Join us on Sept. 29th in St. Pete to install native plants!

The Pinellas Chapter FNPS has an exciting new project in St. Petersburg’s Bartlett Park neighborhood, just south of downtown. Please join us for a half day to install native landscaping at Neighborhood Home Solutions (NHS)/Bartlett Park Community Resource Center. The native plant demonstration beds, surrounding the entrances to the building, are the first phase of a project to support the center’s homeowner education programs and help the Bartlett Park Neighborhood Association encourage sustainable landscape practices by the residents. The second phase of this project will provide education and training in sustainable landscape practices, and the benefits of native plants, to hundreds of NHS clients in the Tampa Bay area and Bartlett Park in 2019.

On Sept. 29th, in conjunction with St. Petersburg’s Carefest, we will be removing old plants, installing new native ones and adding mulch to planting beds. We will be joined by Boy Scout Troop 263, so this is a great chance to pass on your knowledge and skills to eager young minds. Work starts at 9:00 a.m. and should take a couple hours. Lunch will be provided by the chapter at the end of the work session.

Neighborhood Home Solutions (NHS) is a not-for-profit neighborhood revitalization and community development organization that was incorporated in 1980. Its services are dedicated to helping people improve their financial well being, qualify for home ownership, maintain their home after purchase, learn how to avoid foreclosure and in the unfortunate event intervene as
an advocate for any person facing a foreclosure action. NHS provides homeownership education to approximately 600 individuals each year and assists about 100 in purchasing a home. Learn more about Neighborhood Home Solutions at http://nhsfl.org/

When & Where: Sept. 29, 9 am - noon, 1600 Dr Martin Luther King Jr St S, St. Petersburg

What to Bring: Bring a reusable bottle for drinking water (we will have cold water on hand for refills), hat, gloves, sun protection, and hand tools if you have them. Lunch will be provided by the Chapter at the end of the work session.

Please RSVP by emailing pinellasfnps@gmail.com so we can plan for lunch.

Nominations Open for 2019 Chapter Officers and Directors

The Chapter’s annual meeting is Wed., November 7th, at Moccasin Lake Nature Park. At the meeting, next year’s Chapter Board will be elected. According to the Chapter bylaws, the board is composed of the officers and up to five (5) directors. Those who have been nominated and agreed to serve if elected are:

- President: Jan Allyn
- Vice-President - Stefan Babjak
- Secretary - Sue Taylor (continuing)
- Treasurer - Rebecca Wellborn (continuing)
- Chapter Representative - David Perkey.
  (Chapter Rep. is the liaison with the state FNPS organization. Travel to four (4) Council of Chapters meetings a year is required, with expenses reimbursed by the chapter.)
- Director - Marcia Lork (continuing)

Nominations will be accepted "from the floor" at the November 7th meeting. If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else (with their permission!), or would like more information about what is required of any position, on the Pinellas FNPS chapter board, please contact the nominating committee chair Mary Sanders at merrysand111@gmail.com.
Upcoming Chapter Events:

The Pinellas Chapter holds monthly program meetings the first Wednesday of each month, 7:00 pm, at Moccasin Lake Nature Park, 2750 Park Trail Lane, Clearwater. We have announcements, a silent auction of plants and seed swap, and a featured speaker. Members are invited to bring refreshments to share. All meetings, field trips and other FNPS activities are free and open to all.

- **Oct. 3 (Wed.) — Pinellas Chapter Meeting/Program,** 7:00 - 9:00 pm, at Moccasin Lake Nature Park. Program: Ecology of the Florida Sandhill Community, presented by Dr. Craig Huegel, in conjunction with the Ocala National Forest/Juniper Springs field trip.

- **Oct 12 -14 (Fri. - Sun.) — Field Trip/Camping:** Ocala National Forest and Juniper Springs State Recreation Area. We hope that you can join us for a memorable expedition to one of Florida’s premier natural areas. Ocala National Forest is extra special in October and we will hike in one of its best managed sandhills on Friday afternoon and spend Saturday in the scrub. There is a very good chance of seeing red-cockaded woodpeckers and Florida fox squirrels in the former and we WILL see Florida scrub jays on Saturday - in addition to some amazing wildflowers. And, since we’ll be camping next to Juniper Springs, we can cool down in the water after each hike. The trip will be led by Craig Huegel. For FNPS members only.

