Garden Party
by Katy Roberts and Donna Trott

Instead of the usual field outing, our chapter celebrated the glorious efflorescence that is May with a Garden Party at the home of Katy Roberts and Gary Vertescher. Their yard is a good example of a mature, diverse and mostly native Florida landscape.

Guests were invited to wear their most festive garden hats, and these were seen bobbing amidst the pines, mulberries, beauty berry, firebush and privet cassia. A party game, essentially a scavenger hunt, was created by committee members Nancy Bickner, Angie Titus and Katy Roberts.

After a stroll through the grounds, we cooled off under umbrellas, eating cucumber sandwiches and drinking sweet tea and lemonade. An air show of zebra longwing butterflies entertained us, while pileated woodpeckers kept a beat.

Thank you Katy, Gary, and all the volunteers who made this a splendid event. Let’s do it again next year!
Upcoming Programs

Monthly programs are open to the public and are usually held 7 - 9 pm on the first Wednesday of the month. In an effort to provide access to all Pinellas residents, monthly programs may take place at Moccasin Lake Nature Park in Clearwater, Boyd Hill Nature Preserve in St. Petersburg, or at Pinellas Extension in Largo. Please read carefully — each announcement will specify the location and time. Monthly programs organized by the Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society are free and open to the public, featuring refreshments, seed swap, and silent auction of native plants. Field trips and workshops may have small fee for entrance or materials. For more information visit: http://pinellas.fnpschapters.org.

6 July 2016
Wednesday 7 - 9 p.m.

Tampa Bay Aquatic Preserve Program

Randy Runnels

Moccasin Lake Nature Park
2750 Park Trail Lane, Clearwater, FL
http://goo.gl/maps/Zofh0

Randy Runnels will speak on the topic of lost habitat and ecosystems in our county. Randy Runnels, Aquatic Preserve Manager for Florida DEP's Coastal Office, will also speak about Pinellas County's "lost preserve" — an undeveloped and little-known parcel of conservation land on Lake Tarpon that is owned and managed by the Florida Division of State Lands.

3 August 2016
Wednesday 7 - 9 p.m.

Grasses of Boyd Hill

David Hall

Moccasin Lake Nature Park
2750 Park Trail Lane, Clearwater, FL
http://goo.gl/maps/Zofh0

Hear from renowned author and grass expert David Hall. Talk starts 7:30ish, but we encourage people to socialize before the announcements at 7.

5 October 2016
Wednesday 7 - 9 p.m.

Creating Winter Interest in a Landscape

Arnie Rutkis

Moccasin Lake Nature Park
2750 Park Trail Lane, Clearwater, FL
http://goo.gl/maps/Zofh0

This lecture will focus on ways to increase aesthetics in Florida winter landscapes by using long season plantings and adding plants with structural characteristics such as berries, branching, unique habit and interesting foliage, color and textures. The ecological functions these plants give us will be discussed. Other ideas such as water features, hardscaping art and mulch options will be presented. Arnie Rutkis’ website chronicles some of his works and collaborative projects. www.stoneshovel.com

7 September 2016
Wednesday 7 - 9 p.m.

Land Management Initiatives

Jan Allyn and Katy Roberts

Moccasin Lake Nature Park
2750 Park Trail Lane, Clearwater, FL
http://goo.gl/maps/Zofh0

FNPS members and land management reviewers Jan Allyn and Katy Roberts will talk about land management and FNPS’s role. Talk starts 7:30, but we encourage people to socialize before the announcements at 7.

Future Programs and Field Trips

For updates to future events, visit the FNPS Pinellas Chapter online calendar.
or check us out at meetup

Keep this issue handy until Halloween. The next issue of the Understory will be delayed until the end of October. See you then!

