



The

Understory

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

February - March 2010

2009 PCFNPS AWARDS

by Bill Bilodeau

CHAPTER AWARD

The Chapter Award is given by a vote of the Board of Directors to a person or persons in the community demonstrating extraordinary support for the mission of the Florida Native Plant Society. This year's award goes to Lucy Trimarco and Gary Crosby, both of the Crescent Lake Neighborhood Association, for their leadership in a project to restore Crescent Lake; a 21-acre lake in St. Petersburg. Crescent Lake is an important lake that functions as a focal point for the surrounding community. It was degraded over the years by the high levels of nutrients (mostly from lawn fertilizer) entering it from stormwater runoff. Partnering with the City of St. Petersburg, water-cleanup procedures were put in place and extensive plantings of native aquatic plants were installed - both for aesthetic reasons and for purifying lake waters. Their work has improved water quality in this lake substantially. The project is a fine example of what citizen action can accomplish.

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The President's Award is determined solely by the Chapter president and goes to a member who, in the president's judgment, has done the most in the preceding year to advance the mission and function of the Chapter. Jim McGinity is the 2009 recipient for the superb direction he provided our last two native plant landscape tours and other outstanding contributions. We rarely think of personal qualities as resources, but Jim's steady and reasonable approach to issues and willingness to act are very real Chapter assets.

Chapter Awards

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Red anise
Torrey State Park

President's Message

by Alexa Wilcox-Huegel

Where have we been? Where are we going?

In September of this year, our Chapter will be 20 years old! The first membership meeting was held Sept. 5, 1990, at the Pinellas Park library. It all started with the vision of a few people and the hard work of many more. Recently, I read through old records of the earliest meetings and I was amazed at how much was accomplished from the first organizational meeting held May 9, 1990 to the actual coming together of people that September who were interested in preserving native plants and native plant communities. That first meeting was attended by 23 people! And, by November, they had already outgrown the space at the library and moved to the Pinellas County Cooperative Extension as their next meeting place. To quote from the records of that first membership meeting: “Many (in attendance) expressed the concern that Florida is in danger of losing its unique natural identity; . . .the study and use of native plants are essential to help conserve energy and water, encourage wildlife and, when properly chosen, can be easy to maintain.”

I am putting the final touches to a history of the Chapter that I am writing for the State's 30th Anniversary. The finished narrative will soon be available on the Chapter website at www.pinellasnativeplants.org. In writing this history, it made me realize how little our goals and ideals have changed over the years. We, as well as other environmental organizations, are getting the message out - as evidenced by the upsurge of the green movement, though it has been a long, slow haul. Sometimes it feels like we take three steps forward and two steps back (as in the loss of funding for Florida Forever this past year).

In January, your board of directors met for a day-long goals-and-planning meeting to establish our priorities for the upcoming year; in keeping with the Chapter's mission of conservation, restoration and preservation of native plants and native plant communities. One of our high-priority goals is to encourage/teach/help in the planting of natives in public landscapes as well as our home landscapes. We discussed various ways to do this, and of course one is educating people about what native plants

do for us, versus what non-natives don't. Most of us in this Chapter understand the value of natives and the value of our native habitats, but, in the public realm, that understanding is far from common. Hopefully, with the green movement becoming more mainstream, people will be more open to using landscaping techniques that enhance nature, not compete with it by wasting valuable natural resources such as water, or contributing to pollution with fertilizers and pesticides.

I recently re-read an article by Bruce Turley entitled *The Spirit of Place* (website: www.pinellasnativeplants.org). The essay was about Frederick Olmstead, the great landscape architect, (<http://www.fredericklawolmsted.com/philos.html>) and it seemed so in sync with other truths we have come to realize. During Olmstead's time, a trend to landscape with highly decorative plants from other places like Japan and China was beginning; ignoring the beauty and naturalness of native plants. He objected to this because it took away the “sense of place” the native flora brought to an area. We have come full circle now to realize that not only does using non-natives take away our sense of place, but also interferes with nature's balance. Our December speaker, Dr. Doug Tallamy, provided us with the scientific facts and figures to prove what we have already seen; eliminating native plants decreases the diversity of wildlife that depend on them. That, in turn, interferes with the balance of our earth and all the other life (including human) that depends on it.

