Mark your calendars

Aug 4 - Field Trip to Cross Bar Ranch. Contact Bill Bilodeau for carpooling information at 727/488-3163 or billbilodeau@verizon.net

Sept 5 - Monthly Meeting 7:00 pm. Moccasin Lake Nature Park. Topic: Native Plant Yard Tour Overview.

Sept 8 - Field Trip Tour of Pinellas Members Landscapes. Contact Erica Powell at Fieldtrip.pinellas.fnps@gmail.com


Oct 6 - Fall Plant Sale “Fall in Love with Natives” Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Rd, Tarpon Springs. 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Volunteers contact Joy Wharton 727/522-8769

Oct 13 - Field Trip to Balm Boyette Scrub, Riverview Contact Erica Powell at fieldtrip.pinellas.fnps@gmail.com

Welcome New Members
Rosemary Colodiy
Christopher Ellis
Linda Gettles
Liza Ryan
Diane Smith

Almost two dozen people gathered on July 21st to plant six red mulberry trees at Boca Ciega Millennium Park in memory of Pinellas Chapter member Dave Anschuetz, who died last summer. The planting was originally planned for June, but had to be postponed due to the drought. Park manager Judy Jarosz reminisced about the earliest days of the park, when Dave assisted another departed friend, Jerry Shrewsberry, in performing biological surveys of the still undeveloped property to inform the county about the plant and animal life found there. Other "memorial trees" have been planted there, she said, along the sidewalk in the manicured front section, but because Dave loved the wilder, natural areas of the park, the staff decided it would be a fitting tribute to plant the mulberries along the more secluded nature trail. After fond words of remembrance, family and friends left the shade of the park's maintenance building to brave the morning sun and summer heat.

The mulberry planters worked as a group to get the four-foot-tall trees into the ground, grateful that the nature trail is mostly shady. Judy provided the plants and the planters with a drink, her golf cart carrying coolers of water and a rain barrel with a spigot and hose. One day the park's wildlife will be fed by juicy red berries… Dave and Jerry would be very happy about that.
President’s Message
Going Green

On June 16th & 17th we exhibited at the second annual Living Green Expo in St. Petersburg. The purpose of this event is to showcase “green” products, technologies, and methodologies for people who want to manage their lives in a more environmentally friendly way. Like last year’s debut event, this year’s Expo was a huge success as judged by attendance figures; over 5,000 entered the Coliseum over the weekend. It is a very positive trend that many people appear to be interested in learning ways to be more sensitive and supportive of the natural environment around us.

We had taken an alcove for our chapter’s exhibit of literature and plants, both of which created opportunities for us to talk to people directly about the importance and the uses of native plants. And we talked to many people. Ray Wunderlich provided most of the plants that we sold generating a profit while doing our mission. As the song goes, that’s “nice work if you can get it, and you can get it if you try.” Thank you, Ray.

A big “Thank You” to all those who volunteered to “man” the alcove: Bob Funari, Elizabeth France, Chris Ellis, Melody Staunton, Nancy Smith, Lorraine & Don Margeson, Jim McGinnity, Bob Kimzey, Pepe Bruno, Lucy Trimarco, Pat Brinkley, Jean Minnerick, Mary Ann Beekman, and Marilee Fiele. Jan Allyn and Jane Williams handled the cash box while assisting many attendees. And thanks to Joy Wharton for the fine job of rounding up many of these volunteers. Apologies to anyone I might have missed thanking. Jan Allyn and I presented well attended PowerPoint presentations from our “In Harmony with Nature” series.

What stood out for me by the conclusion of the Expo was the reconfirmation that there is a steadily growing interest in native plants. Many people recognize that turf grass is not environmentally or wildlife friendly and they want to reduce the size of their lawns, replanting with trees, shrubs, and ground covers. Most need help and guidance in making appropriate choices. It was also clear that our responsibility is to make this type of transition as easy as possible for them through on-going educational programs, literature handouts, media exposure, and demonstration plantings. Our role in the “going green” of the general public is a central one, and we must repeatedly examine our means of communicating the practical applications of the FNPS mission if we are to be maximally effective.