Rock Art by Sue Taylor
PINELLAS CHAPTER NEWS

9 July 2016
Saturday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

**Rock Painting Workshop**

Stephanie Coutant
Nature Preserve Ranger

Boyd Hill Nature Park
1101 Country Club Way S, St. Petersburg

Join us to create native plant rock art. Use your rock art in the garden, as paperweights, pet rocks, or just because! Release your inner artist and escape the summer heat. Cost: $5.00 per person, all ages welcome. Materials are included. Call Boyd Hill (727) 893-7326 to sign up. [http://www.stpeteparksrec.org/boyd-hill.html](http://www.stpeteparksrec.org/boyd-hill.html)

16 July 2016
Saturday 9 a.m. - noon

**Pinellas County’s Lost Preserve**

Randy Runnels
State Aquatic Preserve Manager

Meet near boat ramp at J. Chesnut Sr. 2200 East Lake Road, Palm Harbor, FL. Park & carpool to site

Visit Pinellas County’s "lost preserve" — an undeveloped and little-known parcel of conservation land on Lake Tarpon. This is a wetland. Please bring shoes suitable for wading, bug spray, water, snack, and dry clothes or seat protector for the drive home.

6 August 2016
Saturday 8 a.m.

**Grasses of Boyd Hill Nature Preserve**

Stephanie Coutant
Nature Preserve Ranger

Boyd Hill Nature Park
2900 31st St. South, St. Petersburg, FL

Join Stephanie Coutant for a tour of Boyd Hill with emphasis on native grasses. Kodiak Brothers and Arnie Rutkis will assist with grass identification. There will be a four dollar ($4) fee for the tour.

17 September 2016
Saturday 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

**Kayaking at Weedon Island**

1800 Weedon Dr NE, St. Petersburg, FL

Join Jan Allyn on a paddle through mangrove tunnels and out to Riveria Bay. Meet at 10:30 a.m. at kayak rental area on entrance road near the visitor center. Plan to launch at 11 a.m.

Ten single kayaks are reserved. If 10 people sign up, the price will be $36 per person for 4 hours. If fewer than 10, it will be $40. To reserve a kayak, email pinellasfnps@gmail.com. If you bring your own boat, there is no charge.

Tide will rise during the paddle (high tide 3:15 p.m.). Bring water, sun/insect protection, snacks, and hat.

22 October 2016
Saturday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**Fall Native Plant Festival**

**Wilcox Nursery**

12501 Indian Rocks Rd, Largo, Florida

Join us for a fun-filled day of talks and native plants for sale. Wilcox Nursery donates a portion of the sales that day to our local chapter, so indulge your native plant addiction while supporting our mission: "To promote the conservation, preservation, and restoration of Florida native plants and native plant communities.”

5 November 2016
Saturday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

**Devil’s Millhopper**

Gainesville, Florida

Craig Huegel

Join Dr. Craig Huegel as we explore Devil's Millhopper Geological State Park (120’ deep sinkhole) and San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park (mature hardwood forest). Afterwards, we will hear from Dan White about his native garden. Carpooling is encouraged for this trip to Gainesville, Fla. to minimize environmental impact. [Devil's Millhopper](http://www.devilsmillhopper.com)
GET YOUR TREES READY FOR HURRICANE SEASON

by Belinda Lambert
ISA Certified Arborist FL-0372A, TRAQ

1. Inspect all trees on your property, focusing on large trees that are higher than your roof line.
   • Look for dead and decaying limbs that may fall or be torn off by heavy winds.
   • Inspect the base, trunk and root plate of all large trees, looking for evidence of decay such as fungal “mushrooms”.
   • If the tree is particularly old, tap the trunk with a rubber mallet or heavy stick, listening for potentially hollow areas.

2. If you see any issues, consider hiring an arborist to further assess your large trees. Make sure the arborist is licensed, insured and ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) certified before you do business with him/her. A qualified arborist can
   • thin out dead wood that may become projectiles during a storm,
   • perform proper pruning to improve the structural integrity of your tree,
   • identify if you have any trees (whole trees or limbs) that are at high risk of failure. Ask if your arborist has TRAQ—Tree Risk Assessment Qualification—through ISA

3. Beware of door-to-door tree and landscape services that offer to trim your trees. Ask to see their credentials. Ask them to explain the term “lion’s tailing” to you (*see photo and ISA definition below). If they cannot answer, YOU DO NOT WANT THEM WORKING ON YOUR TREES.

