

The Understory

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

December 2010 - January 2011

President's Message

By: Alexa Wilcox-Huegel

Hi Everyone,

I just got back from a wonderful few days 'cabin camping' and hiking in Myakka State Park. I'm convinced that there is nothing like hiking through a Florida prairie and experiencing the beauty of the wildflowers and lovely plumes of our native grasses, hearing the wind through the tall pines, and sitting on the prairie with good friends eating a lunch of fresh bread, cheeses and fruit..... along with sitting around a campfire at night, after a dinner of smoked mullet and a nice bottle of wine. I don't think there is any better medicine to lower our blood pressure and stress levels than days of simple living and experiencing nature. There is just something fundamentally calming about watching an eagle soar across the sky, or heart-warming about seeing two barred-owls blinking down at you in the morning light, or an otter scuttling across the road to find a better place to play..... and there can't be any sleeping pill that is better than the mesmerizing light of a campfire.

The elections are behind us, thank heavens, and even though the results were rather disappointing for many of us, it is a relief to have a little peace from all the lies and people bashing that went on. Hopefully the 'tea-party' candidates will be true to their promises and listen to the people. That means "We, the People" need to be more diligent than ever in writing to our representatives and telling them what is important to us. If we don't have 'responsible' growth (as opposed to the 'run-away development' of the last 10 years or so) we will be even worse off than before; faced with the same old problems with more debt. It is important that our representatives hear over and over again how valuable our natural lands are to us, and not just for us, but for our children and grandchildren as well.

President's Message

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At this time of year, the weather is beautiful, and the wooded areas are full of nature's beauty. We have had a number of opportunities to be out enjoying nature's fall color show. See the articles and pictures from the October and November field trips. I hope you are all able to take some time to get out to some of our beautiful natural areas. Our State Parks, and local Preserves, such as Brooker Creek, Weedon Island, etc., need our attention and support more than ever. I'd like to encourage you all to join and support some of the "Friends" groups. In these times of huge governmental cut-backs, they are the ones who are helping to keep the parks open and make sure they are protected. See links at the end of this article, or go to the exhibits at the Conservation Celebration to sign up as a "Friend/Supporter" of these wonderful places.

(continued page 2)

(President's Message, cont.)

"We cannot win this battle to save species and environments without forging an emotional bond between ourselves and nature as well - for we will not fight to save what we do not love." —Stephen Jay Gould

Enjoy this beautiful season
..... In harmony with nature.

Alexa

"Friends" Organizations:

Friends of Weedon Island Park <http://www.fowi.org/>
Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve:
http://www.friendsofbrookercreekpreserve.org/become_a_friend.htm
Friends of Ft. Desoto <http://www.friendsofftidesoto.org/>
Friends of the Islands (includes Caladesi & Honeymoon Island)
<http://www.islandparks.org/index.html>
Friends of Florida State Parks:
http://www.friendsoffloridastateparks.com/membership_application
Friends of Myakka River State Park:
<http://www.myakkariver.org/friends.html>

Chapter Calendar

December Program: Wednesday, Dec. 1, Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo.
See flier, page 3.

December Field Trip: No field trip. Happy Holidays!

January Program: Wednesday, Jan. 5, 7:00 pm, Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Rd, Largo.

Speaker: Roger Hammer

Topic: The Flora of South Florida

Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Rd, Largo.

Renowned author and naturalist, Roger Hammer will speak and provide a visual tour of the unique flora and habitats of South Florida. Few people are as qualified as Roger to present this program and no one does it with his style and wit. Roger has written and provided the photography for numerous books about south Florida. He has also been given numerous awards for his willingness to reach out to the public about Florida and its unique ecosystems. He will be bringing some of his written materials for sale and will be happy to sign them. Do not miss this program for anything other than a family emergency.

January Field Trip: Saturday, Jan. 8

You must sign up for all Field Trips — see info below.

Location: Emerson Point Park, Palmetto, Manatee Co.

