The Understory

2016 Issue 1

President’s Message

Fall Native Plant Festival: Zest 2015

If past events are indicative of the future, one might have expected our 2015 Fall Native Plant Festival to have been relatively slow compared to the Spring event we hold every year at Wilcox Nursery and Landscape. Whether it was the speakers, vendors, or just the buzz that accompanies the nature and fresh air of fall, this year’s festival was more alluring than ever. As one of our chapter’s more successful fundraisers, the event raised over $1700 to support our mission, “To promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.” We raised more money than either the past fall or spring festival. We also welcomed many great new members and sold some merchandise. To top it off, all this was possible only through the hard work and generous commitment of our volunteer work force. Thank you volunteers!

So, just who, exactly, were these speakers and vendors? There were five speakers and six vendors covering a wide range of topics and items for sale. We learned about “Native Herbs, Berries, & Other Edibles” from Hilary Edenfield and Bruce Turley of Wilcox Nursery and Landscape and were treated to many tasty tidbits from Hilary’s kitchen and garden. Bill Bilodeau discussed “Sustainable Urban Agriculture.” Darcey Philips Of Detail Divas titled her talk “It’s All About the Weeding.” An interesting presentation from Chris Parisi, “Milkweed and More: Gardening for Pollinators”, drew both experienced and beginning butterfly gardeners to his talk. Members and guests also enjoyed access to the wares of Bee Branch Apiaries (local honey, soaps and salves), The Earth Friendly Nook (soils, natural fertilizers, and everything moringa), Hawaiian Orchid Connection (Exotic orchids),

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Member meetings are usually held at Moccasin Lake Nature Park from 7 - 9 pm on the first Wednesday of the month. Exceptions are noted below*. If the gate is locked, call Jan Allyn at 727-244-0312. These events are organized by the Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society -- free and open to the public, featuring refreshments, seed swap, and Silent Auction of native plants. For more information visit: http://pinellas.fnpschapters.org.
Moccasin Lake Nature Park, 2750 Park Trail Lane, Clearwater, FL  http://goo.gl/maps/Zofh0

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

6 January 2016
Wednesday 7 pm

Urban Forest Management
Rob Northrop will speak about urban forest management in the City of Tampa, and about the methods used and results obtained in compiling the 2011 Urban Forest Analysis and Management Plan.

2 March 2016
Wednesday 6:30 - 9:30 pm
The Nine Principles of Florida Friendly Landscaping

Doris Heitzmann
Doris Heitzmann, the Community Outreach Coordinator at Pinellas County Extension, will present the nine principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping (FFL) in the context of native plants.. Doris will also discuss hurdles and successes she has encountered over 10 years educating community association members on FFL principles.

3 February 2016
Wednesday 7 pm

Everyday Sustainability
A representative from the St. Petersburg Sustainability Council will speak about the Council's activities and ways we can reduce our environmental footprints.

Saturday 13 February 2016
3 p.m.

Boyd Hill Nature Preserve
1101 Country Club Way S St Petersburg
Guided Nature Walk in this peaceful oasis located on the shores of Lake Maggiore in St Petersburg. Enjoy the trails and boardwalks that wind thru many unique ecosystems, home to over 60 species of amphibians and reptiles, over 50 species of butterflies and over 165 species of birds.

Saturday 5 March 2016
9:30-11:00 am

Demonstration Garden Tour by Chris Claus
1650 3rd Avenue North, St. Petersburg
Join Chris Claus at the Water Resources Department facility in St. Petersburg for a tour and discussion on Florida native and Florida-Friendly landscaping. This site is a good example of an attractive and green commercial landscape with no lawn and minimal resources required for maintenance. Chris will discuss how the design saves water, time, and sweat and how you can employ this approach at your residence or business.

Monthly Silent Auction Native Plants
Do you have native plants volunteering in your garden? Please pot them up and bring to a monthly program. 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!

Field Trips
Saturday 16 January 2016
9 a.m.-noon

Dunedin Hammock
1900 San Mateo Drive, Dunedin
Hike an ancient 90-acre mixed-hardwood forest filled with more than 300 native species of trees, shrubs, ferns, wildflowers and small animals. In addition, over 100 species of birds inhabit the preserve throughout the year.