We are planning a hike on Friday afternoon for those that can make it, and an extra hike Sunday morning for those who don’t have to leave right away. Meals will be on your own each day, but we hope to get together in the evening to swap stories. Details will be forthcoming.

We have reserved four adjacent camping spaces for chapter members, all of which are now taken. Additional sites may be available directly from Recreation.gov. Note: Our Chapter’s insurance does not cover water activities, so we are not planning a group canoe trip. However, canoes are available for those that wish to plan their own trip. To rent a canoe, call (352) 625-2808. Visit the Chapter website for more details, and to reserve one of the sites or go to MeetUp.

Cardinal flower, photo by Frances Lucas.
**Nov 7 (Wed.) – Pinellas Chapter Meeting/Program/Potluck, 6:30- 9:00 pm.**
Annual Chapter meeting with election of 2019 Chapter officers and directors. This is our annual potluck - bring your specialty! Dinner will start at 6:30. The Chapter will provide beverages, plates, forks, napkins, etc. To be extra "green", bring your own cup, plate and cutlery! Our short annual meeting/election will begin at 7 pm, followed by our program.

Our guest speaker will be Nancy Bissett, co-owner of The Natives, Inc. Nancy Bissett will give us insight into what it takes to do restoration projects in public gardens, using the native wildflower meadow and other projects at Bok Tower Gardens as an example. Nancy is a horticulturist, botanist, and restoration ecologist. She has experimented with the propagation and growth of many native plants, including grasses, wildflowers and rare species. She has developed techniques for restoring many upland communities, including scrub, sandhill and flatwoods, from site preparation and planting to direct-seeding native groundcovers and weed control.

**Nov. 10 (Sat.) — Field trip: Tiger Creek Preserve, 674 Pfundstein Road, Babson Park, Florida, led by Craig Huegel. Carpool details and meeting times TBD.** From the Nature Conservancy website: "An array of extremely rare plants includes the scrub plum, pygmy fringe tree, Lewton’s polygala, scrub ziziphus and Carter’s mustard. Tiger Creek shelters ten plants that are federally-listed as threatened or endangered; four are found only on the Lake Wales Ridge." Please RSVP for this field trip to Tiger Creek by sending an email to pinellasfnps@gmail.com, and providing cell phone number and the number of people in your group. Additional information about carpool time, trails, etc. will be available later on Meetup and the Chapter calendar.

**Dec. 1 (Sat.) – Joint Chapter Holiday Event, 11 am, with guest speaker James Stevenson at the Brooker Creek Preserve Auditorium.** This is our joint holiday get-together with the Suncoast Chapter. James Stevenson will talk about The Ferns of Brooker. Bring a side for our potluck turkey lunch and then a plant walk led by James. A great day of friendship and nature at Pinellas County’s wildest (and most wonderful) place. Note: starts at 11 am. Signup will be on Brooker Creek Preserve’s “Eventbrite” page at www.eventbrite.com.

Visit our Calendar page for a current list of upcoming speakers, field trips and other events.  [http://pinellas.fnpschapters.org/calendar/](http://pinellas.fnpschapters.org/calendar/)

To receive reminders/notifications of upcoming programs, field trips, and other activities, become a member of the Chapter's Meetup group. Visit the Subscribe page for more information and to sign up.  [https://www.meetup.com/Pinellas-FNPS/](https://www.meetup.com/Pinellas-FNPS/)
Native Plant Society & Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Holiday Celebration!

At Brooker Creek Preserve
3940 Keystone Road
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688

Saturday, December 1, 2018, 9 am to 4 pm

Free Admission, Public Invited!