Time: Meet at 8:45 am at the Home Depot parking lot off 22nd Ave. N. in St. Petersburg if you wish to carpool. The Home Depot is between I-275 and Hwy 19 and is easily accessed from either by exiting at 22nd Ave. N. If you drive up separately, meet at 9:30 am at the Emerson Point entrance parking area. See directions below.

Description: Emerson Point Park is owned by the state and managed by Manatee County. Though close by, it contains a large diversity of coastal hammock flora not seen in Pinellas County; large gumbo limbo, mastic, soapberry, and stoppers. The site also has a rich archaeological history with numerous mounds along the walking trails. We will explore these areas before lunch and then walk the wonderful boardwalk trails after lunch with those that wish to stay a while longer. Wear good walking shoes or boots, and bring water, insect repellent, and binoculars if you have them. The Park has plenty of facilities, including rest rooms and there is no entrance fee.

Sign-up / Information: Contact Alexa Wilcox-Huegel at e-mail: alexa776@tampabay.rr.com or call (727) 422-4792.

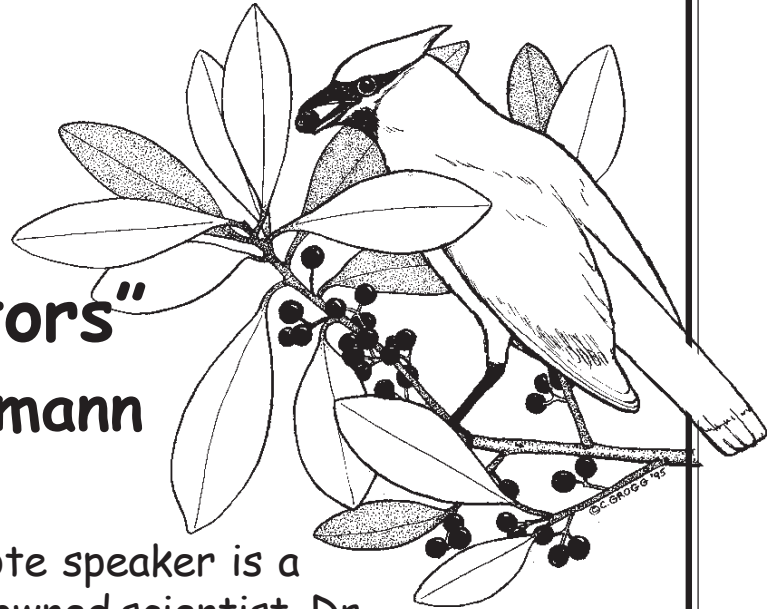
Directions to Emerson Point Park: Exit Pinellas County across the Skyway Bridge/I-275 and take the US Hwy 19 exit to the right. Stay right as you enter Palmetto and take the Business Hwy 41 exit into town. This is also called 8th Ave. West. Turn right (west) at 10th St West and travel west for several miles. It makes an "S" curve at the water and then becomes 13th St. West. Stay on 13th St W. for another mile or so and watch for the sign at Tarpon Rd. Turn right (north) to 17th St. West and then left. The Park entrance is about 1 mile west from this intersection at the end of 17th St. W. We will meet inside the park at the first parking area.

Pinellas Native Plant Society, St. Petersburg
Audubon Society and Pinellas/UF Extension
Invite you to our annual

Holiday Conservation Celebration

Wed., Dec. 1, 2010

Presenting
"Forgotten Pollinators"
by Dr. Stephen Buchmann

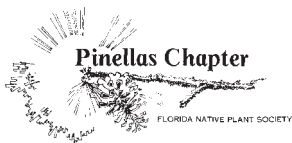


6:30 -- Mix & Mingle
Environmental Exhibits
Silent Auction
Appetizers

7:30 -- Welcome
Conservation Awards

8:00 -- Speaker

Our keynote speaker is a world-renowned scientist, Dr. Stephen Buchmann, author of *"Forgotten Pollinators,"* and President and founder of The Bee Works. Dr. Buchmann will speak on the interdependence of plants and their animal pollinators, and the fragility of this system in the face of habitat destruction and environmental poisoning. Dr. Buchmann comes to us from Tucson, Arizona.