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

Monthly Silent Auction

Native Plants
Do you have native plants volunteering in your garden? Please pot them up and bring to a monthly program. 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!
In order to bring more attention to Florida Native Plants and to bring more visibility of our organization to local officials and the public, FNPS declared October as “Florida Native Plant Month”. FNPS Development Director Andy Taylor, “Month” chair Donna Bollenbach, and FNPS membership chair Jonnie Spitler created posters and graphics for chapter use and organized proclamations at local governments throughout the state. Eventually, 45 such proclamations of Florida Native Plant Month were made, with no fewer than four in Pinellas: Pinellas County, St. Pete, Clearwater and Dunedin. A heartfelt thank you to everyone from our chapter who attended these events, especially Diane Lebedeff and Rebecca Wellborn, who initiated the proclamations for Clearwater and Dunedin, respectively. The State of Florida also issued a proclamation which was signed by the governor. In addition to the proclamations, Chapters branded their October events with the Florida Native Plant Month graphics in order to further promote Florida Native Plant Month.

With serendipitous timing, on October 30th the Tampa Bay Times Newspaper In Education department distributed a long-planned curriculum supplement for high school students: "La Florida – Land of Flowers: Ornamental Horticulture with Florida Native Plants". Sue Bedry of the Times was the lead on the project, with Pinellas Chapter members Katy Roberts, Debbie Chayet and Jan Allyn providing guidance on content. Topics covered include invasive exotic plants, advantages of landscaping with natives, Florida Friendly landscape principles, garden design, growing zones, creating wildlife habitat, landscaping with wildflowers, trees, palms, and edible plants. There are lots of references for students to find more information, and suggestions for related projects and exercises that students can do. The 16-page, tabloid-sized insert was delivered to all Tampa Bay Times subscribers and distributed to high schools in Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties. The supplement was created with funding from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Foundation. You can view and download all the Tampa Bay Times NIE curriculum supplements at [http://nieonline.com/tbtimes/supplements.cfm](http://nieonline.com/tbtimes/supplements.cfm)

"La Florida", the curriculum supplement on Florida native plant horticulture, can be found here: [http://goo.gl/eOLyT](http://goo.gl/eOLyT)
by Belinda Lambert

American, or true mistletoe, refers to one of many species of parasitic plants in the Phoradendron genus of the Viscaceae family. In Florida we have two species, both of which are native: oak mistletoe (Phoradendron leucarpum) and mahogany mistletoe (P. rubrum).

Mahogany mistletoe (Phoradendron rubrum) is listed at the state level as endangered and is only known to occur in extreme southeast Florida (think Miami and Florida Keys).

The more common oak mistletoe (Phoradendron leucarpum) is widespread throughout the state, and as the name implies, frequently occurs on various species of oak trees. It is most conspicuous when the canopy of semi-deciduous trees such as laurel oak and water oak begin to thin out in the winter months. The tufts of deep green foliage interspersed throughout the tree are commonly mistletoe infestations.

The leaves of the mistletoe are simple and opposite. The flowers are white and inconspicuous, and produce white to reddish berries, approximately 1/8” in diameter, with a sticky pulp covering the seed. These berries are fed on by birds, and the seeds are thus distributed wherever they land, often sticking on high thin-barked branches. The berries are reported to be toxic if consumed by humans or livestock.

Since mistletoe is parasitic, it draws water and nutrients from its host, and usually weakens and possibly kills the host tree over time. Management recommendations include cutting the branch approximately 12 inches below the point of infestation. Be wary of tree services recommending foliar chemical treatments, even while the tree is dormant, as evidence on the effectiveness of this approach is mixed at best. If removing the infested branch is not practical, or the infestation is particularly severe, the tree may be considered for removal.

Sources:
ISB Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu

THE CHRISTMAS TRADITION OF MISTLETOE

So why do we hang mistletoe at Christmas?

The tradition of associating mistletoe with Yuletide is centuries old. The Norse believed that warring troops or quarreling spouses would come to peaceful terms if they met under mistletoe. The Druids placed twigs of mistletoe with berries on their doors in the spirit of forgiveness.

Current practice

Current mistletoe manners are for the man to remove a single berry from the mistletoe branch for each kiss he “plants” on the object of his affection. When all the berries are gone, no more kissing is condoned.