   *Lion’s Tailing is a “poor pruning practice in which an excessive number of branches are thinned from the inside and lower part of specific limbs or a tree crown, leaving mostly terminal foliage. Results in poor branch taper, poor wind load distribution, and a higher risk of branch failure.”

It is like making an open umbrella out of your tree branch – I am sure you can imagine how easy it is for an umbrella to get yanked out of your hand in heavy winds!

“...employ the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it; tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it; and thus, through the influence of the mind over the body gives the effect of refreshing rest and reinvigoration to the whole system.”

Frederick Law Olmsted 1865

3 December 2016
Saturday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Florida Native Plant Society Mini-Conference
Brooker Creek Preserve
3940 Keystone Rd, Tarpon Springs, FL

Join us for a fun-filled day at Brooker Creek Preserve in cooperation with Suncoast, Nature Coast, Citrus and Heartland chapters. Dr. Craig Huegel will talk about roots, Bruce Turley will discuss Landscape Design, and there will be hikes and a variety of other activities. A schedule of events will be posted on our website as we verify events and times.
CONSERVATION IN PINELLAS

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The highly urbanized nature of Pinellas County has been duly noted in the Understory (2015 Issue 3 page 7). You might want to read this piece written in 2013 by Richard Reep Florida's Pinellas County: Growth Gone Wild

Reep aptly captured the rampant, poorly planned development here in Pinellas County, but missed an opportunity to call for integrated open space and parkland for Pinellas residents. Despite many acres of preserved lands, too many Pinellas neighborhoods lack parks or easy access to natural areas.

The great American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted fervently believed that green space should be equally accessible to all and should be protected from private restraints. “What we most want is a simple, broad, open space of clean greensward….and a sufficient number of trees about it to supply a variety of light and shade….We want depth of wood enough about it….to completely shut out the city from our landscapes” (F.L. Olmsted).

Olmsted concluded that green and awe-inspiring scenery was the ultimate equalizer, a great civilizing force that could bring a sense of democracy to a population. His concept behind the original design of Central Park in New York City was to provide a green and peaceful place for people of all socio-economic backgrounds to relax.

More recently, scientific research has revealed that children on greener school campuses performed better on academic tests, that green surroundings improved the outcome of mental illness, and that higher levels of green vegetation and tree canopy were associated with decreased mortality and higher property values.

Would any of these elements spur you or your local city or county board to reconsider decisions about community gardens, open space, or resources for land purchase, land management, or local parks?

Did you know that living closer to nature is better for your health, and new research suggests green surroundings may even extend your life?

According to a recent study funded by National Institute of Health, there was a 12% reduction in overall death rates among women in areas with greatest vegetation compared to those in least vegetated areas. The study followed 108,630 women from 2000 to 2008 during which time 8,604 deaths occurred. Death rates were lower for kidney disease by 41%, respiratory disease by 34%, and cancer by 13% for those women whose homes were surrounded by more green vegetation.

For more information: James et. al 2016, Exposure to Greenness and Mortality in a Nationwide Prospective Cohort Study of Women, Environmental Health Perspectives, http://dx.doi.org/10.1289/ehp.1510363

Submitted by Belinda Lambert

Imagine a plan for green space distributed equally among all demographics, providing a backdrop for health, intelligence, prosperity, and longevity throughout Pinellas County.

For information: Green Space Roundup Your Understory Editor, Ellen Raabe

THE HAMMOCK IN DUNEDIN

One way that we can protect and conserve native plant communities is to prevent their destruction and support land purchase and land management for the few native plant communities remaining in this heavily developed county.

Currently, the Hammock Park in Dunedin is facing development pressures that threaten gopher tortoise habitat and old growth trees on an adjoining 7.5 acre parcel. The current owner, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, is considering high density development of the parcel.