Now is the time that people need to hear our message more than ever. Now is the time to put action with our words. We all need to do our part in getting this message out. For some, it may simply be sharing with your neighbors the life and fun your garden brings you. Hopefully, some of you will want to help in a more hands-on approach; helping with events or projects. For some, perhaps, it will be advocating for change with our state or local representatives. Whatever you can do is important to get the momentum of the green movement going in the right direction. We need to give our message a more public platform so others can learn, as we have, that in order for our earth to survive, we need to live “in harmony (President's Message, continued, page 5)

Chapter Calendar

February Program: Wednesday, Feb. 3
7:00 p.m. Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo

Program Topic: Botany Basics: Identifying and Keying Out Plants. It's Not Hard!

Speaker: Annie Schmidt, MS, Botany & Conservation Biology. You can count on Annie Schmidt to make anything fun and exciting. Come learn the basic botany terminology and steps that will help you to identify and key out Florida's native plants. Powerpoint presentation and hands-on demos will be used.

February Field Trip: Saturday, Feb. 6
You must sign up for all Field Trips -- see info below. This trip requires a \$10.00/person ferry fee.

Location: Caladesi Island State Park, Dunedin. Meet at parking lot on the corner of Alt 19 (Bayshore) and Causeway Blvd., behind the MacDonald's. *There is an \$8.00 per car parking fee at the park, and parking is limited, so we will carpool to the Ferry area.*

Time: 9:15 am (at the Parking lot listed above.) We will arrive at the Ferry around 9:30 so we have plenty of time to pay and get organized.

Bring: Backpack or fanny pack, sack lunch, water/beverage, good hiking shoes (prickly pear cactus are common). Recommended: hat, sunscreen, binoculars, camera, field guides.

Description: Each season offers a different experience at Caladesi Island State Park. Easy walking on a coastal barrier island. Now is a great time to explore Caladesi beyond the beach. The beautiful nature trail will lead us through several different natural communities, including a coastal pine flatwoods, as you explore the island's interior. The trail is a great place to find osprey nesting in old pine snags or to cross paths with a gopher tortoise. We are hoping to see some of Florida's native lupines which often bloom as early as February. For trail map or



birding list go to: <http://www.floridastateparks.org/CaladesiIsland/>

Caladesi Island is accessible only by boat. We will be going via the Caladesi Connection ferry service. Cost for the ferry is \$10.00 for adults and \$6.00 for children ages four to twelve. Trips depart hourly beginning at 10 a.m. Ferry passengers are allotted a four-hour stay on the island. We cannot make reservations for our group on the ferry. If you are late, you may miss getting on the ferry with the rest of us and have to wait an hour to take the next one. No pets are allowed on the ferry. You must register for this trip so we know how many spots to hold. Each person pays for himself.

Sign-up / Information:

Contact Alexa Wilcox-Huegel, cell phone (727) 422-4792, E-mail alexa776@tampabay.rr.com, or Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=268570690976>

March Program: Wednesday, March 3
7:00 p.m. Pinellas County Extension, Largo
Program Topic: The Unique Flora of Torreya State Park and Surrounding Lands.

Speaker: Craig Huegel, PhD. The flora of Torreya State Park and adjacent Bluffs and Ravines Preserve is

comprised of a great many species found nowhere else in Florida. Because of the region's geological history, the steephead hammock forests and sandhills have developed a flora rich in endemic species and species which are more common north of the state line. Craig has been exploring this region for several years with his wife, Alexa, and he will share some of the many photos he's taken; giving us all a preview of what we might expect to see later in the month when our Chapter travels there for our field trip.