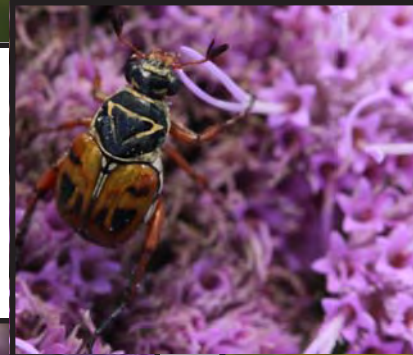
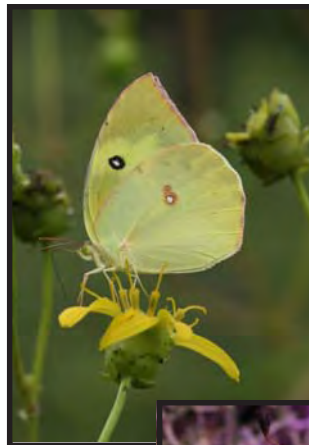


Public Invited * Free Admission * Program Begins at 6:30
Pinellas Extension Service, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo
Map & Info: <http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/map.shtml>
www.stpeteaudubon.org * www.fnps.org/chapters/pinellas



"Dr. Stephen Buchmann, co-author of "The Forgotten Pollinators" twelve other books and more than 170 scientific publications, presents an illustrated talk with followup Q&A's showcasing North American native bee diversity, along with threats to bees and other pollinators. The

amazing ways bees make a living, from carpenters to masons to social parasite free-loaders will be examined along with their fantastic mutualistic dances with flowering plants. Learn about flowers that produce resins, oils and perfumes besides ordinary pollen and nectar floral rewards. See the world's smallest bee (under 2mm) from the Sonoran desert. Stephen will also update us on the current situation plaguing honey bees, Colony Collapse Disorder, and steps the Pollinator Partnership (www.pollinator.org) is taking to alleviate it and help beekeepers. Declines in several bumble bee species will be examined. Its not all doom and gloom, as Stephen shows us simple things to do, steps we can all take in our own backyards, gardens and schools to help bees and other native pollinators. You can become a bee rancher, a pollinator landlord! Several of his books may be available for purchase and signing after his talk. He will also have the 2010 "A World of Pollinators" poster on display, along with other interesting and colorful NAPPC (North American Pollinator Protection Campaign) educational outreach materials. Won't you please join us for an entertaining evening with Dr. Buchmann. "



Pollinators :

Top: Dogface sulphur on kidneyleaf rosinweed (*Silphium compositum*) and bee on dotted horsemint (*Monarda punctata*)

Center: Deltoid Scarab beetle on Florida Paintbrush (*Carphephorus corymbosus*)

Bottom: Bumble bee on Chapman's blazing star (*Liatris chapmanii*) and honey bee on cutleaf coneflower (*Rudbeckia lacinata*)

Welcome New Members!

Teresa Craig & family, Sandy Dewberry, Diane Fairbanks, James Fozard, Irene Franklin, Sue Funk, Theresa Green, Phil Kline, Brenda & Steve Knoll, Nancy Lamagna, Mary Lichter, the Marcum family, Marcia Mathison, Patty McCloskey, Sharon Meyer, Becky Moores, Christopher Parisi, Barbara Stauffer, Neily Trappman Studio, Wayne Scott Tree Sculpting, Karen Wornicki

Plant Profile: Salvias

By: Craig Huegel

For many of us, our experience with our native salvias, or sages, starts and ends with red salvia (*Salvia coccinea*) with perhaps lyre-leaved sage (*S. lyrata*) added in besides. Although both of these species are widely used in home landscapes and widely propagated for good reason, Florida has a number of native salvias besides these that are also wonderful wildflowers. In this article, I will examine the two common species and two of the lesser known.

