

# The Understory

Newsletter of the Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, Inc.

August - September 2012

## President's Message

By Jan Allyn

Summer rains have finally arrived and our gardens are breathing a sigh of relief—mostly. Tropical storm Debby took its toll on many of our landscapes, breaking limbs and flooding yards, but many plants will recover. Some plants are more storm-worthy than others, and this issue of the *Understory* has a great article on choosing plants with good resistance to wind and weather.

The landscape tour committee has spent the last couple of weeks previewing prospects, and we've got some great destinations lined up for our Sixth Annual Native Landscape Tour, coming up October 6-7. The south tour, on Saturday, will be focused in southeast St. Petersburg, and Sunday's north-county route includes Palm Harbor, Dunedin, and Ozona. Mark your calendar!

I cringe slightly when I hear some folks refer to FNPS as a "club." Our focus may be on plants, but we're not a garden club. Our mission is to preserve native plants and "plant communities," but just as important are plants' relationships to human communities, especially in a densely urban county like ours. We are a "Society" and we want to positively impact our society, encouraging people to re-connect with our natural environment, and to make landscape choices that are sustainable. While plants are what bring us together, people are important, and we have great people—all of you who give your time at volunteer days, support FNPS with your membership dues, donate plants for our meetings, and share your knowledge and enthusiasm with each other and with others in the community.

Unfortunately, we've lost one of our best people, our chapter vice president Mary Jackson. She, her husband Eddy, and their furry tribe have packed up and moved to

## President's Message

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22 rural acres in the beautiful Willamette Valley of Oregon. She was sad to leave her native landscape here, and was kind enough to share some of it by donating many of her plants for our monthly silent auction. We will miss her greatly—her intelligence, good humor, energy and generosity were great assets, and she did an outstanding job in organizing the native landscape tour for the last two years. She continued to help in planning this year's tour right up until the time she moved. We wish her much happiness in her new home!

Enjoy your summer, and keep cool!

Jan

## The Good, the Bad, and the Sad of Volunteering

By: Mary Ann Beekman

Halfway into my second year as Volunteer Coordinator for our organization I can report that I've only panicked a couple of times worrying if I had enough volunteers for one of our events. I'm getting better at it. I get my sign-up sheets out early. That's good.

I've learned volunteers seem to fall into groups. Those who do events only – sporadically or consistently. Those who take on commitments (officers, board members, etc) for one or more years. Those who lend a hand when they are present. I can respect each group. Knowing which “group” you are most comfortable with makes for happy volunteers. I try to keep that in mind.

I've learned not to assume that a past volunteer will “always” volunteer. I try not to take it personally when a sign-up sheet is blank following a meeting with 50 members present. I don't enjoy making phone calls soliciting volunteers. That's kind of bad.

Here is the best quote to describe my own feelings. “The broadest, and maybe the most meaningful definition of volunteering: Doing more than you have to because you want to, in a cause you consider good.” ~Ivan Scheier.

So how could I be a sad volunteer when I'm fulfilling my own desire to promote native plants? Answer...because one day I'll be back in the less active volunteer “group” and it will be tough saying no to another volunteer coordinator. Also, because I hear first hand at our Board Meetings how wonderfully pro-active we could be...if we had the volunteer power.

We are lucky our chapter offers such a variety volunteer opportunities. We appreciate the learned and the learning. Do a little or do a lot. Volunteer because you love native plants. Hope to see your name on a sign-up sheet soon!

## Fall Native Plant Festival Rescheduled

So as to have cooler weather and a more reliable supply of wildflowers, we are changing the date of the fall plant sale at Wilcox Nursery to Saturday, November 10th. Please note the new date on your calendar, and we hope to see you there!

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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. (FDACS/DPI Cert. #47222877).

## Welcome New Members

Cathy Claesson, Millard Rollins,  
Tommy Conely & Rikki Leanillo



Necklace Pod (*Sophora tomentosa*) taken in my yard on 7/8/12. I have two plants, both doing well. Both get about a half day of sun, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Once established, I haven't watered them.  
Photo and note by Judy Fisher.

