October is Florida Native Plant Month!

The Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners issued a proclamation that October is officially Florida Native Plant Month in Pinellas County. Mary McCahon delivered a great speech that highlights the role of this Chapter and of the County in working toward a common goal. The full text is given here and on page 3.

Chairman Justice and Honorable Commissioners

Thank you for this proclamation and your acknowledgement that native plants and native plant communities are important to Pinellas County. We, like you, share a love for the natural environment and for promoting biodiversity. It is our honor to be able to assist the county with efforts to preserve and promote real Florida. We see it as a win-win situation that augments the county’s good ecology programs. Our members gladly provide hundreds of volunteer hours at Brooker Creek, Weedon Island, and Fort DeSoto preserves along with numerous municipal facilities, like Carlton Rowell’s maintenance of the butterfly garden at Moccasin Lake Nature Park.

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FNPS members from left to right: D. Chayet, E. Raabe, C. Rowell, [Chairman Justice], A. Taylor, S. Taylor, and M. McCahon

Photo by Debra Lansdowne of Pinellas County
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.

2 November 2016
Wednesday 7 - 9 p.m.
Annual Membership Meeting and Potluck Dinner and Ethnobotany
by Katy Roberts
Moccasin Lake Nature Park
2750 Park Trail Lane, Clearwater, FL
http://goo.gl/maps/Zofh0

This meeting mixes business and pleasure. It is time once again to elect new officers and board of directors, and acknowledge the special contributions of some of our members. Bring a dish to share, finger food, side dishes, casseroles, or desserts (turkey will be provided). Enjoy a relaxing evening with friends as we share good food and good company. If you want to be eco-friendly, feel free to bring your own plate and silverware and a bag to carry them home. This will help reduce the amount of disposables used.

The nominees are as follows:

Officers
President: Jan Allyn
Vice: Mary McCahon
Secretary: Susan Taylor
Treasurer: Donna Trott
Past president: Kodiak Brothers
Chapter Representative: OPEN

Board members
Nancy Bickner
Belinda Lambert
Steve Milian
Arnie Rutkis
One OPEN position on the Board

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

Instead of a monthly evening program, 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 Basic Landscape Design, and there will be hikes and other speakers and activities. See flyer on Page 6 for schedule of events and registration details.

11 January 2017
Wednesday 7 - 9 p.m.
Coming to Pass: Florida’s Coastal Islands
Susan Cerulean
SPC Seminole Campus Auditorium
9200 113th Street North, Seminole, FL

We are thrilled to have nature writer, naturalist and earth advocate, Susan Cerulean to grace the January program. Her recent book of the title above just won a Gold Medal from the Florida Book Awards for Florida Nonfiction. This should be very interesting. Come and enjoy listening to someone who really understands Florida’s wild places and the changes taking place.

Note change of venue. This program will be held at the SPC Seminole Campus Auditorium (Digitorium)
St. Petersburg College, Seminole

Future Programs and Field Trips
For updates to future events, visit the FNPS Pinellas Chapter online calendar.
or check us out at meetup
22 October 2016
Saturday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Fall Native Plant Festival
Wilcox Nursery
12501 Indian Rocks Road, Largo

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.” See flyer on Page 5 and Notes on Page 8.

5 November 2016
Saturday 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Field Trip to Devil's Millhopper & San Felasco Hammock
Gainesville, Florida

Join field trip leader 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. Carpool location and time to rendezvous to be announced.

Did you know
...that I have been preparing the Understory newsletter for four years?

Yes, it is true, and I have enjoyed making a contribution to the Pinellas Chapter of FNPS. However, it looks as though I will be leaving the area soon. So now is the time to pass the torch. This will be the last newsletter that I will layout and edit.

...that you could do this job?

Yes, you could do it! Once every three months, you will collect up all the information on upcoming events, write or solicit articles on pertinent topics, gather graphics, photos, and make a newsletter worthy of FNPS and its mission! Plan 12-24 hours minimum, depending on your style.

And if you volunteer when I am still here, I can help get you started.

Thank you to all the contributors, writers, photographers, and other volunteers that make this Chapter such a great group to work with. It has been a pleasure.

Cordially, Ellen Raabe

Proclamation …Continued from Page 1

Many hours are also contributed to estuary preserves that are so important to the county from the economic as well as the ecological perspective. Educating the public about the advantages of native plants and sustainability is also a major activity of our organization. In addition to our monthly speaker series, we conduct increasingly popular spring and fall native plant festivals geared toward teaching home gardeners about native plants and sustainable landscaping. Our members, including Lisa Boing and Sue Taylor, maintain the native plant demonstration garden and Andy’s Pond at the County’s Botanical Garden in Largo. Both the garden and the drainage ditch/pond that cleans water before it enters McKay Creek, provide excellent object-lessons on what native plants mean to sustainability and biodiversity. And if you haven’t been there recently, we encourage you to visit your botanical garden to see it for yourself.