9:00 am: Meet, sign-in, and drop off your dish in the auditorium

9:45 am: Announcements in the auditorium

10:00 to 10:45 am: Ferns of Brooker with James Stevenson, UF/IFAS Pinellas County Extension Specialist

11:00 to 12:00 pm: Your choice!
  Gazebo: Palm weaving with The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve
  Porch: Leaf ID with Katie MacMillen
  Networking and stroll

12:00 to 1:30 pm: Lunch- bring a dish to share

1:45 to 3:00 pm: Hike with James Stevenson

3:00 to 4:00 pm: Clean up

Pinellas, Suncoast, and Pasco FNPS chapters: Friends of the Brooker Creek Preserve, Pinellas/UF IFAS Extension

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.
Please Help Us Staff our Tent at the Moccasin Lake Nature Park Open House - November 17, from 9AM - 2PM

We are very excited that the Moccasin Lake Nature Park will be re-opening very soon! All of the groups that meet at the park will be represented at their Grand Opening Open House on November 17th. We have been invited to have a booth at the event. We need four volunteers to set up and host our exhibit — two for the 8:00 - 11:00 shift and two for the 11:00 - 2:00 shift. They are providing the table and chairs, we just need to set up our pop-up tent and put out materials. Board members will transport the tent and materials to the site and pick them up after the event.

If you want to help out on that day, please email us at pinellasfnps@gmail.com. Thanks!

The Narrows Garden: Update By Stefan Babjak

It has already been six months since we planted a community garden plot at The Narrows in Largo with a combination of native wildflowers and vines and vegetable crops. This was a small space and we wanted to experiment with as much as we could to see what would work best.

We had success with our dry beans and cucumbers climbing over the back portion of the trellis. This was intermingled with swamp leatherflower and a narrowleaf sunflower, which got huge!, that we trellised in the corner to keep it under control a bit.

The tropical salvia, rosinweed, and ironweed brought a ton of pollinators into the garden which helped our veggies get pollinated. We now have three wonderful signs up explaining the process and why were doing what were doing.

We get interested looks and curious questions whenever we are working on the plot and someone meanders by. Every veggie garden should also be a native pollinator paradise.

Check out The Narrows, formerly McGough Nature Park, and see for yourself! The park is located at 11901 146th Street North, in Largo.

Photo by Stefan Babjak.
My Thoughts
By Craig Huegel

I have been an active member of the Florida Native Plant Society since 1988 and of this Chapter since its inception a few years later. It has been a meaningful part of my life through its various ups and downs. By the time you read this, I will have moved to a new home in Pasco County and I will, therefore, move my FNPS membership to that chapter. It is a period of great change for me and I approach it with both a lot of trepidation and anticipation. I will be a lot closer to a few things that are important right now in my life and a lot farther from quite a few others. My yard is basically a clean slate and so is my new life. Times like these always cause me to reflect and I am using this last article for The Understory to do that. I appreciate your patience in allowing me this privilege.

I believe that the strength of the Florida Native Plant Society rests in its local chapters. They are the ones that set an agenda and mobilize to take on local needs and issues. The state cannot do this. At best, they mobilize local chapters to join together on statewide issues, but they are impotent if the local chapters don't embrace them. The future of this chapter, therefore, lies in the wisdom of its members, its ability to elucidate a mission, and the willingness of its members to become involved. Chapters are not successful otherwise. It is not a game of numbers. I would argue, in fact, that a preponderance of dead weight in a chapter does more to weigh it down that lift it up.

The mission of FNPS is very clearly stated, but often lost in translation. We were established to educate the public about the importance of native plants and native plant communities. We are supposed to be different from the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, and the other also-important environmental organizations working to improve our lives and those of the rest of the living planet. We cannot afford to lose sight of that. By doing so, we lose our very special identity and risk losing our members' hearts and souls. Why not simply belong to one of those other organizations if our goal is to broadly "save the planet?" We need members to be focused on our own unique mission. It is important enough in its own right and we should be wearing it on our sleeve, so to speak.