-Bill Bilodeau

Join Our September Garden Party

We plan to offer tours of members' landscapes as our field trip in September, and if we have enough participants we may do tours on two Saturdays, one for north county yards and one for south county yards. Our September member program will be members talking about their yards, so you'll have an opportunity to give everyone a preview of your landscape if you'd like. Other FNPS chapters around the state have gone for yard tours in a big way, even charging members of the general public to participate. We might do that some day, but this year our tour(s) will be primarily for our members; though all our field trips are open to nonmembers, we will not be publicizing your address or attracting a crowd of strangers to your home.

The goal is to share our successes and challenges with each other, and to familiarize our members with more native species and see them growing in a home garden setting. If your landscape is mostly native and you're willing to give a short tour to a small group of native plant enthusiasts, please contact chapter president Bill Bilodeau at 727/322-9695 or 727/488-3163 or email BillBilodeau@verizon.net to express your interest and obtain more information.
The first season we planted our Salt & Pepper (*Melanthera nivea*), it was a small potted plant from Wilcox Nursery. The storms during that summer caused the plant to capsize over and it was not very symmetrical when it grew to a very respectable size. When the growing season was over last year I asked Bruce Turley what should be done since it was so out of balance. Bruce advised me to trim it down to ground level. So during the winter I trimmed it to ground level to see what would happen.

Well this is what happened: What growth! I have since pruned the Salt & Pepper away from the Flatwoods Plum, St. John Wort, Ironweed and Dwarf Walter’s Viburnum once already in late spring. The Salt & Pepper needs to be pruned again.

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**Salt and Pepper Gone Wild**

- Eric and Joan Holm

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**Amazon Jungle Safari**

*October 19th - 28th, 2007*

Join fellow members of the Florida Native Plant Society on a natural history tour. This rainforest adventure is a great opportunity to have fun and learn about the world’s largest rainforest and river system. We will have our own specially trained guides to describe flora and fauna for us. We will be staying in four “Explorama Lodges” and hiking in the jungle as well as traversing the river system in "collectivos"; long, passenger boats. Along the way we will see monkeys, sloths, toucans, macaws, horned screamers, piranhas, caiman, leaf cutter ants, pink dolphins, etc. We will have the opportunity to view the top of the rainforest on the canopy walkway which is 115 feet in the air and a third of a mile long. We will view ethnobotanical plants along the medicine trail and within the ReNuPerRu Ethnobotanical Garden adjacent to one of the lodges we will stay in.

Starting and ending in Miami, the price for this adventurous nature itinerary is $2795 per person to double occupancy. The tour is escorted by experienced FNPS tour leaders Jo Anne and Fred Trebatoski. A Peruvian naturalist will meet you at the airport in Iquitos and stay with you throughout the trip. For more information please log onto www.fnps.org and click on the brochure (pink) in the trip descriptor on the home page. Hope to meet you on this trip.

You can reach the Trebatoski’s at plantnative @earthlink.net or call 800-466-9660 for more info.
On Sunday, July 22nd, a slightly overcast sky and somewhat cooler temperatures greeted twelve earth-caring volunteers assisting in the initial planting of the “The Rainbow at Mars” native plant pocket park. Dick Estes, John Hood, Anne Fogarty, Danny France, Gail Nagel, Bob Boynton, Christine Wight, Danie Cutler, Cathy Quindiagan, Bill Bilodeau, Ray Wunderlich, and Elizabeth France worked together in the installation of the first phase of the pine flatwoods restoration and also a small hammock. Plants included slash pines, red cedar, silver saw palmetto, marlberry, myrsine, and both velvet leaf and shiny leaf wild coffee.

This park is being developed under a grant from the Tampa Bay Estuary Program. Exotic and declining trees were removed. In its place we are planting various wildlife habitats - pine flatwoods, shady hammock, butterfly garden, and a traditional looking, neatly manicured yard landscape using natives. This latter portion is in attempt to show homeowners that native gardens can be attractive, reduce water usage, save labor and money. After the roots systems have become established, native plants get by on less water - usually just the normal rains - and generally do not need fertilizers and herbicides.