Salvias are members of the mint family. They have strongly aromatic foliage with opposite leaves and square stems. Most are deciduous perennials, though a few are evergreen. All have tubular flowers that are at right angles to the main flower stalk. These are pollinated primarily by bees, though hummingbirds and butterflies are drawn to them as well. Large numbers of seed are produced inside each papery seed capsule and most species become widely spread throughout the home landscape because of these seeds. Many species, therefore, must be kept in check by thinning or by deadheading some of the spent flower stalks before they shed their seed.

Red salvia (*S. coccinea*), or tropical sage, may be the most widely propagated native wildflower in Florida and one of the most adaptable species for wildflower gardens in this latitude. It is native to well-drained open habitats throughout Florida and much of the Deep South. In locations that don't freeze, it will bloom year round and eventually become 4-5 feet tall. Elsewhere, it may act more like an annual and remain a bit shorter. Red salvia will adapt to most landscape conditions except soils that remain wet for too long. It is exceptionally drought tolerant and will perform well even under partial shade. In deep shade, it will survive, but get lanky and rarely bloom. Named for its bright scarlet flowers, red salvia has been bred to include a variety of other color "sports"; white, pink, coral and dusty lavender among the most common. All of these other colors are recessive

and will not breed true over time if there is another color nearby. Red salvia is one of the best hummingbird nectar sources available to Florida gardeners.

Lyre-leaved sage (*S. lyrata*) is so named because of its distinctive basal leaves that remain evergreen throughout the winter and are curiously shaped somewhat like a "lyre" or a violin. Each leaf is also marked by an irregular purplish blotch that contrasts sharply with the dull green of the rest of the leaf. Lyre-leaved sage blooms in the spring, though it frequently produces "cleistogamous" flowers during the late summer/fall that do not open, but self pollinate and produce seed. The flower stalks stand about 2-3 feet above the basal leaves and are a soft blue in color. Lyre-leaved sage does best when planted in partial sun, but it does just fine with higher light levels if given a bit of extra moisture. Use it as a groundcover in place of grass in semi-shade, mow it infrequently after it blooms, and enjoy its flower display in the spring.

Sky-blue salvia (*S. azurea*) is native to well-drained open habitats in much of Florida and most of the eastern two-thirds of the U.S. It is deciduous; spending the winter months below ground and emerging each spring. It also is very lanky. Unlike other members of this genus, sky-blue salvia has little basal foliage and few leaves up the main stem. This main stem



red salvia (*S. coccinea*)
multiple color forms



Sky-blue salvia
S. azurea

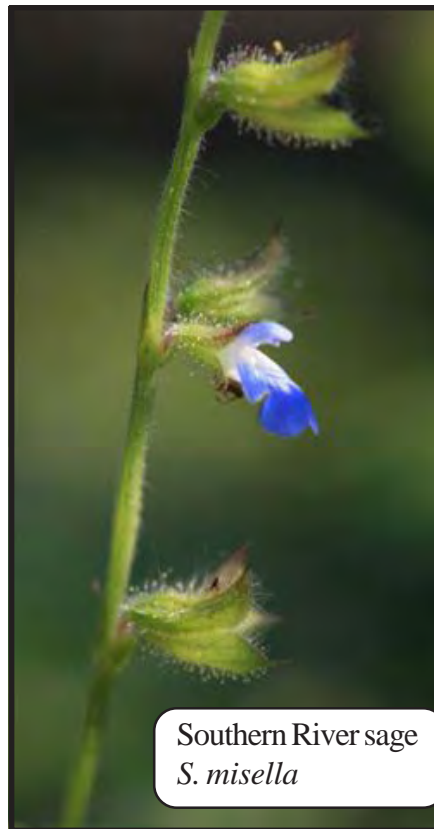


Lyre-leaved sage
S. lyrata

eventually reaches a height of five to seven feet by its fall blooming season. At this height, it tends to bend over a bit – especially under the weight of the open flowers. Though this species is not the most beautiful foliage plant, what it lacks in that category is made up by its brilliant azure flowers. Few flowers come in this shade of blue and a small cluster of stalks, swaying gently in the fall breeze is a spectacular sight. Sky-blue salvia is only rarely available from native plant nurseries and is best used only in expansive settings with good sun and deeply drained soils.