## Landscaping For Hurricanes

By: Andy Karpinsky

Hurricanes are part of the reality of living in Florida. Many of us pretend they don't exist or they will never affect us. Or we think there is nothing we can do and just hope insurance will take care of things.

Hurricanes contain absolutely unbelievable amounts of energy. But they do NOT possess infinite energy. Things in the path of hurricane winds do take energy from these winds. The more obstructions, the more energy taken from the winds and the more the winds are diverted. This is especially true close to the ground.

I've noticed similarities in the damage from hurricanes in the many places I've been to after major hurricanes (Homestead after Andrew, Bahamas after Floyd, Punta Gorda and Pine Island after Charlie, southern Mississippi and Louisiana after Katrina, etc.). Most all the tall trees, billboards, street lights, power line poles, etc., tend to be broken or bent at approximately the same place, which is about 30 ft. above the ground. I suspect this is because the winds close to the ground have lower speed and are more confused due to all the obstructions closer to the ground, compared to the winds higher up, which pretty much have a straight, unobstructed path.

This implies that there is stuff we can do to minimize the damage from hurricanes. For most of us, protecting our residences is probably our primary concern. But we would also like our landscapes to suffer minimum damage, though I think most of us would be willing to sacrifice our landscapes to protect our houses. If we are going to spend the time and money landscaping our properties, why not try to select plants that are best able to survive hurricanes and protect or at least cause minimal damage to our properties.

The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Services (UF/IFAS) has conducted a number of studies on the effects of hurricanes on trees in Florida. Its site, <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandhurricanes/>, has a number of articles which discuss the results of these studies.

One of the better of these reports is Publication No. FOR 119, "Selecting Southeastern Coastal Plain Tree Species For Wind Resistance," by Mary Duryea and Eliana Kampf. It was originally published in September, 2007. It is only 13 pages long, but full of data on tree survival rates for

the various hurricanes studied. The data is well summarized with a list of recommended trees at the end of the report. It also has a list of recommendations for selecting and maintaining trees for the best wind resistance. Most all the trees in this report are native trees.

Publication No. FOR 220, "Selecting Tropical And Subtropical Tree Species For Wind Resistance," also by Mary Duryea and Eliana Kampf, is very similar FOR 119 above, except it covers both native and the most popular non-native trees used in Florida. It is also only 13 pages long, but full of data on tree survival rates for the various hurricanes studied. The data is again well summarized with a list of recommended trees at the end of the report.

Most of the UF/IFAS articles discuss trees, with little information on shrubs and other plants. A book entitled "Stormscaping – Landscaping to Minimize Wind Damage in Florida" by Pamela Crawford, does discuss other plants as well as trees. It is Volume 3 of her "Florida Gardening Series" books.

This book has much information that is difficult to find elsewhere. It has a list of about 150 common Florida landscaping plants and discusses their wind tolerance, as well as a list of plants that should definitely be avoided. There is a discussion on why trees fail and what can hurt and improve the wind survival chances of all trees. A chapter is dedicated to designing your landscaping to minimize wind damage. Another chapter discusses preparing for a storm and how to improve your plant survival rates and minimize subsequent damage after a storm.

One conclusion from these references is that native plants tend to do much better in hurricanes than non-natives. Examples of native trees that tend to have the least damage and cause the least damage from severe windstorms are the sabal palm (*Sabal palmetto*), saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), sand live oak (*Quercus geminata*), live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), American holly (*Ilex opaca*), and dogwood (*Cornus florida*).

Also, plants tend to handle the wind better if they are planted in clusters. Clusters of trees provide a lot of mutual protection and reduce the wind impact for stuff downwind of the cluster. Mixed species tend to do better than monocultures. Layers, with shrubs, low trees, and tall trees



(Landscaping For Hurricanes, page 2)

intermixed, tend to be even better at surviving high winds and provide even more down wind protection. Mixing the ages of your plants also tends to improve survival rates in windstorms.

The slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) tends have the best survival rate of all the conifers. But pines planted away from other trees tended to have a higher rate of uprooting. Most pines have shallow roots and rely on their roots intertwining with the roots of nearby neighboring trees for stability. This is true of most plants but more apparent in pines. Also, lone pines are more prone to snapping about thirty to forty feet above the ground. Again, pines do best when planted in clusters.

Palms in general are among the most wind tolerant plants. An exception is the non-native queen palm (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*), which is considered one of the least wind tolerant of all the common trees used for Florida landscaping.

Not all native trees do well in windstorms. For example, the cherry laurel (*Prunus caroliniana*) tends to break very easily and lose a lot of branches. Though many oaks are among the most wind tolerant trees, the laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*) and the water oak (*Quercus nigra*) are two exceptions with poor survival rates. The laurel oak, along with the non-native Australian pine (*Casuarina* spp) and ficus (*Ficus benjamina*), are considered the three common trees that are least likely to survive windstorms and tend to cause the most damage.

Trees that lose a lot of leaves but retain their branches tend to have high survival rates, both immediately after the storm and long term. But trees that lose a lot of branches may survive the storm, but tend to die shortly after the storm. Smaller trees tended to have a lower percentage of branch loss than bigger trees. An exception

is the sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), which tends to have a lot of branch damage but also tends to have a high long term survival rate.

Slower growing plants also tend to have higher survival rates than faster growing plants. Trees planted close to buildings, pavement, and sidewalks tend to blow over more often than trees planted in open spaces. Professionally pruned trees fall less than untrimmed trees. You should avoid planting tall trees within falling distance of your house and so close that large branches overhang your house. You should also avoid planting tall trees near power lines.

But wind tolerance isn't the only consideration. For those who live in coastal or low lying areas, salt tolerance and resistance to flooding are also considerations. The salt tolerance of various plants can often be found in many books on native plants and is something many landscapers already consider in choosing plants.

Resistance to flooding is not as easily found, but is available with a little bit of research. Many plants can take one day in standing water, but more than that will kill these same plants. Obviously, plants whose native habitat tends to be wetlands would handle temporary flooding better. But many of us live in places that are normally on the dry side and would prefer plants that are drought tolerant. Drought tolerance and the ability to handle temporary flooding are conflicting attributes not often found in plants, though there are a few with both attributes. The bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) is one possible exception, which is very wind tolerant and, though it normally grows in damp habitats, will tolerate drier conditions if adequately watered until well established. But, since if our yards are flooded, there is a good chance our houses may get flooded also, it is best to choose a property that won't get flooded.

Below is a list of some references for more information on making your landscape more tolerant of hurricanes:

“Stormscaping – Landscaping to Minimize Wind Damage in Florida” by Pamela Crawford, published by Color Garden, Inc., Canton, Georgia. [www.easygardencolor.com](http://www.easygardencolor.com).

<http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandhurricanes/>

[http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandhurricanes/selecting\\_southern.shtml](http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandhurricanes/selecting_southern.shtml)

[http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandhurricanes/selecting\\_tropical.shtml](http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandhurricanes/selecting_tropical.shtml)

[http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/urbanforestry/Resources/PDF%20downloads/Dureya\\_hurr\\_recov\\_chp8.pdf](http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/urbanforestry/Resources/PDF%20downloads/Dureya_hurr_recov_chp8.pdf)

[http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/urbanforestry/Resources/PDF%20downloads/Dureya\\_hurr\\_recov\\_chp9.pdf](http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/urbanforestry/Resources/PDF%20downloads/Dureya_hurr_recov_chp9.pdf)

**Plant Profile: Silkgrass (*Pityopsis graminifolia*)**

By Jane Williams

This wild flower is similar to Golden Aster (*Chrysopsis* spp), but the blooms are more prolific and the leaves are long, grass-like, wooly, and silvery in appearance. *Pityopsis* does well in almost any garden soil, except wet conditions, and loves full sun. It is perennial, blooming in the fall. The blooming stem reaches about 18 inches tall with bright yellow flower spikes, but the plant that winters over is a rosette of silvery, spiky, grasslike leaves of about 6 inches to one foot.