No other organization has our base in their mission statement and that makes us, potentially, the best organization to take on the very significant issues facing Florida of habitat loss, environmental lands acquisition, land management needs, and species loss. We are a plant-based organization and plants form the foundation of life on earth. Plants are more significant than wildlife in many ways, though they may not catch the general public's eye the same way. Plants are what form the foundation of habitat, and plant communities are what make Florida unique and biologically amazing. As an organization, statewide and locally, we need to fully embrace this mission and strategically plan for ways to increase the power of our message. We cannot afford
to dilute it down with other messages best left to other environmental organizations. The mission we have carved out for ourselves has never been more important than it is at this point in time.

Since hearing this quote from Senegalese forestry engineer, Baba Dioum, first presented in New Delhi in 1968, at the triennial meeting of the General Assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, I have embraced it as my personal directive for everything I do in conservation biology: "In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught." Simple on the surface, but all-encompassing as we strive to make a real difference.

For FNPS, and each chapter at the local level, it directs us to first put education about the importance of native plants and plant communities as our first goal. We do that with our public outreach; our meetings and our newsletter. But we need to understand that the love and understanding we need as our conservation tool will never be realized without providing hands-on experiences led by people that already love the resource. Teaching is more than passing knowledge; it is fulfilled effectively only by combining that with passion.

For this chapter, and all the others in the state, to succeed in our very important and well-defined mission, we need to recruit and train individuals knowledgeable about native plants and Florida’s plant communities. We cannot hope to move forward without this strongly imbedded in our strategic plan. Then, we need to foster the love of Florida and its incredible biodiversity by teaching in ways that foster understanding—not names of things or a general appreciation. This can come only by providing hands-on experiences in real Florida directed by people that can share both their knowledge and their zeal. Field trips to the best that Florida has to offer and a schedule that takes people to the greatest diversity of plant communities has to take precedence to restoration and service projects.

I believe in FNPS and its potential to facilitate change. I am not leaving that, but leaving this chapter. I wish all of you the best as I do so. This will be the last newsletter for both Cathy Vogelsong and me, and very likely the last article I submit regardless of what form this newsletter takes after our departure. It’s been a long and mostly enjoyable run.

**Weekly on Wednesdays:** Regular weekly Pinellas Chapter work days at the Native Gardens, Pinellas County Extension/Florida Botanical Garden, 12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo, FL. Volunteers needed at the Native Area of the Florida Botanical Garden meet every Wednesday from approximately 9 am to 1 pm. If you would like to participate, please email native garden coordinator Lisa Boing at lisaboing@tampabay.rr.com.
Red Tide: Who's to blame? Everybody, to some extent
By Jan Allyn

*Using native plants in the landscape is one remedy. So is voting. Do your part!*

It being an election year, there has been a lot of finger-pointing by both candidates and voters about who is responsible for the massive red tide bloom that's been ravaging Florida's Gulf Coast for nearly a year now. While there's ample evidence that the current crop of politicians in Tallahassee has some culpability, having slashed environmental regulation, enforcement, and management budgets, and it's true that dumping nutrient-laden water from Lake Okeechobee into the Gulf hasn't helped things any, the causes of the red tide outbreak are multiple, complex and (still) poorly understood. Red tide may be a natural phenomenon, but nutrient pollution from coastal urban areas has definitely made it worse.

Our water quality problems are the result of both water AND land management choices that go back decades. As a society, we have been reluctant to accept that land development and land management practices at every scale have consequences, and we have been unwilling to change our personal, commercial/industrial, and municipal behaviors to mitigate those consequences. We started down the right road with the Florida Land and Water Management Act of 1972, which among other things resulted in the creation of the water management districts, and progress continued in 1985 with the passage of the Growth Management Act. But in 2011 the Florida Legislature made a U-turn, bowing to business interests and allowing more development in more places. Environmental regulations have been loosened and enforcement has been lessened. We're seeing the result.

More development means more pavement, more buildings, and more lawns. A study by NASA concluded that lawns cover an area three times larger than any single irrigated crop in the United States. Our state has its fair share, and lawns are concentrated where population centers are. In Florida, that's on the coasts, near the...
water. St. Augustine may be a native grass, but a dense lawn of it is unnatural and requires a life support system of fertilizer and irrigation to keep it alive. Too many people are unwilling to tolerate any weeds or even the most benign insect life, so they douse the lawn with pesticides. Increased coverage of land areas with pavement and buildings means that developed areas are largely impervious to water penetration. Instead of percolating into the earth and being filtered by soil and taken up by nutrient-absorbing plant roots, water makes a quick trip through stormwater conduits and is dumped into the nearest water body, carrying with it nutrients from multiple sources, including atmospheric nitrogen and fertilizer/pesticide runoff from all those lawns. And there’s the algae - or red tide, or cyanobacteria - just waiting to gobble it all up and grow, grow, grow.