Southern river sage (*S. misella*; syn. *S. riparia*) is native to peninsular Florida and Puerto Rico. It is definitely confined to warmer regions and acts more like an annual in locations that freeze. Southern river sage occurs in the understories of woodlands with a bit of extra moisture. It can be drought tolerant for short periods, but it does not handle full sun well without additional moisture. This is a creeping groundcover that grows outward from a central stem and rarely stands taller than eight to twelve inches; usually shorter. Despite its small size, it makes a wonderful groundcover for semi-shady locations. The diamond-shaped evergreen leaves are deeply toothed with deeply incised veins; traits that make them aesthetically interesting. Flowering occurs during most months except winter. The tiny flowers are bright blue in color; a bit richer than those of sky-blue salvia and nearly as bright. They require a close look to see fully, but they are attractive even from a distance. Use this plant as a groundcover in locations that receive no more than a half-day of sun.

Several other salvias are native to Florida. All are relatively uncommon and most are confined to the southern end of the peninsula. Only the endangered nettleleaf sage (*S. urticifolia*) is restricted to the unique habitats in and around Torreya State Park. Salvias make great landscape plants. Use and enjoy them.



Thank You! Thank You!

A big THANK YOU to all who helped with the Landscape Tour and the Fall Plant Sale. We could not do these events if it were not for your help. You are all helping to make people aware of the value of native plants in our landscapes and natural areas. In these times, more than ever, we all have to work together to make people aware of how important it is to maintain the balance of nature.

I apologize if I have missed some of your names. Those listed below are the names I had on the Volunteer sign in sheets.

Plant Sale: Committee: Bruce Turley, Mary Jackson, Alexa Wilcox-Huegel, Cathy Quindiagan

Speakers: Bill Bilodeau, Bruce Turley, Craig Huegel, Jason Beck

Volunteers: Belinda Lambert, Cheyenne Lambert, Cathy Quindiagan, Marie Hughes, Diane Fairbanks, Carla Levisque, Judy Fisher, Wilma Holley, Cindy Smith, Debbie Chayet, Andy Karpinski, Vicki Jackson, Jim McGinity, John Hood, Jane Williams, Mary Sanders

And a special thanks to Bruce Turley and his staff at Wilcox Nursery: Tiffany Custer, Hilary Edenfield, Jonathon Shonting, Jason Beck, Ed Barr.

Landscape Tour: Committee: Jim McGinity, Bill Bilodeau, Mary Jackson, Mike Stallings, Michael Adams, Alexa Wilcox-Huegel

Volunteers: Vicki Jackson, Barbara Hoffman, Marcia Warren, Linda Culhane, Gwen Smith, Will Miller, Robbi Hanley, Cindy Smith, Pam Schrader, Marvin Ivey, Craig Huegel, Donna

Kiehl, Karen Richey, Monica Pinnell, Han Hadrian Alegarbes, Bob Funari, Sydney Lemieux, Andy Karpinski, Jason Beck, Wilma Holley, Anne Kramer, Bruce Turley, Belinda Lambert, Cheyenne Lambert, Todd Logan, Carl Biver, Amy Dyson, Ellen Thompson, Ginny Nelson, and Elizabeth France