March Field Trip: March 19-22
Place: Camping/Field trip to **Torreya State Park**, west of Tallahassee (Bristol), Florida. For information, go to: <http://www.floridastateparks.org/torreya/>

Tulip tree at Torreya State Park
(*Liriodendron tulipifera*)

Time: 7:00 am, Friday 19 March. Vehicles driving up will meet at the Perkins Pancake House. Since we cannot leave vehicles there for the full time, carpools will need to be arranged ahead of time. After reservations are in, we will determine who wishes to drive or ride with others. (More info below)

Hiking: Most of the hiking trails are fairly easy; one is slightly more strenuous; and another (which we may not have time for) is moderately strenuous. There will be opportunities to opt out of additional hikes throughout the day if you get tired. There are nice trails accessed directly from the campground that you could do instead – or you could simply relax if you want to. You may want to bring a hiking stick. A list of suggested supplies is provided below.

Camping: You will NOT have to reserve your own site, as we have reserved 5 campsites and the YURT which will hold 6 people (women, please) who are willing to share the space (someone will need to share a queen-sized bed); we recommend this for anyone who does not have regular camping equipment. We can put more than one tent per campsite if we need to. The campsites will also accommodate RV's or pop-up campers. Each site has 1 electrical outlet and a water spigot, a grill and campfire area for cooking. The YURT also has electric inside & out, as well as A/C or heater if needed. (No refrigeration- you will need to bring coolers. The campground provides wood for campfires at a cost of \$4 per bundle.

Cost for the Campsites is around \$18.00/night, so if several of you share one you can split the cost. **Cost for the YURT** is around \$40.00/night, divided among the number who share that space (For example, if five of you share it, that will mean \$8.00 per night each person). We are limiting the number of people to 25, so make your reservations early. When you contact us to reserve, we will send more details, and help those who wish to share campsites (or YURT) to get in touch with each other.

Although you can meet us at the campground later Friday night or on Saturday if you prefer, we will form a caravan for those who can leave Friday morning and stop at some interesting natural areas on our way to Torreya. We will drive up the Suncoast Parkway to Crystal River (about 2.5 hours), stop for a restroom break and a quick brunch, then head north again towards Perry. At Perry we will again make a quick stop (restrooms & fast food, so you may want to bring your own sandwiches or snacks if you prefer). From there we will head west along the coast on

Highway 98 (stopping at a coastal scrub area with several rare species), and then north on Highway 65 through the Apalachicola National Forest. While in the Forest, we plan to stop at an amazing dwarf cypress swamp called Tate's Hell (awful name, beautiful place). From there we will be going mostly north toward Torreya. There are interesting stops all through this forest area, so we will make several stops as time allows, but we want to be at Torreya with plenty of light to set up camp.

Saturday will be a morning hike and an afternoon hike, or you may choose to just go on one or the other. The morning hike will feature walks through areas of native flame azalea and a wonderful sandhill ridge, while the afternoon will take us to riverine habitats with hundreds of mature native red anise. On Sunday morning, we will meet Gil Nelson and he will take us to several steephead areas recently added to the Park, but not open to the public. If you can stay over to Monday, we will do a short hike at Torreya before we break camp to head back home.

Suggested gear for hiking: Comfortable shoes or good hiking boots (lots of walking!), water bottle, hat, light jacket (mornings in north Florida are quite cool), nutritious snacks, bug spray; sunscreen, binoculars, camera (optional), hiking stick if you wish.

As we receive reservations and have a better idea of how many we will be, we will send further details. For questions please contact Alexa Wilcox-Huegel: alexa776@tampabay.rr.com or (727)422-4792.