*Pityopsis* prefers a sandy, well-drained soil and will multiply mightily from under-ground stems. Even though my soil is more clay-like it still grows happily and has for many years now. It does respond to a lack of sun by blooming less profusely. The plant is very drought tolerant.

The after-bloom stems dry out over the winter as do the previous year's leaves leaving the plant looking a little grey instead of silvery. Picking off the dead leaves is a tedious chore that I do not wish to pursue. I usually rake my fingers through the dead looking clumps and pull up enough of last year's growth to toss away (recycle in the compost pile). Sometimes new growth comes loose too and these can be replanted in pots and brought to the Pinellas FNPS meeting for the silent auction.

This easy-to-grow wildflower does not show-up in many native plant gardens and I think it should. At least in my yard, it thrives without care; no water, no fertilizer, no insect sprays. I did replant some *Pityopsis* into my back wild flower garden that gets less sun, has richer soil, and does get watered during drought (Apr-May-June). The plant did not like this and responded promptly by dying. The front-yard clump goes on happily from year to year blooming brightly in October. It is a cheery delight.

**Newsletter Editor and/or Designer  
Wanted**

Jan Allyn has been acting Editor all year, along with her job as Chapter President, and Cathy Vogelsong would like to retire as designer. Both positions are in need of new energy. If you enjoy writing, photography and/or graphic design, and would like to use your talents to benefit the Chapter, please contact Jan Allyn [by email](#) or by phone at 727-244-0312 to explore this opportunity! We will be happy to train and assist you!



Silkgrass, photo by Jan Allyn

A new feature of our monthly membership meetings is a seed swap. Bring some, take some, expand your native plant repertoire!

## Upcoming Meetings

### **August Program: Wed., Aug. 1, 7 pm**

Speaker: Craig Huegel on **Native Wildflowers and Groundcovers**. Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL

Please join us for a book signing and presentation by founding Pinellas Chapter member Craig Huegel, whose newest book "Native Wildflowers and Other Groundcovers for Florida Landscapes" has just been published by University Press of Florida. Craig will profile some familiar landscape plants, as well as introducing some wildflowers and groundcovers that you may not have considered for use in your native garden. For photos and plant profiles, visit Craig's blog, Hawthorn Hill Wildflowers: <http://hawthornhillwildflowers.blogspot.com/>

### **August Field Trip: Sat., Aug. 4 -- Annual Canoe/Kayak Trip, Chassahowitzka River**, beginning at 9:00 at the Chassahowitzka River.

Carpool: Meet at 7:00am at Perkins Pancake House Restaurant on the north side of Gulf to Bay, across from Clearwater Mall. We will meet at the very back (north side) of the parking lot, leaving promptly at 7:15am.

Driving Directions: We will meet at the river at 9:00 am. To reach the put-in, take the Suncoast Parkway north to its end. Go west at US 98 and cross US 19 to Miss Maggie Drive. Continue to its end. You can also take US 19 straight up and turn left onto Miss Maggie Drive where US 98 crosses US 19.

**RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED!** Our Chapter Trip Coordinator will be Alexa Wilcox -Huegel; contact her at 727-422-4792 or email ([alexa776@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:alexa776@tampabay.rr.com)). Please let her know you are going, so we can contact you with any change in plans. You may bring your own kayak, but let Alexa know as parking spaces for that are limited.

Cost: Kayak rental is \$30 for a single, \$40 for a tandem. Difficulty: This is an easy, round-trip paddle, perfect for those who have never kayaked, and the outfitter can show

you in just a few minutes all you need to know for this trip. We're planning on being out around 4 - 6 hours. The Chassahowitzka is a fairly wide, tidal river, and even during the stronger periods of the coming and going tides, the current is relatively weak. Even the little feeder streams, some of which we'll explore, are slow.