We commend the county for reopening the Weedon Island and Brooker Creek preserves on Sunday; for effectively using of native plants for roadway landscaping, and for consideration of using BP money to purchase and keep a trained operator of a Fecon mower. What a boon to sound land management of real Florida in this, the state’s most densely developed county. And for your assistance with making it possible for the Friends of Dunedin Hammock to increase the size of that remarkable preserve. Please know that your farsightedness is valued, really treasured, and that we stand, all 250 members strong, ready to assist you and the county’s residents with promoting and preserving Pinellas County’s natural places and native plants.

In closing, a sincere thank you for your recognition of the value of native plants and natural land conservation.

Mary McCahon on behalf of Pinellas Chapter FNPS
by Belinda Lambert  
ISA Certified Arborist FL-0372A, TRAQ

Many of you may not be aware that this question is an issue, but in the world of Arboriculture (the study and care of trees), it has been an ongoing debate for many years. So here are some of the do’s and don’ts:

**When Planting A Tree**
- Mulching a tree as part of the planting process is essentially a personal choice. It may help with moisture retention, but only for rain events > 0.25 inches. Brief light rains get absorbed by the mulch and never make it to the root zone.
- Mulch may help with weed suppression, but there are a lot of variables: how thick, how coarse, how well weeds are removed before it is applied.
- Mulch will probably not have any effect on tree growth rate or establishment.
- Mulch definitely helps prevent mechanical damage from weed whackers, lawn mowers, and so on.
- If used, mulch should be applied at least three feet beyond the root ball all the way around and maintained for the entire establishment period, generally about three years.

**In General and for Existing Trees**
- Mulch should be kept away from the trunk of the tree. If it is close to the trunk, it will retain moisture against the trunk and promote the growth of decay organisms. A good rule of thumb is to keep mulch 12 inches away from the trunk.
- Apply mulch to as much of the root zone as you can. In reality, this could be your whole yard, but using the drip line as a guide is a good compromise. If you can’t mulch all the way to the drip line, an area three times the diameter of the tree is considered a minimum. So, a 12 inch diameter tree should have a minimum mulch area of 36 inches on all sides.
- Mulch depth should be anywhere from 2 - 4 inches. Fine textured mulch (e.g. recycled) should be around 2 inches deep. Coarse textured mulch (e.g. pine straw) can be 4 inches deep.
- Hopefully we all know that some of the more sustainable mulch options are melaleuca, eucalyptus and pine straw. Do not use cypress mulch.
- Besides not being sustainable, cypress mulch no longer has the properties that made it popular many years ago. Only the heartwood of cypress is rot and insect resistant, and the cypress being logged from wetlands through agricultural exemptions is not mature enough to have heartwood development. The cypress mulch commonly available is no longer a byproduct of lumber, but may be the primary product of logging during times of high demand.

**What is the drip line?**

The drip line is an imaginary line drawn from the outermost branches of a tree to the soil. Most trees and shrubs shed rain water to the “drip line” like an umbrella. This is where tiny rootlets are located that take up water and nutrients for the tree. The most active water absorption area is at the drip line and beyond, not close to the trunk.

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**Wilcox Nursery & Landscape**

*FLORIDA NATIVE PLANTS*

12501 Indian Rocks Road, Largo, Florida 33774  
Tel. (727) 595-2073  wnursery@tampabay.rr.com  
www.WilcoxNursery.com  
*Let us help you Plant Real Florida!*
Fall Native Plant Festival
Benefiting the Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society
Sat., October 22nd – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Wilcox Nursery & Landscape
12501 Indian Rocks Road, Largo • (727) 595-2073

Great selection of native grasses, blooming wildflowers, vines, shrubs, trees
Enhance the habitat value of your garden and make it spring to life!
Let FNPS members help you choose the “right plant for the right place”

GROW your knowledge with FREE Mini-Seminars!

9 a.m.  **Bruce Turley**  “Getting Started: The Basics of Home Landscaping with Native Plants”

10 a.m.  **Katy Roberts**  “Butterfly Gardening: Plant These and They Will Come”

11 a.m.  **Lisa Boing**  “Learning by Example: How Our Local Botanical Garden Can Used as a Resource”

Noon  **Arnold Rutkis**  “Beyond Turf Grass: Using Native and Natural Materials”

1 p.m.  **Chris Parisi**  “The Milkweed Man Tells All: Progress & Challenges in Feeding the Multitudes”

Plant species discussed will be available for purchase
FNPS members save 10% all year long at Wilcox Nursery.
Join at the festival to receive your discount!