The Yurt, photo by Alexa Wilcox--Huegel



(President's Message, continued from page 2)
with nature". We need to bring back the balance and help people understand that: *"The wise use of native plants can do much to eliminate the monotony and lifelessness of the typical urban setting, but more importantly, native plant landscapes will provide for wildlife, adding a dimension that creates both wonder and excitement. We are called and challenged to take a more eclectic approach to landscaping."* (from *Florida Plants for Wildlife*, author Craig Huegel, published by Florida Native Plant Society, 1995). I am looking forward to an exciting year. *Alexa*

Alexa with flame azaleas at Torreya State Park



"Hands Across the Sand" to Protest Offshore Drilling

On February 13, the Citizens of Florida will have an opportunity to show their opposition to near shore oil drilling as close as 3 to 10 miles off our coast. This movement will be made of people of all walks of life and will cross political affiliations. This movement is not about politics; it is about protection of our shoreline, our tourism, our valuable properties and our way of life. Let us share our knowledge, energies and passion for protecting our waterways and beaches from the devastating effects of oil drilling.

Hands Across The Sand is devoted to protecting our coastline and waterways from the devastating environmental effects of oil exploration and support industries. We are protesting to protect. Our Mission:

To raise awareness about pending Florida legislation to drill for oil in our coastal waters.

To organize a Gulf coast wide and perhaps a statewide coastal movement to protest this legislation. This protest will bring thousands of Florida citizens to our beaches and will draw metaphorical and actual lines in the sand; human lines in the sand against near shore oil drilling in our waters. This event will be held on Sat., Feb. 13.

To convince our Legislators and Governor to drop any and all Legislation that would allow this folly.

How Do I Help?

1. Go to the beach at 12 pm Central Time (1 pm our time) for one hour, rain or shine.
2. At 12:30 pm, hold hands forming lines in the sand against oil drilling in our coastal waters.
3. Leave only your footprints.

* If Governor Crist calls a special session, this date could change or an additional event could be added. Any changes will be announced on this website.

Tips of the Day

1. Use only approved beach accesses and parking
2. Create as long a line or as many lines as you wish.
3. Be courteous and respectful to those who disagree with your view.
4. Enjoy yourself, its the beach!

The Suncoast Sierra Club is sponsoring an event at Clearwater Beach/Pier 60. For more information contact: Pat Kiesylis (727) 421-2746, goodpat@tampabay.rr.com or Cathy Harrelson 415-8805, cathy_bam@earthlink.net

The Suncoast Surfrider Foundation is sponsoring an event at Upham Beach in St. Petersburg Beach. Contact Jessica Respondek, Chapter Chair, suncoast@surfrider.org

The Surfrider Foundation has been posted to the Disney hands on list for the Give a Day Get a Day. Volunteers who want to participate in the "Hands Across the Sand" event on Feb 13 will be eligible to receive a free ticket to Disney. Link: http://disneyparks.disney.go.com/disneyparks/en_US/WhatWillYouCelebrate/index?name=Give-A-Day-Get-A-Disney-Day When searching use the zip code 33706 and look for Surfrider. This offer starts Dec 15, 2009 and goes until all tickets have been distributed, or Dec 2010, whichever comes first.

Mobbly Bayou Wilderness Preserve Field Trip

by Ginny Nelson

Call us crazy. We are! On what was obviously one of the coldest days of the year, we cared NOT! and gathered together for another field trip adventure. What a Florida novelty; our noses, toes, and fingers were stinging from the cold wet weather even before we walked into the Preserve. We soon had our group of eight or so hikers assembled, though, and everyone was eager to hear from Craig all about this County Preserve in Oldsmar.

The hike began by leaving the paved parking lot surface behind us. The soft path led us through an opening in the tall hedge border into a cathedral-like expanse of uplands with numerous tall slash pine and saw palmetto. Fine dark ash covered the sandy wet soil. Charred tree trunks gave further evidence of a recent burn. Many of the palmetto trunks that were growing horizontal a foot or so off the ground were blackened. Gallberries were numerous; evergreen with their leathery toothed leaves intact.

Walking then towards the mangrove swamp, the icy drizzle chilled us further. In this edge, we walked through needle rush (*Juncus roemerianus*), salt/spike grass (*Distichlis spicata*), and cordgrass (*Spartina alternifolia*). The mangroves in front of us were black, but other species were evident in the distance - past where we cared to venture.