**What to bring:** Wear comfortable clothes that you can swim in, as we will be stopping at one of the springs along the way. Bring sun protection and a hat. and rain gear, just in case. Wear shoes that can get wet, preferably enclosed with good treads. Be sure to pack snacks and plenty of water. There's not much high, dry ground along the Chas, but we'll stop along the way. There is a nice little restaurant near the ramp, so we will probably stop for a lunch after the trip.

### **September Program: Wed., Sept. 5, 7 p.m.**

#### **Sixth Annual Native Landscape Tour Preview!**

Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo

See photos of the gardens on our annual tour and hear from homeowners/landscape designers who created them. We'll have tickets available for purchase, or you can buy at selected ticket outlets (Boyd Hill Nature Park, Twigs & Leaves Nursery, Wilcox Nursery) or online. Watch our website for updated information about the tour!

### **September Field Trip: Sat., Sept. 8 -- Jelks Preserve, 2300 N. River Road, Venice.**

Carpool: Depart at 8:00 am from the Publix parking lot at the intersection of US Highway 19 South and 54th Avenue South. RSVP is required, so that we know how many people to expect. The Preserve has no restroom facilities, so make a "pit stop" en route. For more information, including a trail map, visit this link: <https://www.scgov.net/NaturalLands/Pages/JelksPreserve.aspx> The Mangrove Chapter visited the preserve in 2008 and compiled a plant list during their trip, which may be found here: <http://www.mangrove.fnpschapters.org/field-trip-reports/116-09-27-2008-fieldtrip-jelks-preserve>

**Information from Sarasota County's website:** This 614-acre preserve was purchased in 1999 through the one percent county sales tax and a very generous contribution from the Jelks Family Foundation, for which the preserve is named. The Jelks Preserve is one of the publicly-owned properties bordering the Wild and Scenic Myakka River, forever protecting a piece of the riverine



floodplain. One can view the river at three different locations, while relaxing in the shade of mature live oak trees, festooned with epiphytes.

While exploring the preserve's network of trails, visitors may see diverse natural communities including hammocks, pine flatwoods and seasonal wetlands. Visitors can also observe gopher tortoises, swallowtail butterflies and swallow-tailed kites, an assortment of song birds and wildflowers, such as Carolina jessamine and coralbean. While some trails may be cool as they meander to the river through canopied hammocks, others may be open and sunny as they traverse pine flatwoods.

The preserve has more than eight miles of trails, including the 3.3 mile outer loop trail. The trails are unpaved but accessible for most visitors. Be prepared for Florida's often extreme outdoor experiences by bringing water, sun block, a rain jacket and sturdy shoes. All trail intersections are marked with numbered trail markers. Some trails may flood after heavy rainfall and several trails may be wet year-round at intersections with creeks and ditches.

The preserve has limited parking and is accessible via a walk-thru gate.

**Fall Native Plant Festival: Sat., Nov. 10**, Wilcox Nursery

**Sixth Annual Native Plant Landscape Tour, Oct. 6-7**  
Oct. 6 will be south county (St. Petersburg), and Oct. 7 will be north county (Dunedin/Ozona/Palm Harbor area).



## Other Events

**Volunteer Workday August 18**, Pinellas County Extension Pond Area. It's summer and plants are growing like crazy! Pinellas County Extension would like a bit of help tidying up the pond area, so we've scheduled a work day to do some pruning, weeding, and cleanup. To beat the heat, we'll be starting early, 7:30 a.m., and plan to be done well before noon. Please bring work gloves, hand tools, water bottle, hat, and sunscreen. The chapter will provide cold water and snacks. If you can help, please contact volunteer coordinator Mary Ann Beekman so we know how many people to expect: [mbeekman@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:mbeekman@tampabay.rr.com).

### Ideas for Using the Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants

By: Judy Fisher

I use The Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants website, available at <http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu> to:

1. Search for a plant species by common or scientific name to see photos and whether it is native and/or a state listed species.
2. Select advanced search, filter my search by county, and/or filter by State Listed Status and/or filter by Nativity to see a list of Pinellas native state listed species. There is an option to download these lists to an Excel spreadsheet.
3. Search for a specific species by common or scientific name and then select View specimen details in the USF Herbarium Specimen Database to see the habitat and counties the specimens were obtained from.
4. Compare photos of species in the same genus (or family). To do this, search for the genus (or family), then use the "Compare" checkbox on the right-hand side of the results list to select those species with photos that you'd like to compare. Then click the "Compare Records" button at bottom right.