Many people want new houses in new developments instead of buying older houses and fixing them up, giving no thought to the wetland or upland that got paved over to put that new house there, or what functions those provided. A new waterfront home with a manicured lawn on a seawall is appealing to a lot of people; those same people will complain about algae blooms, despite the fact that they are helping to create them, feeding the algae as they feed their lush swath of grass at the water's edge.

Creating a landscape that uses Florida native plants and managing it to use little or no supplemental irrigation, fertilizer, or pesticides is an important environmental choice. So is keeping rainwater on your property by using rain gardens, rain barrels, or swales - low areas where water can collect and slowly soak into the earth.

It’s easy to point at politicians, business, and industry for our water troubles, but we all have a responsibility to do what we can to improve things, whether that's managing our landscape sustainably or showing up on election day to vote for candidates that pledge to protect our natural areas, enact and enforce environmental regulations, fully fund our environmental agencies and conservation land acquisition programs, and acknowledge that climate change is a real and imminent threat. We must stop pointing fingers, see the big picture, and acknowledge the role each of us has in creating - and solving - our environmental problems.

Eight Ways to Reduce Personal Nutrient Pollution from the Sarasota Bay Estuary

**Florida-Friendly Landscaping™** means using low-maintenance plants and environmentally sustainable practices. Each county has a Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program. To find out more about Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ in Pinellas County, contact FFL Extension Agent Brian Niemann at (727) 453-6524 or FFL Community Outreach Coordinator Doris Heitzman at (727) 582-2422. Native Plants are Florida Friendly!
St. Joseph Peninsula State Park

By Rebecca Wellborn

St. Joseph Peninsula State Park, on the Florida panhandle between Apalachicola and Port St. Joe, has miles of white sand beaches, striking dune formations, a heavily forested interior, 8 cabins, 119 camp sites right next to the Gulf, boat ramp and a great nature trail. The 2516-acre park is surrounded on two sides by the waters of St. Joseph’s Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. An isolated 1750-acre Wilderness Preserve occupies the tip of the peninsula.

I hiked the nature trails in August when I was staying nearby. Not the best time to be hiking in Florida, but I couldn’t pass up the opportunity. I was glad I did not let the heat (and mosquitoes) keep me away. The Maritime Hammock Trail winds through a coastal hammock environment to the shores of St. Joseph Bay. The Bayview Nature Trail curves through a maritime oak community and a salt marsh before running alongside the Bay. I started on the bay side and followed the shoreline for about a half mile, cut through the oak hammock and then through a pine forest in the center of the island, past the campground and coastal sand dunes, ending at the salt marsh. Along the way there are large plant markers identifying the dominant native species along the trail. I was excited to see several species of natives that I had purchased at Wilcox Nursery during their spring festival, as well as Florida rosemary.

Along the trail I saw tracks from deer, snakes, raccoon and many birds. Bobcat inhabit the park, but I did not see any evidence on my walk. There were sea turtle nests along the Gulf. The park is a birder’s paradise — more than 240 species have been observed in the park. You’ll see pelicans, gulls and shore birds such as the piping plover and snowy plover. Along the bayside a belted kingfisher raced from tree to tree ahead of me.
The park is along the migration route of thousands of raptors traveling south for the winter. In late September and October, you’re likely to see sharp-shinned hawks and broad-winged hawks. You may also see kestrels, peregrine falcons, Mississippi kites, ospreys and red-tailed hawks.

For more information on the park visit St. Joseph Peninsula State Park

To view all the photos from my hike visit https://photos.app.goo.gl/LSba1TvX243TjjQi9.