Further upland, we encountered live oaks and cabbage palms and lots of shiny blueberry and redroot. In flower, we saw two lyonia species – *L. lucida* and *L. fruticosa*. The camphor weed (*Pluchea* spp.) and goldenaster (*Pityopsis graminifolia*) had blooms – even after the hard freezes of the nights before. We saw saltbush (*Baccharis halimifolia*), marsh elder (*Iva imbricata*), and lots of fern, including bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), swamp (*Blechnum serrulatum*), and *Thelypteris* spp. in the wetter areas. Several small birds were sighted, flicking their tails and hunting for insects. We wished them well before the cold night fell.

We headed back to the parking lot, happy for the chance to spend time together in an important part of Pinellas County. We parted smiling, rejoicing friends, and thankful for places and plants preserved.

Lyonia fruticosa in bloom, photo by Jim McGinity



Group photo by
Alexa Wilcox-Huegel



**Welcome New Member
Linda Wibberg**

Impacts of Recent Freezing Temperatures on South Florida Plants Used in Pinellas County Landscapes

by Craig Huegel

Over the past several decades, the use of plants typically considered to be south Florida natives has increased substantially. While some of these species occur naturally in south Pinellas County, within coastal hammocks immediately adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico, most are not native and many do not occur naturally within 100 miles of the county. The recent lingering cold temperatures we experienced after January 1, 2010 provided us with an opportunity to evaluate these species' cold hardiness. We experienced almost two weeks of lows near or below freezing, with highs in the 40°'s F. Five nights in particular recorded temperatures below freezing, with the coldest being Monday evening January 11 at 26° F.

Microclimate can make a substantial difference. With few exceptions, all of these species were planted in the landscape of the Pinellas County Cooperative Extension office, Largo, approximately two miles east of the Gulf of Mexico and a bit warmer than areas further inland. Supplemental information comes from plants used in the landscapes of several members in locations near the Extension office. The fact that these species are planted in the same location and under similar microclimate conditions provides an excellent opportunity to compare

their responses to prolonged cold and freezing temperatures against each other. None of these plants received protection from covering.

Surprisingly, some natives which naturally occur only in extreme south Florida, such as wild cinnamon (*Canella winterana*), performed much better than some species which naturally occur here, such as buttonwood (*Conocarpus erectus*). A species' natural geographic range was not necessarily a good predictor of its ability to tolerate cold temperature extremes. I have used five categories to define their performance in the table below: (N) No discernible damage; (L) Light damage, less than 25% of foliage noticeably impacted, (M) Moderate damage, 25-75% of foliage noticeably impacted, (H) High damage, greater than 75% of foliage noticeably impacted, but plant should live, and (D) Plants died. **Key, with photos, page 9.**

As all of us serve as important information sources to the general public on which natives they should consider for home landscaping, and some of us are involved in this as a business, it is important for us to pay attention to the results below. Freezing temperatures are rather rare, but they are predictable for this latitude. Trees, in particular, that take a decade or more to mature are very costly to replace and are significant losses to a landscape when they freeze to the ground or die when hard freezes occur. The same may be said for hedges or other significant shrub features.

Common Name	Latin Name	Damage	Comments
Fiddlewood	<i>Citharexylum spinosum</i>	H	Some plants may be dead
Marlberry	<i>Ardisia escallonioides</i>	M	Plants in direct wind with greater damage; damage mostly to outer stems
Myrsine	<i>Rapanea punctata</i>	N	
Sweet acacia	<i>Acacia farnesiana</i>	L	All leaves lost, but twigs seem fine
Porterweed	<i>Stachytarpheta jamaicense</i>	H	Nearly total top kill; many plants may be dead
Wild coffee	<i>Psychotria nervosa</i>	M/H	Plants protected in understory less damaged than those in less protected locations
Bahama coffee	<i>Psychotria ligustrifolia</i>	M/H	Similar pattern to above
Softleaf coffee	<i>Psychotria sulzneri</i>	M/H	Similar pattern to above
Cat's claw	<i>Pithecellobium unguis-cati</i>	L	Light damage to outer twigs
Privet cassia	<i>Senna ligustrina</i>	H	Many plants appear dead
Bahama cassia	<i>Senna mexicana</i>	M	Portions still green
Mastic	<i>Sideroxylon foetidissimum</i>	N	