## Secrets to a Successful, Community-Initiated, Retention Pond Restoration

By: Ernie Franke, The Shores of Long Bayou Condos, St. Petersburg, FL

It may sound like the headlines from a supermarket tabloid, but there are several proven methods to a successful restoration of an unsightly or unhealthy retention pond. These guidelines reflect the heart-aches and joys experienced during the restoration of three retention ponds. These do not come from a university-trained biologist, but from a retired electrical engineer struggling to meet budget, fight weeds, placate condominium owners, but mostly to improve his very local environment, the quality of the water and to provide local critters with a better home.

### Retention Pond Restoration: Pattern for Success

Someone once remarked that, “We tried to restore Ibis Pond, but never got to first base. What’s your secret?” After thinking about it, I came up with three good reasons.

Remembering back when I first approached the HOA (Home Owners Association) Manager telling him I wanted to restore the retention pond in front of my condo, it’s a wonder that he even let me try. He didn’t know me or my abilities. The first reason for success was that I had to prove myself over the coming year. The manager went from a skeptic to one of my best supporters. All of the secrets listed below combined to win him over.

The second reason for success was gaining the approval of the City (Seminole), County (Pinellas) and Regional (Southwest Florida Water Management District) authorities. By using all their guidelines, we were able to garner their consent to restore the pond, being careful to restore it to the original condition and to re-plant with Florida-native plants. The third reason for success was hunting down funding opportunities. Budgets are always tight, so asking the HOA to fund a pond restoration that the majority of residents couldn’t even enjoy, just wouldn’t fly.

So let’s take a closer look at a few of the secrets on our pathway to a successful restoration. It turns out that these guidelines are embedded in the various questions on an application for obtaining a conservation mini-grant. They are simply prudent planning. Next, we’ll see how these guidelines fit together in time.

### Osprey Pond as a Restoration Example

Two events prompted the resident community to consider restoring Ibis Pond; the concern over the deteriorating water quality with a corresponding decrease in waterfowl and the successful restoration of adjacent Osprey Pond



Ibis Pond Before Restoration



Ibis Pond After Restoration

over the last two years, clearly showing what could be done. A restored pond reaps the tri-fold benefits of improved water quality, a more inviting appearance (less subject to invasive species), and a better habitat for wildlife nesting and foraging. Community education should naturally follow. A successful restoration serves as an example of what the community can do and will inevitably lead to the restoration of other retention ponds.

### Restoration of Ibis Pond: Three Major Goals

First, we planned to improve the water quality of the storm water by providing water filtering through the replacement of exotic and nuisance flora with native, non-invasive planting in the pond. Second, we wanted to provide a suitable nesting and foraging habitat for waterfowl. The



(Secrets to a Successful Pond Restoration, page 2) planned littoral vegetation (pickerelweed, duck potato, alligator flag, etc.) would be a food source for waterfowl. Additionally southern blue iris and canna lilies have both proven to be valuable nesting areas.

Third, just as seen through the environmental education from restoring adjacent Osprey Pond, we expected to reap environmental-impact education within our condo community of about two thousand residents. Similarly, we planned to report our efforts through county seminars and local publications, crediting the Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) and the Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS).

### **First Guideline of Restoration: Obtain Written Permission from All Stake-Holders.**

Secure the blessing of the HOA management, the Wetlands advisory committee, and the multi-county watershed group. Because it was going to beautify the neighborhood and increase property values, management was all for it, but with very little budget.