The Rainbow at Mars is located in Clearwater one block north of Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard (FL Hwy 60) and just west of South Keene Road (CR 1). This work-in-progress is located at the SE corner of the intersection of Rainbow Drive and South Mars Avenue in the Skycrest area of Clearwater. There is still much work to be done before completion so there will be other opportunities to volunteer your time and talents. For more information call Elizabeth France at 727/442-5856 or email eaf5054@earthlink.net.

The Florida Native Plant Society is organizing a Members Retreat for October 5-7, 2007 at Pine Lake Retreat near Clermont, FL. This informal retreat will give members from around the state an opportunity to mingle, learn something new and enjoy the beautiful ecosystems of Central Florida. Activities will include hiking, paddling, workshops, guest speakers, nature crafts and family programs. The FNPS Government Policy & Legislature Committee will also hold an Advocacy Workshop. Look for additional details in the coming months, and please contact Karina Veaudry executivedirector@fnps.org or 407/895-8446 with questions or if you would like to assist before or during the retreat.

Our chapter is co-producing the 2008 FNPS conference with the Suncoast, Serenoa and Mangrove chapters. As part of the planning process, we need to contact potential vendors, sponsors, and silent auction donors. This is a very important task that urgently needs attention. We have a list of good prospects and need help making telephone calls. If you'd be willing to take part in this endeavor, please contact conference co-chair Ray Wunderlich at 727-577-4344 or rayrunner@yahoo.com for more information.

To volunteer your time and energy for upcoming events. Please contact Joy Wharton at 522-8769 to add your name to the volunteer list.
Volunteers Needed

Saturday, Aug 18 - Boca Ciega Park
9:00 am - 12:00 pm
Volunteers needed for shoreline planting. Meet at shelter #1, if you arrive late go to the third pond on the left. Contact Debbie Chayet for further information at dchayet@verizon.net

Saturday, Aug 18 - Fort De Soto Park Boat Ramp
9:00 am - 1:00 pm
Tampa Bay Watch & the Tampa Bay Estuary Program
The 2007 Great Bay Scallop Search, Volunteer boat captains and snorkelers needed. Sign up today by emailing Alexis at aackman@tampabaywatch.org or by calling Tampa Bay Watch at 727/867-8166

Paintedleaf or Fire-on-the-mountain
(Poinsettia cyathophora)
Lisa Curry

Deadline for the October/November Newsletter is September 1st
Contact Lisa Curry with suggestions or story ideas at lkcurry1@tampabay.rr.com or 727/698-3136
Dense Blazing Star

For much of my life, blazing stars (*Liatris* spp.) have been near the top of my list of favorite wildflowers. Across most of North America and in nearly every conceivable growing condition, there seems to be at least one species of blazing star adapted to that community. Wunderlin lists at least 15 unique species as Florida natives and all of them are unique and beautiful in their own right. But, one of most showy and most adaptable is dense blazing star (*L. spicata*).

Dense blazing star is found nearly statewide and, although Wunderlin gives its preferred habitat as “sandhills and flatwoods”, I have found it growing most luxuriantly in moist areas. What this means is that it will tolerate a fairly wide range of extremes, from xeric to hydric, and it will bloom and set seed in all of them. This is the only species of blazing star that will tolerate wet soils. If you have a spot that does not drain well or an area that becomes saturated during the summer rainy season, this is the only blazing star for you. In our yard, we have planted dense blazing star on a sloping “hillside” in well-drained sandy soil and we have planted it within a created “marsh” that includes a wide variety of wetland plants. They have done equally well in both locations.

Dense blazing star is also the most robust species within the genus native to Florida. A mature specimen may have a corymb (an underground bulb-like tuber) that is 2-3 inches across and several stalks may arise from each in the spring. At first, only a few whirls of deep-green, needle-like leaves appear, but this quickly gives way to a fairly stout stalk. The stalks develop quickly. By summer, they will stand 3-5 feet tall. And, though other species are often prone to falling over and winding around on the ground (especially graceful blazing star (*L. gracilis*)), dense blazing star will stand erect through nearly any and all weather events.