Common Name	Latin Name	Damage	Comments
Paradise tree	<i>Simarouba glauca</i>	H	Top kill; trunks appear alive
Satinleaf	<i>Chrysophyllum oliviforme</i>	H/D	May be dead; total top kill
West Indian cherry	<i>Prunus myrtifolia</i>	H/D	Total top kill, but may be alive just above ground level
Spicewood	<i>Calyptanthus pallens</i>	L	Damage only to outer twigs
Myrtle-of-the-river	<i>Calyptanthus zuzygium</i>	D*	*Laurie Bowen reports limited damage to a plant in her Clearwater landscape
Locustberry	<i>Byrsonima lucida</i>	M	Outer branches burned back; inner branches still green
Red stopper	<i>Eugenia rhombea</i>	M	Large plant on east side and unprotected killed back severely; small plant more protected had very little damage
Red-berry stopper	<i>Eugenia confusa</i>	L	Outer branch tips burned back slightly
Spanish stopper	<i>Eugenia foetida</i>	N	
White stopper	<i>Eugenia axillaris</i>	N	
Wild cinnamon	<i>Canella winterana</i>	N	
Jamaican caper	<i>Capparis cynophallophora</i>	N	
Limber caper	<i>Capparis flexuosa</i>	L	Slight damage to ends of some stems
Bloily	<i>Guapira discolor</i>	L	Slight damage to new growth
Simpson stopper	<i>Myrcianthes fragrans</i>	N	
Black ironwood	<i>Krugiodendron ferreum</i>	N	
Cocoplum (both forms)	<i>Chrysobalanus icaco</i>	H	All outer and upper stems dead; some green at ground level and interior
Firebush	<i>Hamelia patens</i>	H	All top portion dead
Biscayne pricklyash	<i>Zanthoxylum coriaceum</i>	N	
Pigeon plum	<i>Coccoloba diversifolia</i>	N	
Sea grape	<i>Coccoloba uvifera</i>	M/H	Protected plants less damaged than those in more open locations.
Saffron plum	<i>Sideroxylon celastrinum</i>	N	
Mahogany	<i>Swietenia mahagoni</i>	N	
Buttonwood	<i>Conocarpus erectus</i>	H/D	Even large specimens appear dead; some may resprout from lower trunk
Gumbo limbo	<i>Bursera simaruba</i>	H	Major damage; all small to medium branches appear dead
Pond apple	<i>Annona glabra</i>	H	As above, but some interior and lower branches still green
Varnishleaf	<i>Dodonaea viscosa</i>	H	All upper portions dead; may resprout from lower trunks
Bloodberry	<i>Cordia globosa</i>	D	
Geiger tree	<i>Cordia sebestena</i>	D	
Bay cedar	<i>Suriana maritima</i>	H	Total top kill, but bottom branches are alive
Plumbago	<i>Plumbago scandens</i>	D	
Quailberry	<i>Crossopetalum ilicifolium</i>	M	Ends of branches killed
Golden creeper	<i>Ernodia littoralis</i>	H/D	Jury's still out, but may resprout from below ground
Little strongbark	<i>Bouyeria succulenta</i>	D	
White indigo-berry	<i>Randia aculeata</i>	N	
Silver palm	<i>Coccothrinax argentata</i>	N	
Sargent's cherry palm	<i>Pseudophoenix sargentii</i>	N	
Paurotis plam	<i>Acoelorrhaphe wrightii</i>	N	
Leather fern	<i>Acrostichum danaeifolium</i>	M	Many fronds dead; plant should easily recover



No Discernible Damage (N): This black ironwood showed no damage at all from the recent freezing temperatures.