### **Second Guideline: Seek Out Leadership**

Seek out a leader, an experienced pond person that has a passion for the job. A committee is nice as a backer, but you need a leader to get the job done. Leadership transitions as ownership moves from restoration to maintenance. The project leader supplies the technical expertise and serves as the primary grant writer. He is phased out after the restoration stage, replaced by the team leader, who organizes “work parties”. This talent will prove to be of value during the maintenance phase. The project manager is typically the HOA manager who maintains financial control and accountability. Because of his position, he ensures moderation and acts as a clearing-house for suggestions. The project manager performs public relations among the condo buildings and the HOA. His job phases out after restoration, but maintains the pond restoration fund and prepares for the next pond restoration.

### **Third Guideline: Develop a Written Plan, Budget and Schedule**

Then get buy-in from the participants and secure sources financial assistance. With the sagging economy, funding for community-improvement projects tends to dry-up. People are more than willing to help when they can clearly see the work progressing. Plus they love to invest in someone that has pride and passion about their work.

*"Give everyone a chance to participate . . . Involvement builds ownership."*

Before applying for a grant, other financial sources should be secured. Most benefactors look favorably on a shared cost system, where home-owners contribute an equal amount, either in hard currency or sweat labor. Benefactors look for success, for the strong guidance of someone who has demonstrated experience. This demonstration comes in the form of restored ponds and from publications. They are looking for community involvement and for community education.

Carefully select the excavator, where the majority of the budget is centered. One problem we ran into was that most dredging companies were not interested in jobs of less than \$10,000. Bid preparation needs to consider the depth of muck to be removed, the final shape to the pond, access for the earth-movers, restoration after the machines do their business, and what to do with the muck. The scope of our job increased because the muck was too wet to support the large tires of the back-hoe or treads of the bobcat. This increased the job by 30% and required the re-visit of the bobcat for grading and clean-up one month after the muck dried out.

### **Fourth Guideline: Limit to Only Native, Non-invasive Plants**

Someone recently asked advice on beautifying a retention pond next to their home. As I was discussing a few options I noticed that the person was trying to get it all down in notes. I also had a difficult time transferring the vision of what it could look like. So it occurred to me to simplify the process by limiting the selection of aquatic plants and by giving easily-accessible places, such as city / county parks, for observing the effects of aquascaping, the art of adding plants to a water environment.

Selecting plants for your pond involves consideration of several factors, including the size of the pond, the depth of the water, and the amount of sunlight. We have chosen ten plants that can be used along shallow lake and pond shorelines in Florida. We have chosen these plants because they are native to Central Florida, love full-sun, are robust and grow easily, and are readily available.

Native plants are not showy, but come with such descriptive names, such as; Mexicana (yellow) and

(Secrets to a Successful Pond Restoration, page 3)  
Fragrant (white) water lilies, Pickerelweed, Spatterdock, Duck Potato, Alligator Flag, Golden Canna, Sand Cordgrass, Horsetail Reed and Southern Blue Flag (Iris).

Native plants quickly multiply. A few canna plants, for example, quickly spread to fill in, and provide even more for dividing. Some plants take a few seasons, such as Southern Blue iris, to take off. One beauty of this limited-selection is that each of them can be propagated by simply dividing the existing plants. You don't need messy pots, just divide with a small shovel, stick it in the muck, and lovingly pat firmly in place.

### **Fifth Guideline: Community Involvement Works Both Ways**

Give everyone a chance to participate, even if it's merely providing refreshments. Involvement builds ownership. Residents learn to aquascape through "hands-on" learning, experiencing first-hand environmental changes. That "see what we have done" knowledge will spread to other residents to contemplate future restorations of other retention ponds.

The project leader (mentor) made it quite clear that he was only present for one year. After that he could be consulted, but it was hands-off after that; community initiative, community involvement and community ownership.

### **Sixth Guideline: Communicate the Vision**

People feel a part of a project when they know what's going on and why. Transforming a pond is a long-term affair, so it's important to transfer your vision of the pond. Go beyond merely posting a quarterly report on the bulletin

board of each building, listing accomplishments over the last quarter, by outlining future activities.

Educate the participants concerning the environmental goals of the project. These same folks become disciples as they show and tell their friends of what they have accomplished. People need encouragement as they reflect on the past, as well as to look to the future, capturing the "before and after" pictures, as well as the planting "work days".