Blazing stars produce flower buds along their mature flower stalks, but they have the curious habit of flowering from the top down. Though the buds start to form as the stalk continues to elongate, it is the last buds to form on the top of the stalk that are the first to bloom. True to its name, dense blazing star produces fairly large blooms that are densely packed along the length of its tall stalks. Like most species in this genus, the blooms are a rich lavender purple and they remain in bloom for much of a month’s time – late summer to early fall.

Plant this species in an open sunny location. Young specimens grow quickly and most will bloom annually from their second year from seed. Ours produce copious seed that ripens by late October/early November and each year we get new plants sprouting up from last year’s crop.

Every wildflower garden should have blazing stars. Unless yours is in pure white sand in former scrub or on the beach in direct salt spray, it should include dense blazing star.

- Dr. Craig Huegel

( Photo: *Liatris spicata* Courtesy of Christina Evans)
**Weedon Island Preserve**

**The Fourth Annual “Heartsbreath Flute” Extravaganza** - Saturday, Aug 11, 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm, Native American Flute Performers

**Decomposition: Life’s Process of Renewal**
Friday, Aug 17, 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Dr. Bruce Rinker, Environmental Lands Division

**Compost Happens**
Saturday, Aug 18, 10:00 am – 11:30 am

**In My Backyard - Hall Gallery Exhibit**
Exhibit continues through Aug 26, Christina Evans – Photographer

**From Sea to Shining Sea: 200 Years of America’s Coastal Survey** - Exhibit continues through Sept 30, Sponsored by NOAA and Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Services

**Greening Your Home**
Saturday, Sept 8, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm, Bert Henderson

**Florida’s Heritage, Lands and Inhabitants**
Exhibit through Oct 27, The Florida Photographers Group

**Florida’s Fascinating Snakes**
Sunday, Sept 23, 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm, George L. Heinrich

Contact Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center at (727) 453-6500 or visit www.pinellascounty.org/Environment/pagesHTML/se10.html to learn more about these and upcoming programs. Learn about the history of the Preserve by visiting their homepage at www.weedonislandcenter.org

**Brooker Creek Preserve**

**Wild Wetlands** - Sunday, Aug 5, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

**Water on the Go - Groundwater Pumping in Tampa Bay** - Saturday, Aug 11, 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
Warren Hogg - Tampa Bay Water

**Geocache to Hidden Natural Wonders** - Sunday, Aug 19, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

**Back in Time** - Saturday, Sept 8, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm, Archaeologist Jay Hardman

**Meet The Artist - An Artist’s Vision: Florida Wildlife and Landscapes, Thomas Brooks** - Sunday, Sept 9, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm, exhibit running during normal hours through Oct, 27

**Cypress Swamp Café - Global Warming: Changing the CO2urse** - Wednesday, Sept 12, 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

**Upland Ecosystem Restoration** - Saturday, Sept 15, 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm, Nancy Bissett of The Natives

**Florida Panther: Big Cat on the Brink** - Saturday, Sept 22, 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm, Pat Kiesylis, Florida Programs, Defenders of Wildlife

**World Rivers Day FEST** - Saturday, Sept 29, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Contact Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center at (727) 453-6800 or visit www.pinellascounty.org/Environment/pagesHTML/se10.html

Learn how to become a Friend of Brooker Creek at [http://www.friendsofbrookercreekpreserve.org/](http://www.friendsofbrookercreekpreserve.org/)

Members of the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve receive a discount on admission fees.
Eco-Tips

I have addressed several starting points for recycling in our last issue. Obviously there is more to being environmentally friendly than just recycling. I want to highlight a few simple actions that everyone can take to help reuse and reduce our typical waste stream. Even if you can only implement a few of these, you are helping minimize the amount of materials burned or buried by your local waste disposal service.