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, “Gopher tortoises share their burrows with more than 350 other species, and are therefore referred to as a keystone species. Conservation of gopher tortoises depends not only on the efforts of FWC and other conservation groups, but also on Florida’s citizens. In Florida, the gopher tortoise is listed as Threatened. Both the tortoise and its burrow are protected under state law.”

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service goes on to state “Gopher tortoises need large parcels of undeveloped land not fragmented by roads, buildings, parking lots, and other structures.” While the Florida Native Plant Society is not typically concerned with animals per se, the presence of gopher tortoises indicates a unique sand hill habitat that supports a community of both plant and animal species that operate in tandem. By supporting the purchase and management of this property as parkland, you show support for the preservation and protection of this habitat and all its associated species.

Funds from the BP Economic Settlement Fund may be available to purchase the disputed property. Please visit the Friends of the Hammock website for more information about this issue. http://hammockpark.org

Photo courtesy Jan Allyn
WEDNESDAYS 9 AM – 3 PM
Organized by Lisa Boing
12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL

Volunteers at the Native Area of the Florida Botanical Gardens meet every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. You may volunteer for all or part of those hours. There are no set required hours and you need not attend every week. All help is appreciated and jobs in the garden change weekly depending on project and season.

Come be a part of this beautification project and learn what native plants would be happy in your own garden!

Please bring your own hand clippers, loppers, shovels, gloves, hat, sunscreen and water.

This is also an excellent opportunity for High School students to earn Bright Futures Community Service hours. Three high school students have already volunteered in the Native Area. Summer is a great time to earn the required hours toward a scholarship. The Florida Native Plant Society is an eligible community project (http://www.pcsb.org/Page/3554).

Keep in mind Moccasin Lake Park in Clearwater is also eligible for Bright Futures hours.

Kudos to those students giving back to the Community. I look forward to teaching you all about native plants, why they are important, and share one of Pinellas County’s special places—The Florida Botanical Gardens.

Please contact me at lisaboing@tampabay.rr.com if you are interested or have questions.

Lisa Boing, Pinellas County Master Gardener and Board Member of The Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation

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Welcome New Members

Brian and Karla Booth
Pat & Thomas Botulinski
Eve and Ed Broomes
Pamela Butler
Bertha Dann
John D’Andrea
Karen Davis
William Ebert
Jerry Gibson
Maridell Hahn
Donna Heelan
Boni Kalecki
Roxanne Lavalle
Melanie Long
Susan Marchiselli
Trudi Massaro
Nichole Matthews
Mike & Kathy Mitchell
Donna Moore
Marty Newman
Renee Penkalski
Angela Pietas
Lisa Barlow & Wayne Robbins
Lawrence Rozenfeld
Katherine Schaedel
Pam Seiser
Ann Silver
Kathleen Smith
Paula Smith
Jackie Stevens
Andrew Tarcza
Mark Wilhelm

“Thanks to Olmsted's vision and creative genius, America has a little bit of nature left in many of its most urban places.”

The National Wildlife Federation in reference to landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted

Wild Bear Landscaping Inc.
727-459-3458
by Sue Taylor

Creeping Indigo (Indigofera spicata) is a non-native, invasive plant that is wreaking havoc among horse owners. Although the plant has not been officially designated as invasive, anecdotal evidence indicates it is widespread throughout Florida. Many horses have died as a result of what is believed to be creeping indigo poisoning. Attention to this plant was brought to us by Jeane DeFelice, a concerned horse owner and Florida resident of 37 years.

According to online sources, the plant was brought to Florida in the early 20th century as a forage for rabbits, but it was not successful for that purpose. It subsequently "escaped" and has spread rapidly. It was also used as an ornamental ground cover. It appears in pastures, highway medians, and yards. Creeping indigo is a deadly low-lying ground cover or weed that resembles common clover and is both attractive and toxic to horses. It contains two toxins: 3-nitropropionate (3-NPA) a nerve poison, and Indospicine a liver toxin.