The mission of the Florida Native Plant Society is the conservation, preservation and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida

The Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) organization, is registered with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Registration #CH4271. No amount of any contribution is paid to a professional solicitor and 100% of each contribution is retained by FNPS.
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2016-0828
by Mary McCahon

On Saturday, October 22nd the Pinellas Chapter FNPS is holding its Fall Native Plant Festival at Wilcox Nursery located at 12501 Indian Rocks Road in Largo. The festival is a wonderful way to learn about landscaping with Florida native plants. Popular, free lectures start at 9 am and continue until 2 pm. Some of the area’s leading practitioners will present how-to information on getting started with native plants and the advantages of landscaping for biodiversity and water conservation (see Flyer page 5).

Wilcox Nursery specializes in a wide variety of native wildflowers, shrubs and trees, so all plants discussed in the talks, and many more, will be available for purchase. Chapter members will be on hand to help with selecting the right plant for specific locations or conditions. There will also be several specialty plant-related vendors on hand along with free literature about native plants and biodiversity. Proceeds from the event help fund the chapter’s native plant education and preservation activities throughout the county and region.

To improve flow of attendees through the nursery, we are limiting the parking available on Wilcox property. Please consider parking at Anona School to the south of Wilcox on the same side of the road or at the rear of the office complex to the north. There will be signs marking these parking areas, and it is a short walk to enter the festival site. We will provide a large plant holding and pick up area behind the store so that it will be easy for you to drive through and load your plants. There will be volunteers on hand to help you. Hopefully this will solve our parking and circulation problems!

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Contact Mary McCahon 813-732-9626, lantanaorchid@gmail.com or for more information about the event, please go to http://pinellas.fnpschapters.org/
by Ellen Raabe

Not every plant that is part of an environmentally-friendly landscape is a Florida native. And unless you are managing a preserve, it isn’t likely that your landscape will fit the high expectations of 75% or more native plants. But, there are many attractive landscape plants and landscaping practices that are Florida Friendly, do not require large input of water, nutrients, or other resources, and help reduce fuel consumption by mowers, blowers and so on.

I want to share with you this sign, that I proudly display at my house in St. Petersburg. It certifies that my landscape meets the requirements of a Florida Friendly Landscape™ (FFL) at the Gold level!

While both manicured and “natural” landscapes can satisfy FFL requirements, my landscape has no turf grass and no irrigation system. Instead, there are plantings of trees, shrubs, ground covers, neatly trimmed shrubbery, and discreetly hidden tangles of wild flowers. The trees and shrubs provide shade, drop their leaves and self-mulch. The soil that once was dry and lifeless now is rich with organic material and earth worms. A path leads to a bench in the shade where birds, butterflies, and the resident black racer can be seen.

There are over 100 plant species on this suburban lot, and more than 50% of them are Florida native plants. Street and utility easements are mowed once a month during the summer and consist primarily of native plants, too!

Every plant is located where it can thrive under what I like to call “benign neglect”. The benign part of it means that I do not make all the decisions. I allow the plants to show me what works best, and depending on heat and frost, rain and drought, some plants die back while others thrive and spread. The “neglect” part means that there is little physical input from me, aside from some mulch, occasional pruning or weeding, and even less frequent water or fertilizer. There is a seed bank here, and this facilitates changes in species composition as determined by changing conditions.

If you would like to learn more about Florida Friendly Landscape™ (FFL) go to the UF/IFAS website and read about the nine FFL Principles, read the resident checklist, and look over the UF/IFAS Assessment of Non-Native Plants. Get started making your landscape more sustainable, reduce energy, water and fertilizer use, and make a habitat suitable for both you and wildlife.

http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu

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"What is that feeling when you're driving away from people and they recede on the plain till you see their specks dispersing? - it's the too-huge world vaulting us, and it's good-bye. But we lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies.”

~Jack Kerouac. On the Road
Native Plant Holiday Mini Workshop

At the Brooker Creek Preserve

Saturday, December 3, 2016 9 am to 2 pm

Registration is required. To register, please visit Eventbrite
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/native-plant-holiday-celebration-tickets-26568804008

Free Admission with registration, Public Invited

9 am - regular Saturday hike limit 20
10:00 am – 11:30 am
Auditorium:
   Introduction to Plant Identification with James Stevenson including a hike
Classroom:
   Using Native Plants in the Landscape, some Basics of Designing and Maintaining the Natural Landscape’ Bruce Turley Wilcox Nursery

11:30 am - 12:30 lunch, bring a dish to share, announcements then mix and mingle and enjoy.