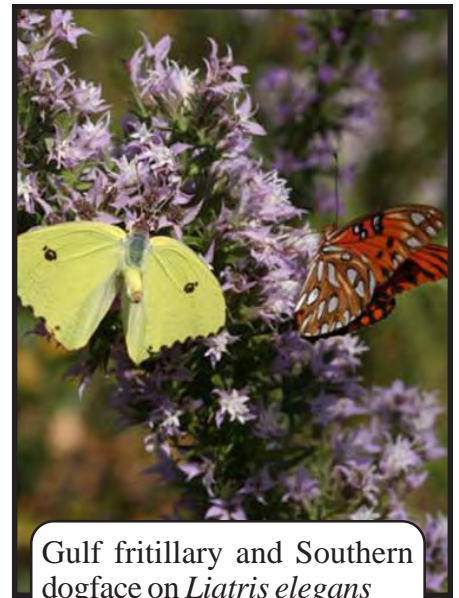
FNPS Booth @ St. Petersburg Party in the Parks: Bob Funari, Craig Huegel, Alexa-Wilcox-Huegel

Dunedin- Living Green Expo: Jim McGinity, Bill Bilodeau, Mary Sanders

October Field Trip: Withlacoochie Wildflowers and McKethan Lake

By Craig Huegel

October is the best time in Florida for wildflower watching and the best habitat for that purpose is sandhill. On Saturday, October 23, about a dozen of us drove north of Brooksville to visit some beautiful wildflower areas within the Citrus Tract of the Withlacoochie State Forest. It was a wonderful day to be outdoors and we were greeted with a dazzling array of wildflowers within a few feet of our parking area. This portion of the Forest has been managed intensively over the past few years; the Florida Division of Forestry has thinned the oaks and other hardwoods and used prescribed fire to manage the understory plants. Because of this, we encountered dozens of species within an acre or two of open sandhill – and, being the Native Plant Society, it took us more than an hour to see it all. By far, the most spectacular show was put on by the dense stands of elegant blazing star (*Liatris elegans*). Their tall sturdy wands of light lavender blooms were alive with pollinating butterflies; gulf fritillaries, southern dogface sulphurs and pipevine swallowtails, as well as several skippers which went unidentified. The Chapman’s blazing star (*L. chapmanii*) was done for the year, but we also saw graceful blazing star (*L. gracilis*) and scrub blazing star (*L. tenuifolia*). The list of other species in flower is simply too long to include here, but most spectacular were the sky-blue salvia (*Salvia azurea*), downy phlox (*Phlox pilosa*), and Walter’s aster (*Symphotrichum walteri*). Although not blooming, we also saw both species of native New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus microphylla* and *C. americana*), kidney-leaved rosinweed (*Silphium compositum*), and the endangered Florida spiny pod (*Matela floridana*).



Gulf fritillary and Southern dogface on *Liatris elegans*

Liatris elegans with butterflies



Sky-blue salvia (*S. azurea*) with monarch. See salvia article p. 5.

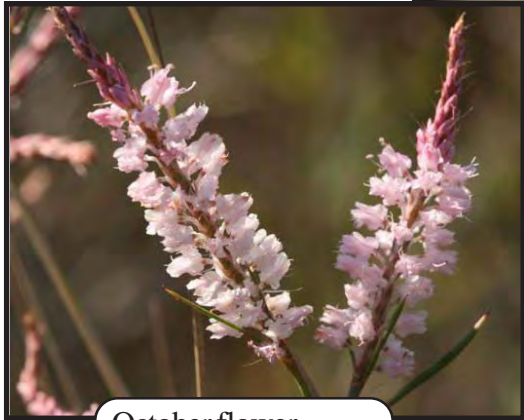
From here, we walked back to our vehicles; parked at the trailhead for the McKethan Lake Trail. After lunch in the picnic area, most of us walked the short loop trail through the hammock around the lake. McKethan Lake Trail takes its visitors through hardwood hammock forest and it contains a great many species whose natural ranges from the north end here. We did not find the fabled tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) reported to be along this trail, but we did see a great many species. The highlights for me were the devil’s walking stick (*Aralia spinosa*), flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), rusty and arrowwood viburnum (*Viburnum rufidulum* and *V. dentata*, respectively), sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*), and winged elm (*Ulmus alata*). Along the trail, Debra Davies discovered a young flying squirrel that had fallen from its nest – so, she carried it with her for the rest of the hike and then took it to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator near her Withlacoochie River cabin who specializes in such creatures. It was a full day outdoors, but all of us had a wonderful time.