Light Damage (L): This limber caper has experienced only minor damage to the extreme tips of its branches and a few exterior leaves.

Key to Recent Freeze Damage



Plants Died (D): This patch of native blue porterweed has been killed by the recent cold weather.



Moderate Damage (M): Many plants like this marlberry showed a good deal of damage to the exterior branches, especially to the branch tips.



High Damage (H): This mature sea grape has suffered high amounts of damage. Only the interior branches are still alive.

North vs South, the Battle Hymn of the Republic and When is a Native Native...

by Craig N. Huegel

For nearly two decades (OK, I took a hiatus in there for a while), I have used this section of the newsletter to give you some insight into the ecology and growing needs of specific plants. We have looked at so many different trees, shrubs, and groundcovers during this time that it is sometimes difficult for me to think of something new to write about. For this column, I thought I'd stimulate debate by sharing some of my philosophy. (WARNING: The following article does not necessarily express the viewpoint of the Florida Native Plant Society or its Board of Directors). Perhaps it's my age or an easy way to solve the puzzle of which plant to write about. But these are not just idle ideas, I hope. They are ideas about issues I feel are at the core of our mission -- what is native, what is the rallying cry of our mission, and how do we select which species (and from where) to promote? There are times when questioning our core beliefs is not only appropriate, but necessary.

Note: I must add this after hearing Rick Joyce at our January program and just recently going through a couple weeks of extremely cold weather – I wrote this before either of these events and they are more important considerations now than when I “penned” it initially... So, please “hear” me out.

Since the dawn of the Native Plant Society, there have been debates of philosophy. Forget the “simple” question of defining what a native plant is... We have politely avoided that one by choosing to agree to define a native plant as any species *believed* to be present when the Spaniards arrived in Florida. Of course, the Spaniards were hell-bent on raping and pillaging the land and people, and they brought very few scientists along on those early boat trips from Europe. The real botanists largely came more than 100 years later. By then, who knows how many things had changed? And this decision to be agreeable skirts the very real issue that things we accept as native have been coming into and leaving the state for millennia – all on their own or assisted by native people. Take a look at how many of our rarest orchids arrived on the trade winds out of tropical America. Some of these have certainly arrived since 1492. Which ones did is anybody's guess. If we knew, would we call the newer arrivals non-natives the way we do with armadillos and

coyotes, mammals that have found their way here all on their own? By our definition, the spiny hackberry (*Celtis pallida*) is native, though it was most certainly brought here from south Texas as a food source by native Americans. In fact, the species is vigorously protected today as a state endangered species because it *still* only grows on a few “Indian” middens in and around Sanibel-Captiva. If a European newly-native resident brought in golden dewdrop (*Duranta erecta*), however, it is not considered to be native. Seemingly, only “natives” can establish new native plants. Talk about ethnic bias... But, we have decided to play nice and simply accept the tenet of pre- vs. post-European as our means of setting something up as native or not. No debate here, at least not today.

My debate revolves around the issue of north vs. south. What better place than Florida, the deepest south and the least “southern” southern state, to wage this debate? We can all accept that the state's flora is deeply divided along north and south lines, but here in Pinellas County we lie at the merger of the two. In the great war that now wages, which side do we adopt – or do we stay neutral and outside of it all?

Over the last nearly 25 years, I have used plants from north Florida in all of the landscapes I have installed. I have done so brazenly and I have met with some stiff opposition from friends and colleagues who wonder how I can use plants that are not native to this region. I have used north Florida hawthorns (*Crataegus* spp.), tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), and a bunch of others whose natural ranges extend no closer to here than 100-200 miles. Most of these have done very well, some for more than two decades, producing flowers and fruit, and (best of all) viable seed. Though these species have prospered and provided an important ecological function, to some they are simply “wrong” for Pinellas County.