12:30 pm – 2 pm
Auditorium:
   How Roots Work - Dr. Craig Huegel – hike following
Classroom:
   Designing Your Natural Landscape, a Hands-on Primer limit 20
   RSVP call Katy at 727-726-1455
Gazebo:
   Grape vine Wreath making with The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve
   free to participating members $15.00 for non-members

Pinellas, Suncoast, Citrus, Nature Coast, and Hernando FNPS chapters: Friends of the Brooker Creek Preserve,
Pinellas/UF IFAS Extension  Map & Info: http://goo.gl/maps/kr7Tg  http://www.fnps.org/chapters/chapters

NOTICE: A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free within the state (800-435-7352, reg. no. CH4271). Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.
Rock Painting Workshop

Organized by Stephanie Coutant, Boyd Hill Nature Preserve Ranger with Sue Taylor and Ellen Raabe, representing Pinellas Chapter FNPS

In this hands-on workshop, rocks became spiders and lady bugs, flowering native plants and Florida landscapes. On a hot day in July the inner artist of two dozen or more children and adults painted side by side for four hours at Boyd Hill Nature Park. For some the process of painting was a satisfying reprise, for others it was a challenge, but in the end, everyone clamored for another workshop to paint more rocks.

There is something about the earthy and tactile element of rocks that draws out even the most reserved artist. Cups with Florida native plants adorned the tables and we attempted to paint realistic impressions of them. The children favored painting animals, insects, and reptiles. We try to keep in mind that animals are often a child’s first connection with nature. Eventually interest in habitat, food, and shelter for a beloved animal will lead the novice to appreciate the need for native plants and a natural setting for survival.

All the painted rocks featured in this newsletter were created by participants in the workshop!

Watching the Grass Grow

by Lisa Boing

Oh humm….GRASSES… My youngest joked and asked if I went to watch the grass grow. Funny guy! Did YOUR eyes skim over the announcement of a Grass Tour? Didn’t sound interesting to you? If you were glued to the weather forecast for Saturday and didn’t want tear your eyes away from your screen, you missed a beautiful day with some knowledgeable outdoor enthusiasts sharing their knowledge of Florida grasses of Boyd Hill Nature Preserve (BHNP)…BUT that’s not all we experienced.

In early August, a group of 11 ventured out to observe native Florida grasses in their natural habitats of hardwood hammocks, sand pine scrub, pine flatwoods, willow marsh, and swamp woodlands at Boyd Hill Nature Preserve. The tour was guided with BHNP’s Ranger Stephanie Coutant with help from Wilcox Nursery Landscape designers’ Kodiak Brothers and Arnie Rutkis.

It was fun to learn about what each of us knew and what we still had to learn on Florida native grasses and the important role they play in plant communities. We also observed and discussed invasive and exotic species in this special place saved during the depression of the 1940s due the stopping of development.

From left to right: Rachael Shields, Cheri Riley, Jason Sharp, Marie Hughes, Arnie Rutkis, Kodiak Brothers, Damon Moore, and Stephanie Coutant. Photograph by Lisa Boing
by Ellen Raabe

Caesar’s weed, *Urena lobata*, is a fibrous-stemmed understory plant that can grow to 10’ tall. It is called Caesar’s weed because the broad leaves look something like a Roman shield. The pink flowers are small, about 1/2 inch long.

The bloom looks a bit like a tiny hibiscus flower. That is because this plant is a *Malvaceae* and is related to hibiscus. But this plant is an invasive exotic that has become abundant in Pinellas County, especially in nature parks and preserves where it can crowd out native understory species.

The seed pods of Caesar’s weed are little brown burrs that attach to clothing or pets as they pass by. It reseeds easily and can form thickets in hammocks, fields and disturbed sites.

Caesar’s weed is easiest to remove in spring before seed-bearing burrs are formed. Many of our preserves and parks will need vigilant volunteers to monitor and remove this plant in the upcoming years. Look around and offer your help at a favorite nature preserve or county park. Or offer to help a neighbor rid their yard of this noxious invasive.

For more information visit: UF/IFAS *Urena lobata*

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**3 pm October 13**

**Proclamation in St. Petersburg**

St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman will issue a proclamation declaring October 2016 to be Florida Native Plant Month in front of the City Council at City Hall, 175 5th Street North in St. Petersburg. You are invited to attend.

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**Visit the Butterfly Garden at Moccasin Lake Nature Park and view the new archway built by volunteer Carlton Rowell.**

*Photo by Jan Allyn*
COMMUNITY

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!

WE SUPPORT

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

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Artist: Cathy Vogelsong
Events/Displays: Andy Karpinski
Field Trip Coordinator: Vacant
Spring and Fall Plant Festival Coordinator: Mary McMahon
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
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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