November Field Trip: Crooked Lake Sandhill, Crooked Lake Prairie and Tiger Creek Preserve By: Craig Huegel

About eight of us ventured out on Sunday November 7 for a field trip to various locations near Babson Park in central Polk County. Originally, we had planned only to visit two nearly adjacent properties purchased and managed by the Polk County Environmental Lands Program, but on our way we discovered that both of these parcels were only a few miles away from a large property managed by The Nature Conservancy. So, we went there too.

We started our morning at the 25-acre Crooked Lake Sandhill. The description called this property the “best remaining example of sandhill habitat remaining in Polk County” and I believe they are correct. Crooked Lake Sandhill consists of a series of rolling hills near the banks of Crooked Lake. The 1-mile loop trail allows visitors a good opportunity to see much of the parcel, including a number of listed sandhill and scrub species. Large numbers of the uniquely upright Lake Wales Ridge form of blue lupine (*Lupinus diffusus*) was abundant and told all of us that this would be a spectacular place to visit in early spring. Early November is a bit late for most of the sandhill wildflowers, but we saw scrub blazing star (*Liatris tenuifolia*), October flower (*Polygonella robusta*), honeycombhead (*Balduina angustifolia*), and palafoxia (*Palafoxia feayi*) in bloom as well as evidence of a number of other species that were now in seed. Several extremely rare plants are

Ocola Skipper on Garberia
(*Garberia heterophylla*)



October flower
Polygonella robusta

Glade lobelia
Lobelia glandulosa



present on this site, but the only one we noticed was scrub plum (*Prunus geniculata*) with its thin geniculate (zigzag) branches. Along the way, some us gathered and/or grazed on some edibles as well – scrub hickory (*Carya floridana*) and tough bumelia (*Sideroxylon tenax*), in particular.

Crooked Lake Sandhill



From here, we drove a few miles around the lake to the entrance of Crooked Lake Prairie. Despite its name, much of this 520-acre preserve is scrub in various stages of restoration. Recent prescribed fires had left much of it in a regeneration stage and the various scrub oaks, including the rather rare inopina oak (*Quercus inopina*) were less than a foot tall above the white sand. As the name of the property indicates, this site also contains some wet prairie along the edge of Crooked Lake. We hiked the loop trail and were back at our vehicles by about noon.

Lesser groups may have packed it up for a return home at this stage, but Jim McGinity had noticed the sign on

(Nov. Field Trip, cont.)

US 17 for Tiger Creek and Tiffany Custer determined through her mobile phone that it was, indeed, the sign for the famous Nature Conservancy property. So, we packed up and drove to the entrance. Tiger Creek Preserve is nearly 5,000 acres and is a diversity of upland and wetland communities. Because time was short, we hiked some of the main loop trail through sandhill and scrubby flatwoods; at times skirting freshwater wetlands. The highlight for most of us was the large numbers of flowering garberia (*Garberia heterophylla*). A number of wonderful herbaceous wildflowers were still in bloom also, including Florida paintbrush (*Carphephorus corymbosus*) and vanilla plant (*C. odoratissimus*); glade lobelia (*Lobelia glandulosa*); Rugel's milkwort (*Polygala rugelii*); and honeycombhead. We hated to have to leave early, but all of us agreed that we should return next year and make it our sole destination.

The weather was absolutely beautiful and perfect for a day outdoors. The company was equally good and I believe all of us came away with a renewed sense as to why Florida is a uniquely wonderful state.

Call for Scientific Papers and Poster Presentations

Florida Native Plant Society 2011 Conference

The Florida Native Plant Society annual conference will be held at the Sheraton Orlando North, Maitland, Florida, May 19-22, 2011. The Research Track of the Conference will include presented papers on Friday, May 20 and Saturday, May 21. Posters will be on display on Friday and Saturday and the poster session will be on Saturday afternoon.