---

**September Field Trip: Rock Ponds Project Transforms Ag Fields to Pine Flatwoods, Tidal Creeks & Salterns**

By Jan Allyn

On September 8th, Pinellas Chapter members were treated to a private tour of one of the Southwest Florida Water Management District’s most ambitious restoration projects, the Rock Ponds site in Ruskin, on the north side of the Hillsborough-Manatee county line. Back in 2009, when SWFWMD still had adequate funding and management support for such undertakings, the District began restoring over 1,000 acres of land that had been a patchwork of farmland and ruderal patches overgrown with invasive plants so dense that in one spot they completely hid an old building. The goal was to restore estuarine habitats on the edge of Tampa Bay, to improve water quality and provide a place for wildlife and passive recreational activity. The work is now all but complete and the result is a gem, but the site is not yet open to the public. The hope is that once it is, Hillsborough County’s
Environmental Lands Acquisition and Preservation Program (ELAPP) will take over management responsibilities in perpetuity, and that it will be a permanent destination for outdoor lovers and a haven for wildlife.

Our guides for the tour were Brandt Henningsen, a biologist, and Nancy Norten, a professional engineer. SWFWMD will soon lose both of them, as Brandt plans to retire at the end of this year after 30 years with the District, and Nancy will follow him out the door in about a year and a half. This dynamic duo has worked hand in hand for years, sculpting the Rock Ponds site to alter its hydrology for the benefit of its ecosystem, creating meandering tidal creeks, ponds, wetlands, palm tree hammocks, and a nascent pine flatwoods. Brazilian pepper, Australian pine, and other exotics have been banished, with native grasses, shrubs, and trees replacing them, nearly a million plants in all. We climbed to the top of Mount Rock Ponds North, a huge observation mound that rewards those who scale it with a 360-degree view of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge, the skylines of St. Petersburg and Tampa downtowns, Tropicana Field, adjacent Cockroach and Terra Ceia Bays, and our beautiful Tampa Bay. Brandt and Nancy proudly showed us their handiwork, pointing out landscape features and recounting the process of transforming the property. We visited what was a borrow pit, now made shallower with truckloads of dirt and renovated with littoral shelves and connected to an adjacent tidal pool. After our tour of Rock Ponds, Brandt and Nancy led us south to Terra Ceia to visit another SWFWMD coastal restoration project which features rehabilitated tidal marsh and an emerging mangrove forest, a perfect spot for kayaking or fishing. Afterward, half our group opted for a native plant shopping trip at Sweetbay Nursery in nearby Parrish, while the rest gathered at Popi’s restaurant, recommended by Brandt and Nancy. We hope to return one day soon, once Rock Ponds is open to the public, to hike and birdwatch and botanize!
New How-To Guide Was Written for Newbies, Is Helpful for Everyone
By Jan Allyn

You don't have to be an inexperienced native plant gardener to appreciate *A Step-by-Step Guide to a Florida Native Yard*. It's the nuts and bolts guidebook we've needed for a long time in the native plant "movement". There are lots of field guides around, but not many good landscaping books that are focused on Florida. This one is well-organized, attractively illustrated, and helpfully provides both a plant list and a handy index. It explains how to assess your property, make a plan, and gradually create an "Improved Florida Yard" by selecting and implementing desirable, sustainable landscape features like rain barrels, rain gardens, pollinator gardens, outdoor rooms, a "freedom lawn", a lined pond, a wildlife hedge, and/or a meadow of native grasses. The illustrations are wonderful and the text instructs and encourages, using lots of sidebars, tips, and strategies. Importantly, it tells you why a feature or technique is important, not just what to do and how to do it. Helpful lists of additional resources are provided for those who want to dive deeper into a topic. No matter where you are in the process of creating a native landscape, this book is worth adding to your library.

NATIVE FLAGS

In June 2008, sponsored by the New York Foundation for the Arts, Xavier Cortada traveled to the North Pole, the 90th parallel north (90N), to perform a series of site-specific installations that explore our connection to the natural world.

Upon arriving, Cortada planted a green flag to “reclaim it for nature.” He developed Native Flags to engage people on a global level, encouraging them to take action at home to slow the effects of climate change.