Reuse

- Bring a reusable mug to work instead of using plastic or paper cups.
- If you use plastic drink bottles, refill them.
- Donate old magazines to nursing homes or doctors offices.
- Donate clothing, appliances or office equipment to charitable organizations.
- Use empty glass jars to organize your arts and crafts, screws, nails, nuts and bolts or writing utensils.
- Purchase refillable pens and pencils.
- Purchase stationery, scratch pads, business cards, paper towels, toilet paper and facial tissue made from recycled paper.
- Purchase used items when possible. A little elbow grease and creativity can make them good as new.

Reduce

- Stop junk mail originating from credit bureaus for 1yr, 5yrs or a lifetime (credit cards and insurance offers) by calling 888 5opt out
- Buy locally produced products to reduce fossil fuels used for transport.
- Cleaning the condenser coils on your refrigerator every few months will reduce electricity consumption.
- Buying concentrated products will reduce packaging. Avoid individually wrapped portions.
- Use cloth napkins and wash rags or towels instead of disposable paper products.
- Avoid excess packaging. (example - fresh produce on a styrofoam tray wrapped in plastic)
- Use rechargeable batteries.
- Purchase washable furnace and air conditioner filters
- Replace disposable coffee filters with a reusable filter.
- Purchase products that use recycled materials for packaging. Avoid purchasing styrofoam.
- Choose long lasting metal or wood toys rather than plastic. Donate to a charitable organization when your children outgrow them.
- If you must use paper or plastic when you go shopping, remember to return to the stores recycling bins.
- If you are ready to purchase a new washing machine look for a front loader. On average they use half the water of a top loader.
- Purchase cleaning products that do not contain phosphates. Several brands of cleaners offer natural ingredients that don’t contaminate water sources.

If everyone implemented just a few of these tips it would make a big difference. Once you get into the habit you may find that you can do more. Don’t be afraid to ask for what you want. Like most everyone else, I am constantly on the run and end up grabbing my food on the run. I frequent a business that makes the most wonderful fresh salads. They remember the “crazy bag lady” every time I walk in. They put my salad on a plastic tray with a plastic cover. They then wrap it in a paper bag, staple it shut and place the gift wrapped salad in a plastic bag. If I purchase more than one salad, this process is repeated in duplicate. I always ask for them to reduce the packaging and they accommodate me, with a smile. Try taking one baby step at a time and you will soon find yourself running. You might even have a cute new nickname. As for me, I will continue to wear my “crazy bag lady” title with pride.
Through stifling heat under a blistering sun, five tough members of our chapter tackled a mid-summer tour of this unusual man-made wetlands area. Fortunately, we were not required to do much walking as we were chauffeured in the back of an open pick-up truck equipped with special hay bale seating that tended to collapse over time. It was obvious to us that our driver and guide, Bob Rope, was dedicated to his task of educating us about this award winning park.

In 1987, this former cattle ranch was turned into a 1,220 acre treatment area for reclaimed wastewater. Twenty million gallons of water arrive daily through a 48" diameter pipe from a treatment plant 17 miles away. The water enters the park through three specially designed outflow structures that have an uncanny resemblance to natural springs.

Excess nutrients are removed as the water flows through a deep marsh, then into a mixed marsh, and eventually into a hardwood swamp. About 40 days from the beginning of this process, the polished water enters the St. John’s River. Two million aquatic plants and 200,000 trees were planted to create this unique system for the water’s journey. A great by-product of this wetland system is the creation of habitat for a wide variety of bird and animal species and hiking/biking trails for humans.

The park continues to be a work in progress. Early mistakes, such as large plantings of cattails, are being remedied by removal and replanting with more environmentally friendly native plants. Changes in water levels produce remarkable scenery such as expansive vistas with birds perched on snags of dead hardwood trees. Pockets of cabbage palms (Sabal palmetto) are also affected by these changing water levels. Live palms with golden polypody ferns (Phlebodium aureum) growing from their boots can be observed standing next to dead ones that were unable to adjust to the new flooded conditions.

Visit this park in spring to view a myriad of migrating birds. Be sure to stop by the kiosk at the park entrance to view the interesting exhibits and to pick up some valuable information.