Researchers are invited to submit abstracts on research related to native plants and plant communities of Florida including preservation, conservation, and restoration. Presentations are planned to be 20 minutes in total length (15 min. presentation, 5 min. questions). Abstracts of not more than 200 words should be submitted as a MS Word file by email to Paul A. Schmalzer paul.a.schmalzer@nasa.gov by February 1, 2011. Include title, affiliation, and address. Indicate whether you will be presenting a paper or poster.

Chapter Directory

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Congratulations to our 2011 Officers and Board of Directors

President: Alexa Wilcox
Vice President: Mary Jackson
Secretary: Jan Allyn
Treasurer: Jane Williams
Chapter Representative: Debbie Chayet

Board of Directors: Mary Ann Beekman, Frank Brandt, Tiffany Custer, Andrew Karpinski, Ginny Nelson, Mary Sanders

Contacts

Officers:

President: Alexa Wilcox-Huegel
Vice-President: Jim McGinity
Secretary: Jan Allyn
Treasurer: Jane Williams
Chapter Representative: Debbie Chayet
Past President: Bill Bilodeau

Board of Directors Members-at-Large:

Danie Cutler, Wilma Holley, Mary Jackson, Ginny Nelson, Mary Sanders

2010 Committee Chairs/ Coordinators:

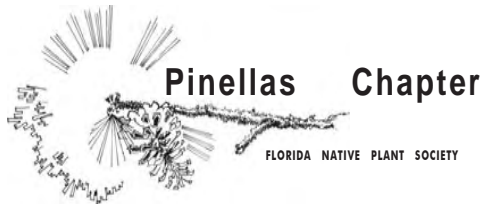
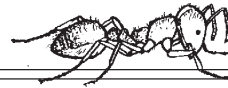
Advocacy /Conservation: Ginny Nelson
ALP Representative: Bill Bilodeau
Displays: Marie Hughes
Education: Bill Bilodeau
Subcommittee-Scholarships: Cindy Peacock
Field Trips: Dr. Craig Huegel
Grant Writer: Debbie Chayet
Chapter Grants: Mary Sanders

Hospitality Coordinator: Mary Ann Beekman
Membership: Cathy Quindiagan
Newsletter Editor: Dr. Craig Huegel
Co-editor/ Publisher/ Artist: Cathy Vogelsong
Programs/ Special Events: Alexa Wilcox-Huegel
Publicity: Danie Cutler
Sales/Merchandise: Jane Williams & Jan Allyn
Volunteer Coordinator: Mary Sanders
Speakers Bureau: Bill Bilodeau
Web Master/Pinellas News: Jan Allyn

Interim Committees:

Budget Committee: Jane Williams
Plants Sales: Alexa Wilcox-Huegel & Bruce Turley
Film Festival: Jim McGinity
Landscape Tour : Jim McGinity
December Conservation Celebration:
Wilma Holley & Cindy Peacock

See Directory of phone numbers
and e-mail addresses on page 9

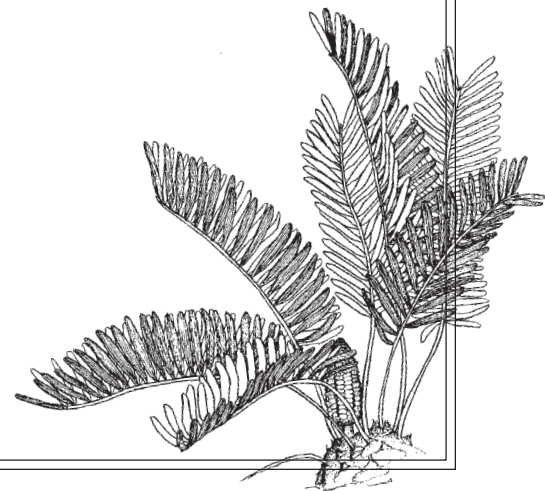


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Pinellas Chapter Info Line:
(727) 544-7341

Pinellas Chapter web address:
<http://pinellas.fnpschapters.org>

FNPS Bulletin Board
<http://fnps.org/phpBB>



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