Participants are asked to plant a native tree, reduce harmful greenhouse gases, and mark it with a green flag to symbolize their own efforts to reclaim their own land for nature.

Visitors are invited to add their voice and actions to the continuing Native Flags narrative at nativeflags.org

The Native Flag Project

Conceptualized during Xavier Cortada’s residency at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Artist Residency in Captiva, Florida, the collection of multiple works that make up FLORIDA IS... invite the viewer to consider Florida’s environment not as an outsider but from their place within it.

Through various forms of media (ceramic, painted, drawn and digital) Cortada brings forth the diversity of the state’s ecosystem in vibrant colors and complex patterns. Each work is informed by an aspect of his childhood in Miami: a time when, for him, Florida was defined not by buildings, roads and structures, but by the flora and fauna that today’s man-made encroachments have displaced.

FLORIDA IS... Diatoms starts at the water’s edge with a collection of diatoms in glazed ceramic and digital prints. These single-celled organisms harness the power of the sun to convert carbon dioxide to oxygen, an exchange essential to the lives of Florida’s animals, human and otherwise. Paired with images of starfish, these works offer a peek into Florida’s native marine life.

Moving onward to land, FLORIDA IS... Endangered Species highlights 13 of Florida’s most endangered animals including red wolves, wood storks and the Florida panther. Partially obscured by complexly patterned backgrounds, each species demands a closer inspection, which, with the growing threat of extinction, may be its last.

The project concludes with FLORIDA IS... Wildflowers, a closer look at some of Florida’s native fauna through the hidden geometry of fractals, repeated patterns that occur in progressively smaller sizes.

Visitors are invited to participate in the continuing narrative of FLORIDA IS... by visiting www.floridasynature.com
Life Farms CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)

By Rebecca Wellborn

In the past few years, I’ve noticed an increasing demand for organic markets and restaurants from my clients relocating to this area. So when I was offered the opportunity last week to tour an organic farm right here in Clearwater, I jumped at the chance. Life Farms, located off Sunset Point Road and US 19, is a six-acre community-supported organic farm and education center that I have driven by numerous times, and never knew it was there. The farm is owned by Rowland and Kathy Milam, and since my visit they have joined FNPS as a business member. They see membership as an opportunity to learn more about Florida native plants, specifically the edible ones with nutritional value, and share that information with their members and through their educational programs.

Established in 2013 by Rowland Milam and Victor Heidman (Farm Manager) the farm produces organic vegetables, herbs, fruits and honey year-round. While their traditional season is October through June, I walked away in mid-September heat with fresh leaf lettuce and arugula. Their summer crop of lettuce and herbs are grown in hydroponic towers under shade cloth, cooled by fan-driven water vapor. It is just one of the innovative methods they are testing in order to provide their members with a twelve-month supply of nutritious fresh produce. They are also in the process of converting their greenhouses and pump stations to sustainable solar energy.

The list of vegetables, herbs and fruits they produce is too long to list here, but trust me when I say they have the usual....and the unusual. Everything from beans, greens, squash and eggplant to micro-greens, mulberries, turmeric and ginger.

Life Farms is a CSA, commonly known as community-supported agriculture. CSA members pay at the onset of the growing season for a share of the anticipated
harvest; once harvesting begins, they receive weekly shares of vegetables and fruit. Members come to the farm on designated days, and choose from the selection of the current harvest. In addition to the weekly share of seasonal produce, members receive recipes, ideas, and educational farm tours. Life Farms also provides educational programs and farm tours for school children and other community groups.

Victor Heidman started his career in organic farming in 1984 in Texas. Born and raised in Pinellas County, he returned to Florida and worked in the 1990s as the farm manager for the Organic Gardening Research and Education Park at the University of Florida in Gainesville. During my tour, Victor spoke with passion about the high nutrient content of organically grown food, and the ways in which they enrich the farm's soil with natural materials such as minerals, preparations of fish and seaweed, molasses, unrefined sea-salt, and soft rock phosphate.