Viewed from above, the plant appears to “creep” along the ground vining out from a central root. The compound leaf stems have 5-9 alternating smooth-edged leaflets. The seed pods form downward pointing clusters of a light green or brown color — to distinguish it from the hairy indigo plant which is not poisonous. The blossoms are coral pink to red in color and resemble small snapdragon blossoms. The plant grows well in dry sandy soils and is easy to miss. The taproot is carrot-like, two feet long, and difficult to remove. It must be dug up to eradicate the plant. Only slow acting herbicides are capable of killing creeping indigo permanently. For more information go to http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ag399

Although UF advises that many of the later neurological symptoms caused by creeping indigo are irreversible, some horses have been rehabilitated. A recovery regimen for horses is published on www.Ninaswarriors.com

This website has a wealth of information about creeping indigo, including identifying the plant, locator map, and eradication. Horse owner Summer McGuire of the Tampa Bay area is the driving force behind creeping indigo education among horse owners in Florida. There is also a Facebook group maintained by Ms. McGuire called Nina's Warriors Creeping Indigo Resource.

The Year of the Tree

The St Petersburg Sustainability Council is working on a new project to celebrate "The Year of the Tree” with Neighborhood Tree Walks.

The idea is for people to host tree walks in their own neighborhoods, educating their neighbors about what tree species are nearby, including those with special value and those that are invasive. If you would like to host a tree walk in your neighborhood, contact Lucy Trimarco for more information:

lucy.trimarco@gmail.com

The Understory
by Jan Allyn

The last time our chapter had a field trip to Manatee County’s Emerson Point Preserve was in January 2011, so it was time to return for a visit. The park is located on Snead Island, a spit of land that juts west toward the Gulf of Mexico. It is bordered on the north by Terra Ceia Bay and on the south by the tidal Manatee River.

Our group included two members of the Serenoa Chapter (Manatee and Sarasota counties). Stephanie Coutant (Boyd Hill Nature Preserve) led the trip and was prepared with information about the use of the site by native Americans and early Manatee County pioneers.

We started our hike at the Portavant Mound, the largest surviving Native American temple mound in southwest Florida. In the area near the mound we admired coastal subtropical hammock species like strangler fig (*Ficus aurea*), gumbo limbo (*Bursera simaruba*), seagrape (*Coccoloba uvifera*), and softleaf wild coffee (*Psychotria sulzerrii*). We searched the limbs of trees and found epiphytes: Tampa butterfly orchid (*Encyclia tampensis*) and giant wild pine (*Tillandsia utriculata*). We were dismayed at the number of exotic and invasive species on and around the mound. These included carrotwood (*Cupaniopsis anacardioides*), Chinese fan palm (*Livistona chinensis*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), and snake plant (*Sansevieria trifasciata*), among others.

As we left the mound area to walk trails in the park, rain materialized. For the most part we were well prepared for the weather and only one opted to head for home. As the rest of us splashed along the trails of the park we identified a total of 67 plant species, 55 of them native. Some of the interesting plants we saw were coastal groundcherry (*Physalis angustifolia*), soapberry (*Sapindus saponaria*), slender goldenrod (*Euthamia caroliniana*), false mastic (*Sideroxyline foetidissimum*), and wild plumbago (*Plumbago zeylanica*). Ferns we saw included resurrection fern (*Pleopeltis polypodioides, var. michauxiana*), leather fern (*Acrostichum danaeifolium*), swamp fern (*Blechnum serrulatum*), and bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum var. caudatum*).

By the time the rain tapered off and the sun returned we were all pretty well soaked, but we didn’t mind too much since the downpour had tamed the heat of the June day. One disappointment was that because of the threat of lightning we did not climb to the top of the observation tower. On clear days the tower allows a 360-degree view of the Manatee River, the Skyway Bridge, and the Egmont Key Lighthouse. The park also has a canoe and kayak launch for those who wish to explore the area by water. Emerson Point is a great place to see coastal and hammock species and is well worth a visit, rain or shine.

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"My head reeled at the sheer and startling beauty, the wide, bare openness of it. The sense of space, the vastness of the sky above and on either side made my heart race, I would have travelled a thousand miles to see this. I had never imagined such a place.”