While some of us avoid our more northern flora, I have seen a growing acceptance of the use of south Florida natives in our local landscapes. I have never seen a native Pinellas Simpson stopper (*Myrcianthes fragrans*), for example, but we accept them universally. I have used them extensively myself and they are wonderful; just not native to Pinellas as far as I can tell. To a greater extreme, we now have all sorts of native south Florida plants used routinely in our landscapes without a bat of an eye these days: fiddlewood (*Citharexylum spinosum*), bay cedar

(*Suriana maritima*), and Jamaican caper (*Capparis cynophallophora*) to name just a few. Admirable plants, but no more native to here than my tulip tree. Is there really any difference between adding plants with natural ranges 100-200 miles south of Pinellas or 100-200 miles north? I don't see it, personally.

Of course, I hear the argument that south Florida plants make more sense here because of the influence of "global warming." Few things could be further from the truth. Global climate change is real (at least in my mind), but it doesn't necessarily translate to "warming". While the poles are seeing increases in *average* temperature, areas nearer the equator are not. No climate change scientist is predicting real warming for Florida. The difference in *average* temperature is minute here and we must remember that these are *averages*. What global climate change will largely bring us in Florida are new extremes, not new averages. Remember, the average of two and ten is the same as the average of five and seven. In the new world climate that is emerging, we will still see temperatures well below freezing. Those days are not gone and the plants we incorporate in our landscapes must be able to tolerate them or they will die.

I hear rumblings from various quarters that we need to fine tune our definition of what is native; that a plant is only "native" if it occurs naturally in the geographical area we are planting it. By this line of thought, we in Pinellas should only be planting species native to this county (and possibly adjoining counties) that were here at the time the Spaniards landed on the east coast. While this level of rigidity is important in the art of natural lands restoration and should be embraced whole-heartedly by those charged with managing our natural lands, I find it especially foolish for the rest of us tasked with landscaping developed areas.

Developed lands are simply that. Their soils and hydrology have been irretrievably altered and the once-active ecosystem has been gored and torn asunder. The community that once was is no more. We can weep for its loss and we can start over, but we cannot take it through a time machine to return it to its former condition. Planting flatwoods vegetation in a developed landscape that was once flatwoods does not make it a flatwoods. It is a costume, a façade, and nothing more. A flatwoods is not a collection of plants, but a community of inter-working plants and processes. In most developments, the processes have been gutted. Putting plants on top of the

carcass does not resurrect the living organism that once existed. The life we imbue it with is a new life. We start with a new set of conditions.

I believe we are confused when we look at urban landscaping as ecological restoration. In very few situations are we able to restore natural systems to those areas which have been highly altered. It is mission impossible, and we should humbly decline a mission we cannot possibly achieve. I believe our battle hymn should be more in tune with the line of using our lemon to make lemonade; that we should strive to enhance the ecological function of the tracts of land we personally manage and make the most of it. That is not ecological "restoration" in the strict sense, but ecological "creation".

What are our goals in native plant landscaping? Should it be restoration of communities? Do we really believe that we can take Florida back to pre-European conditions by landscaping our yards one lot at a time? I doubt it. The new reality is a Florida with a population and infrastructure that is not likely to fade back into the primeval fog. I believe our goal should be to restore ecological function to these lands to the greatest extent possible. If that means creating wildlife habitat by mixing species together that will give us the biggest bang for our buck on our quarter-acre lot, then so be it. If I reduce my negative ecological footprint on this parcel by reducing my use of water and chemicals, I have made a difference. My landscape plan needs to accomplish ecological objectives and it should not matter whether it does so with northern or southern plants or by combining plants from totally different natural communities. If these newly created landscapes function together in a way that is ecologically sound, what difference is there if it has combined sandhill plants with those of a south Florida hammock?

I believe it is time to heal the division between north and south, become as inclusive as possible in our definition of what is native (when it comes to landscaping), and assume a unified voice which does battle against all forces that would limit us in our fight to improve the ecology of developed areas. My eyes have seen the glory this challenge offers us and the vision lies with all of us away down south in Dixie -- from the panhandle to Key West -- using all the plants in our potential palette as long as they are adapted to the microclimate we put them in. I believe we are all Creationists in this struggle.

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