Thanks to Marie Hughes, who diligently kept track of the birds that were sighted, and to Jim McGinity, who compiled a creative photo record of the trip. Unfortunately, our chapter president, Bill Bilodeau, suffered trauma from an attack by a giant caterpillar.

- Story and Photos Courtesy Melody Staunton
During Earth Day weekend, April 21st, over fifty residents of St. Petersburg’s Crescent Lake Neighborhood and the surrounding community spent Saturday morning installing over one thousand individual plants within Crescent Lake. Prior to this event, four community work days were spent in the lake removing approximately fifty cubic yards of trash and debris from the lake and preparing the planting sites. This project is part of the neighborhood’s Crescent Lake Restoration and Beautification Project funded by the Tampa Bay Estuary Program. The 21-acre Crescent Lake is a natural spring fed lake which also serves as a storm water retention area. Storm water runoff enters the lake from the large drainage field of the surrounding community and then exits the lake to drain directly into Tampa Bay.

For most, this was their first experience in lake planting. Many were hesitant and somewhat perplexed as to how to go about properly planting a water lily in 3.5 feet of water! Through the guidance of resident lake biologists (Kerry Illiff and Jim Bays live in the adjacent Crescent Heights neighborhood) and other project team leaders, the art of using a dibble (or shovel) to wedge an opening into the lake bottom, ensure the metal staple inserted into the root mass pointed down, inserting the plant into the created opening, gently closing the opening and patting the plant securely into the lake bottom became almost second nature. Others found the planting of the canna lilies and blue flag iris in water depths less than 12 inches rewarding as the placement of the root was apparent and the young plants emerging from the water surface was a satisfying visual. The machine-like repetition of planting the bulrush held the interest of others. By 2:00 pm. the task was complete!

A majority of the plants were planted within twenty five foot diameter wire cages called excluders. The name describes their intent- to exclude- or at least limit damage to the plants due to predation, uprooting or damaging the plantings by the fish, turtles and/ or waterfowl before the plants can become established enough to hold their own. The cages in most areas are now being removed as the plants take hold and begin to propagate.
The three and a half inches of rain as a result of Tropical Storm Barry in June was challenging to the plantings. At one point, the lake level was 2 ½ feet above its normal level. The plants were completely submerged! The volume and velocity of the storm water run-off entering the lake dislodged some of the plantings on the south end. As disturbing was the amount of trash and debris carried into the lake through the storm water drains! Unfortunately, a large portion of the debris passed through the lake and out to Tampa Bay during that storm event. The City’s Stormwater and Parks staff removed more debris from the lake during the following week and an emergency volunteer workday occurred the following weekend.

As of this writing, the lake plantings are doing well. Exceptional growth has occurred. The original plants have increased significantly in height and added noticeable foliage. Some species have already begun to propagate. Already the white flowers of the fragrant water lily and the duck potato, the yellow blooms of the canna lily and spatterdock, and the blue flowers of the pickerel weed are present. Waterfowl have made roosting nests within the pickerelweed and bulrush stands offshore.

Large invasive populations of hydrilla and ludwigia are of a present concern. The project team is presently working with the City of St Petersburg in an attempt to prevent or reduce the runaway growth of these species that the lake is now experiencing. The long range goal is control through the native plantings, herbicidal and mechanical treatments are a short term defense. As actions are taken, observation of the outcome will guide us.

A shoreline planting of Florida native plants is scheduled for Saturday, September 15, 8:30 am – 1:00 pm. In the fall, storm drains that discharge into the lake will be marked to dissuade the dumping of litter and pollutants into the storm water drain system.

This project is a great opportunity to make a positive difference in the ecological health and aesthetic character of an urban wetland environment. To volunteer or for more information regarding the project contact Lucy Trimarco at 821-2133 or lucyt@ij.net

Article and photos for reprint courtesy of Gary Crosby
MEMBERS - SIGN UP FOR OUR EMAIL LIST AND GET THIS NEWSLETTER IN COLOR AT www.pinellas.fnpschapters.org

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