And where did the name mistletoe come from?

It was believed that mistletoe was spread by bird droppings on branches. Mistletoe is Anglo-Saxon for “mistle” (meaning dung) and “tan” (meaning twig). So when we honor the romantic tradition of mistletoe with a kiss between loved ones, we are really celebrating “dung-on-a-twig”!

Painting of American Mistletoe by Mary E. Eaton originally published by National Geographic in 1917.

Phoradendron leucarpum, or American mistletoe, is a shrubby yellowish green parasite, with short jointed branches and flat thick leaves. Photo by Mary Keim.

Painting of American Mistletoe by Mary E. Eaton originally published by National Geographic in 1917.

Phoradendron leucarpum, or American mistletoe, is a shrubby yellowish green parasite, with short jointed branches and flat thick leaves. Photo by Mary Keim.
**WATCH THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE**

by Jan Allyn

**Beginning in January, Keep an Eye on the Florida Legislature**

Because 2016 is a presidential election year, the Florida Legislature will hold its session early, in January instead of in March. The regular session convenes on January 12th and will end on March 11th. House and Senate committees are currently considering bills which will come before the Legislature during the session. The Florida Native Plant Society employs a lobbyist who will represent its mission and make regular reports to FNPS Policy and Legislation Committee chair Gene Kelly, who will post action alerts on the FNPS website when advocacy for or against certain bills would be helpful. Current items of concern include:

- Senate Bill 400 (HB561) would give the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection complete authority to reorganize, create and abolish DEP Offices and Divisions. Currently much of the organizational structure of DEP is dictated by State Statute, which gives it at least some measure of protection from constant structural upheavals by upper management. This bill seems designed to further centralize control of environmental protection to the executive branch of state government and remove any remaining measure of autonomy from DEP. The Office of General Counsel and Division of State Lands must be retained as they are mandated by the Florida Constitution, but other offices, including Recreation and Parks, could be eliminated at the whim of the Secretary if this bill was to become law.

- According to the *Tampa Bay Times*, the governor’s proposed budget eliminates 152 jobs in the Department of Environmental Protection, most of them jobs in the state parks system that DEP administration has chosen not to fill. An underfunded and under-staffed DEP cannot enforce environmental law or adequately monitor environmental conditions in the state to protect human health and natural systems. The governor’s budget is only a proposal; the final budget will be a product of both the governor and legislature, so input from constituents will be important.

- Our state parks especially need our advocacy now; the acting DEP Secretary has proposed consumptive uses for them which are incompatible with their preservation and proper conservation management, in an effort to “make parks pay for themselves”. The parks are more self-sufficient than most in the nation, receiving no funds from general revenue and raising 64% of their operating costs through entry and camping fees, concessionaire income sharing and other partnerships. The parks are understaffed and Florida Park Service employees are under-compensated. Funding for the parks could be eroded by House Bill 570, which would waive park entrance fees for one year. The sponsor of the bill stated that there would be a general revenue appropriation to prevent this fiscal impact, but this is not a certainty. There is also concern that those parks which are already at or beyond their carrying capacity (Honeymoon Island, for example) would receive even more traffic as a result.

All FNPS members are encouraged to pay close attention to actions in the legislature and to contact legislators regularly to express their support for bills that protect our natural resources.

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Restless Natives Nursery (milkweeds and other butterfly host plants), Wet, Green, and Wild Things (native orchids, aquatics and milkweed), and Wild Birds Unlimited (quality wild bird products). Expert to novice, and insider to newcomer, the 2015 Fall Native Plant Festival had something for everyone.

These festivities didn’t happen by themselves. A band of volunteers set up just about everything. They tagged plants, unloaded trucks, manned booths, set up signs and tables, assisted customers, and helped with labeling and loading operations. A huge “thank you!” for making this event a success! Volunteers have always been the backbone of our organization, and we couldn’t do it without your valiant efforts.

Last but not least, we would like to welcome our new members. Welcome to The Florida Native Plant Society! We would like to encourage you to become active in our chapter, and thank you for expressing an interest in our group. We have many other speakers, socials, workshops, and field trips coming up—we hope to see you out there. Even in the Holiday season, we cannot be grateful enough to our volunteers for making the 2015 Fall Native Plant Festival a success. They did everything: procuring vendors, handling publicity, labeling plants, answering questions, set-up, breakdown, running the booth, shuttling gear, and just being awesome.