While touring the greenhouse, with rows and rows of baby plants (my term - not theirs) I learned that each plant is started from an individual seed, carefully placed into a starter pot. I met several women who tend the crops by hand in the field. I commented on what an extremely labor intensive business they were in, where everything is done by hand. "It's a labor of love", Rowland said with a smile, "you have to love it to do this work".

For more information on Life Farms, including the cost of a seasonal share and what's in season, visit their website at http://lifefarms.net/. You can also follow them on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/LifeFarmsCSA.

The Pinellas Chapter's monthly meetings include a seed swap. Bring some, take some, expand your native plant repertoire!

Do you have extra "volunteer" plants? Support the Chapter by donating them for our silent auction
Other Events of Interest:

FANN’s 6th Annual Native Plant Show - Oct. 18 - 19

By popular demand, the Florida Association of Native Nurseries (FANN) Native Plant Show will be expanding its educational offerings to include classes designed for ecologically minded gardeners and private property owners seeking sustainability solutions. For the first five years, the Native Plant Show served a primarily industry professional audience. This year the show, held at the Bradenton Area Convention Center, will expand to serve both a professional and amateur audience. The theme of this year’s show is “Making Native Plants Your New Norm”.

The Native Plant Show is an education event with exhibits featuring native plants and select green products and services. Continuing education classes are provided for horticulture, landscape and environmental professionals as well as concerned property owners and ecologically minded gardeners. Growers and green professionals from throughout Florida and the Southeastern U.S. are invited to exhibit and provide classes or demonstrations related to native plants. Meet experts that know how to use these plants in a variety of settings, and even score some great native plant buys.

Attendees include landscape architects, designers, installers, maintenance professionals, environmental consultants, municipalities, arborists and other professionals interested in native plant production, sustainable landscaping and wetland and upland restoration. Twenty percent of attendees are registered landscape architects.

Native plant enthusiasts, master gardeners and conservation gardeners should mark their calendars, save the date, and watch for registration to open in the late summer 2018. For more information visit www.nativeplantshow.com.
UF/IFAS Extension, Urban Horticulture classes. Pinellas County Extension’s Urban Horticulture folks have some great classes coming up to help you manage your landscape more sustainably! Go to EventBrite.com


Nov. 3 — Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park Fall Wildflower Walk, led by Roger Hammer and Craig Huegel. Registration for this popular event is sold out, but you are welcome to join the WAITLIST if you missed out. Members get early registration and a discount on registration fees. If you aren’t a member, please join Friends of Kissimmee Prairie Preserve so you can get in early next time!
Thank you to our Business Sponsors. They support us. Please support them.
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.

Post Office Box address: P. O. Box 4265, Clearwater FL 33765
Pinellas Chapter web address: http://pinellas.fnpschapters.org/
FNPS Blog: http://fnpsblog.blogspot.com
Follow FNPS on Twitter @fl_native_plant
Join us on Meetup: https://www.meetup.com/en-AU/Pinellas-FNPS/
Like us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/PinellasChapterFNPS/

Officers
President, Vacant
Vice President, Vacant
Secretary, Sue Taylor
susn31taylor@gmail.com
Treasurer, Rebecca Wellborn
rebecca@rebeccawellborn.com
Chapter Representative, Jan Allyn
jallyn@tampabay.rr.com
Past President, Jan Allyn

Board Members
Stephan Babjak, Marcia Lork, Mary Sanders

Committee Chairs/Coordinators
Advocacy/Conservation: Vacant
Events/Displays: Vacant
Field Trip Coordinator: Mary Sanders
Spring and Fall Plant Festival Coordinator: Vacant
Hospitality: Vacant
Membership Coordinator: Bonnie Carine
Native Plant Demonstration Garden Liaison: Lisa Boing
Newsletter Editor: Craig Huegel
Newsletter Publisher: Cathy Vogelsong
Publicity: Nancy McClelland
Sales/Merchandise: Vacant
Social Media: Katy Roberts
Volunteer Coordinator: Vacant
Website: Vacant

The Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, 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.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.

This is your newsletter, published quarterly
As always, feel free to contribute. Please send articles to pinellasfnps@gmail.com.