Part of that communication will be lecturing and publishing the results to encourage others. Osprey Pond was documented in Bay Soundings [1,2], lectured at the annual Lakes & Ponds Education Day [3] and seen on WTVT FOX 13's Good Day Tampa Bay [4].

### **The Mechanics of Pond Balance: Be Patient**

Be patient as it simply takes time. It will take several years to manually "undo" what has been chemically "done" for so many years. You can't turn a neglected eye-sore around in a few months. Timing is everything. It's a waste to stock fish until a cover has been provided. Water lilies have proven to be great; offering cover for fish hiding from herons and egrets, as well as a nursery area for the fish; screening sunlight and lowering water temperature to decrease algae growth. Similarly you can't expect birds to nest unless you provide islands with vegetation to hide in for nesting.

We have taken an "adaptive management strategy" to restoring the pond, a practice common in conservation projects. Small changes are introduced and then monitored for effect, allowing the plan to evolve based on the success or failure of different aspects.

For original article with additional photos: <http://pinellas.fnpschapters.org/pdfs/pondrestoration.pdf>

#### **References**

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2. Franke, E., *Simple Aquascaping of Your Retention Pond Using Native Plants*. Bay Soundings, Winter 2012: 10. Viewable at <http://www.baysoundings.com/Stories/Aquascaping.asp>
3. Franke, E., *Annual Lakes & Ponds Education Day* (Pinellas County Watershed Management Division and the City of Largo, FL), Successful Adopt-A-Pond, 7 May 2011 and Retention Pond Restoration: Pattern for Success, 19 May 2012.
4. Channel FOX 13's Good Day Tampa Bay environmental topics, 25-26 September 2011, viewable at [http://www.myfoxtampabay.com/dpp/good\\_day/adopt-a-pond-092511](http://www.myfoxtampabay.com/dpp/good_day/adopt-a-pond-092511)

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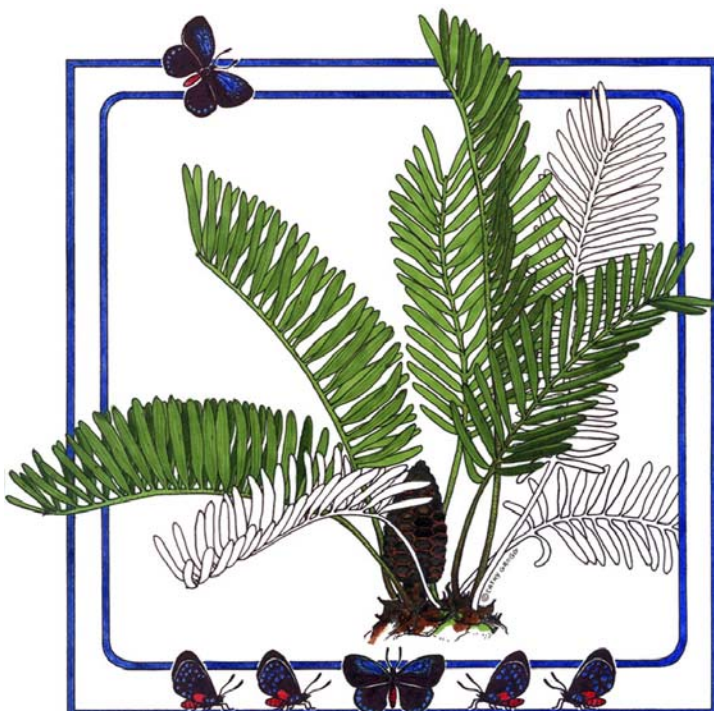
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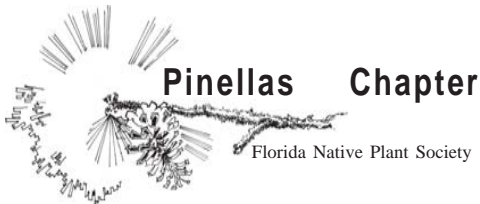
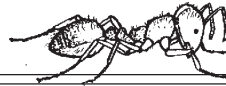
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