~Author, Susan Hill
FNPS is a nonprofit organization whose mission is the preservation, conservation, and restoration of native plants and native plant communities of Florida. All meetings, field trips and other FNPS activities are free and open to all.

Pinellas Chapter of FNPS plays an active role in community outreach. If you are interested in participating, please visit our website Pinellas Chapter FNPS or contact the Chapter via email: pinellas@fnpschapters.org.

Our volunteers are the best. Thank you to our members, new and old and for the many hours you volunteer for FNPS.

Thank you to our Business Sponsors. They support us. Please support them.

This is your newsletter. As always, please feel free to contribute. Understory Editor, Ellen Raabe

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SILENT PLANT AUCTION

Do you have native plants volunteering in your garden? Please pot them up and bring to a monthly program (see Page 2). A silent auction of donated plants is held each month. Your extra plants will go home with someone trying to establish natives in their own yard or community project AND the proceeds benefit the Pinellas Chapter FNPS!

The Pinellas Chapter supports efforts around the County and the State that express intention, take action, and show results in harmony with the mission of the Florida Plant Society. If you are aware of a community project, Friends Group, local ordinance initiative, municipal effort, or issue that deserves this Chapter’s encouragement or support, please contact a member of the Board (page 9). Here are a few of the parks and projects we have supported through advocacy, volunteers, or funds:

- Moccasin Lake Nature Park Butterfly Garden (City of Clearwater)
- Boyd Hill Environmental Education Center (City of St. Petersburg)
- Naturemania Camp (City of Largo)
- Dunedin Nature Center (City of Dunedin)
- Brooker Creek Nature Camps (George Heinrich)
- Weedon Island Fishing Camps (Sensing Nature LLC)
- Nature’s Academy (Garden at Fort de Soto)
- The Hammock: 50 for Fern and Invasive Removal Project (City of Dunedin and Friends of the Hammock)
- Friends of Pinellas Master Naturalists : Jerry Shrewsbury Award
- FNPS Conservation Grants Program (State level)
- Honeymoon Island Native Garden
- Pinellas County Extension/Florida Botanical Gardens
- Outreach events including Drive Electric Tampa Bay, Green Thumb, Lakes and Ponds Day, and Earth Day
Chapter Directory

Officers
Kodiak Brothers, President, kodiak224@gmail.com
Vacant, Vice President
Sue Taylor, Secretary, susn31taylor@gmail.com
Donna Trott, Treasurer, donnatrott@me.com
Jan Allyn, Chapter Representative jallyn@tampabay.rr.com
Candy Arnold, Past President caarnold78@gmail.com

Board Members
Debbie Chayet dchayet@verizon.net
Andrew Karpinski, ak@stonemarmot.com
Belinda Lambert bocklamb@aol.com
Nancy Bickner nbickner@gmail.com
Ellen Raabe, juncusjane@gmail.com

Committee Chairs and Coordinators
Advocacy/Conservation: Katy Roberts
Artist: Cathy Vogelsong
Events/Displays: Andy Karpinski
Field Trip Coordinator: Vacant
Spring and Fall Plant Festival Coordinator: Mary McCahon
Hospitality: Lisbet Joyce
Membership Coordinator: Nancy Bickner
Native Plant Demonstration Garden Liaison: Lisa Boing
Program Coordinator: Belinda Lambert
Publicity: Carlton Rowell
Sales/Merchandise: Vacant
Social Media: Katy Roberts and Donna Trott
Understory Editor: Ellen Raabe
Volunteer Coordinator: Vacant
Web Master: Jan Allyn
FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

The mission of the Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) is to promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

Join us at monthly meetings for inspirational speakers, on field trips to see natural habitats, at plant sales, or visit local plant nurseries specializing in native plants. Visit us online.

Pinellas Chapter web address: http://pinellas.fnpschapters.org/
FNPS Blog: http://fnpsblog.blogspot.com

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Like us on Facebook
Pinellas Chapter FNPS
Join us on meetup

Pinellas Chapter Florida Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 1661
Pinellas Park, Florida
33780-1661