Kodiak Brothers, President

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

FNPS is a nonprofit organization whose mission is the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the 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 thank you to our business members. They support the Florida Native Plant Society. Please support them.

This is your newsletter. As always, please feel free to contribute.
The Pinellas Chapter celebrated the month of caring and sharing at Brooker Creek Preserve with the Annual Holiday Celebration including two hikes, plenty of food and friends, and a talk on *The Importance of Native Plants* by Craig Heugel. Craig’s talk was, as always, funny, insightful, and to the point. Many FNPS Nature Coast Chapter members also attended. It was good to meet members from other chapters. The silent auction brought in $400 and we hope each guest is happy with the item they selected.

The hike was led by Barbara Hoffman, a very knowledgable and loyal volunteer for Brooker Creek Preserve. She explained how the current parking lot had been unused farmer's land that had become a garbage dump and several inches of contaminated soil had to be removed to make it usable for the Preserve. As we walked along the boardwalk she pointed out maple trees, Dahoon holly and tupelo trees with gnarled roots. She explained how the water in the creek, now low and unmoving, becomes a strong current as high as the boardwalk during the rainy season. The trail moves from the boardwalk through the woods to a sandy path that leads to an open-sided covered wooden structure that shelters people from the sun or rain and that many couples choose for a wedding site. As the hike came to an end, we stood in the darkness and breathed in the silence, watching fireflies. Thanks to everyone, Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve, the Nature Coast chapter and the Pinellas chapter who helped with the celebration.
FNPS BOARD MEETING AT WITHLACOOCHEE TRAINING

by Donna Trott

This fall several Pinellas chapter members attended the state organization’s quarterly Board of Directors meeting at the Forest Service Withlacoochee Training Center near Brooksville. The Council of Chapters also met during the weekend. It was a good opportunity to gain greater understanding of the issues concerning our society and to network with members from other chapters. The accommodations were comfortably rustic amid slash pines and oaks. Autumn wildflowers captivated hikers.

One of many items discussed was the October Native Plant Month, the first for our state. There were 45 Proclamations received from all over Florida, including a proclamation from the Governor. A fundraising idea for a “Native” license plate was presented, and a break-out group began work on a strategy to improve the availability and accurate merchandising of native Florida plants from the big box stores. It wasn’t all business; an evening campfire and morning plant hikes enhanced the camaraderie that grows when people with similar interests gather.

The state organization varies the locations of quarterly meetings so that members of local chapters can more easily attend. Any PNPS member may attend state meetings, workshops, retreats and conferences. There are many opportunities to participate and volunteers are needed.

Our Business Sponsors help our Pinellas chapter in so many ways. They participate in our festivals and donate materials and time. Please thank them when you see them, and patronize their businesses!
Chapter Directory

“Green is the prime color of the world, and that from which its loveliness arises.”
~ Pedro Calderón de la Barca

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
caarold78@gmail.com
Claudia Lewis, Past President,
clewis.consulting@gmail.com

Board Members
Debbie Chayet dchayet@verizon.net
Andrew Karpinski, ak@stonemarmot.com
Katy Roberts, kroberts@tampabay.rr.com
Ellen Raabe, juncusjane@gmail.com
Lisa Boing, Native Plant Demonstration Garden Liaison, lisaboing@tampabay.rr.com
Belinda Lambert BockLamb@aol.com

Committee Chairs and Coordinators
Advocacy/Conservation: Katy Roberts
Artist: Cathy Vogelsong
Events/Displays: Andy Karpinski
Fall Plant Sale Coordinator: Mary McCahon
Hospitality: Lisbet Thiron-Thome
Membership Coordinator: Nancy Bickner
Programs/Field Trips: Vacant
Publicity: Carlton Rowell
Sales/Merchandise: Vacant
Social Media: Katy Roberts and Donna Trott
Understory Editor: Ellen Raabe
Volunteer Coordinator: Vacant
Web Master: Jan Allyn

Thank you to all who help us continue the work of Pinellas Native Plant Society.
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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Pinellas Chapter Florida Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 1661
Pinellas Park, Florida
33780-1661