

Mark your calendars

June 6th - Monthly Meeting 7:00 pm.
Moccasin Lake Nature Park
Topic: "Caring for Florida's Native Trees" Speaker: Loren Westenberger

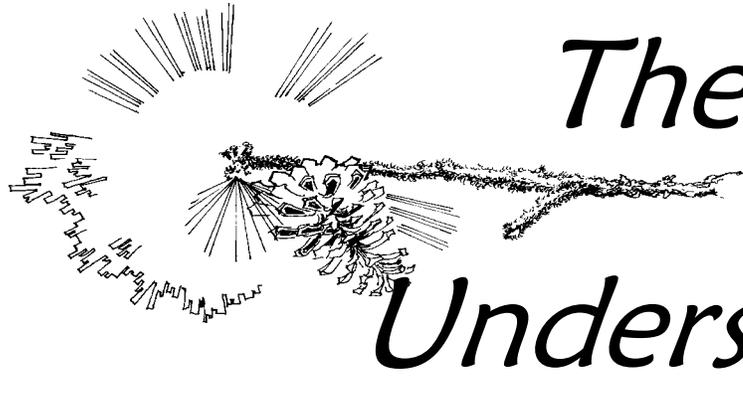
June 9th - Field Trip to USF Ecological Research Area, Tampa.
Contact Erica Powell at fieldtrip.pinellas.fnps@gmail.com

July 11th - Monthly Meeting 7:00 pm.
Moccasin Lake Nature Park
Topic: "How to Love Your Lake" Speakers: Kelli Levy and Jim Griffin

July 14th - Field Trip to Orlando Wetlands Park
Contact Erica Powell at fieldtrip.pinellas.fnps@gmail.com

August 1st - Monthly Meeting 7:00 pm.
Moccasin Lake Nature Park
Topic: "Landscaping for Wildlife" Speaker: Dr. Craig Huegal

August 4th - Field Trip to Cross Bar Ranch
Contact Erica Powell at fieldtrip.pinellas.fnps@gmail.com



The Understory

Clam Bayou Marine Education Center

I appreciate all of your enthusiasm for and interest in the Clam Bayou Marine Education Center project. The previous volunteer days have transformed the Education Center. The plants are doing very well and looking beautiful!

We will be having a volunteer workday soon to add the Royal and Buccaneer Palms, Lignum Vitae as well as a variety of others along the back porch area looking out into the water. This will be a truly beautiful addition to the property and we hope that you all come down and help in this phase of the project.

We will also be looking for groups that would like to 'adopt' certain areas of the yard for upkeep (mulching, maintenance, weeding, etc.) and future plantings. We thought this might be a good way to gain community support for the project, and keep maintenance of certain areas more localized. It is a big yard! If you know of any groups that might be interested in an 'adoption' please let me know! We would like to be able to give recognition to these groups for their efforts.

Thank you again for your support of this project. We hope that over the years the facility and grounds will be an inspiration for many to create Florida Friendly yards, utilize native plants, and create wildlife habitats in their own landscapes at home and work.

Contact: Danie Cutler at danieleec@msn.com to get involved.

Welcome New Members

Laurie and Millard Bowen, Sally Harkness, John Hood, M.D., and Christine Wight



Volunteers needed Saturday, June 16th and Sunday, June 17th

to help set up and break down the FNPS booth. We also need people to answer questions and hand out literature both days of the event. Please contact Joy Wharton to sign up at 522-8769

President's Message *Doing the Mission*

Our chapter has just passed through a wave of intense activity in support of the Florida Native Plant Society mission to preserve, conserve and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida. Spring, with its surge of energy, brings with it not only our own worthy projects, but also many requests from community groups for our involvement in their environmental programs, celebrations, and hands-on conservation efforts. In our chapter we have knowledge, experience, and resources that are recognized as critical in the ever growing green movement to establish a more harmonious relationship with the biosphere. Every weekend from mid March to the end of April we have been in demand, sometimes from more than one group for the same weekend. It can get hectic, but it is gratifying to know that environmentally aware people recognize our mission as an important part of the transformation into green living.

What kind of actions have we undertaken in support of our mission? They fall into three broad categories: conservation, education, and advocacy. Under conservation some of us with Ray Wunderlich's lead have been active in a restoration partnership with the city of St. Petersburg at Little Bayou Park clearing invasive species and preparing the park for a future planting of native species. Ray is also advising St. Petersburg on issues around a large Indian burial mound in Pinellas Point. Debbie Chayet has just finished directing a large restoration planting at Lake Seminole Park, a partnership between Pinellas County, Tampa Bay Estuary Program and volunteers. Amazingly this undertaking was initiated by Boy Scout, Cory Jordan, who started it as an Eagle Scout project. Elizabeth France is working with the city of Clearwater on a pocket park which will feature butterfly and wildlife friendly plantings. At Crescent Lake Park in northeast St. Petersburg, I have been assisting the local neighborhood in the planning of upland plants for the restoration of their park.

Our education efforts are also important in the fulfillment of our mission because through them we

attempt to raise public awareness to the importance of using native plants in creating or restoring habitat. Two recent plant sales on back to back weekends supported this intention. The outreach PowerPoint program entitled "Landscaping and Gardening with Florida Native Plants" was presented three times in the last two weeks of April to the Top of the Bay Garden Club, the Sierra Club monthly meeting, and at the Earthfest celebration at Pinellas County Cooperative Extension. We have also distributed literature and talked to many people at our exhibits at the various environmental events that mushroom up in the spring.

Advocacy is not a seasonally related activity, but is an important component of accomplishing our mission. We seem to be increasing our participation in this area. Jan Allyn represented our chapter at the county's hearing on the problems and potential solutions at Shell Key. A very serious issue has arisen around Brooker Creek Preserve. The county is currently considering withdrawing thousands of acres from the preserve so that they can utilize it for projects to service increased development in the northern reaches of the county. We, as an organization and as individuals, must resist this movement if we are to be true to our mission. In a county already overly developed the loss of these lands is not acceptable. Please contact your county commissioners and let them know that you would like to see the preserve, that we all thought we had, be preserved in its entirety.

Each of us are members of the Florida Native Plant Society because we believe in the importance of its mission to preserve, conserve, and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida. Belief and sympathy with the cause are not enough. It is imperative that belief be translated into actions that can support the manifestation of the mission into real concrete results. We must **do** the mission. If we are not doing, we are losing... the opportunity to help create a better world for all of us.

- Bill Bilodeau

Earthfest + Volunteers = Successful Spring Plant Sale

The chapter's spring plant sale / fund raiser was once again tied to the "Earthfest" at the Pinewood Cultural Center, home to Pinellas County Co-operative Extension Service. The large number of people who patronized the event was testimony to the draw of a beautiful and breezy spring day combined with the great marketing efforts of the county folks that promoted this earth day celebration. Another smaller sale was conducted at Weedon Island the following weekend.

The twice a year plant sales raise the majority of the funds that the chapter depends on for our many activities. The sales are successful strictly based on the participation and devotion of the volunteers. Everyone that gives their time to these sales is the reason the chapter is able to prosper and provide benefit to the community. Please consider giving your time for the chapter when the next sale comes up on October 6th at the fantastic Brooker Creek Preserve Education Center. Sales are a great place to meet other chapter members and get an education, too!

A special thank you is in order for volunteer co-coordinator, JOY WHARTON. She has graciously provided the charming and warm voice on the telephone requesting your aid in these important efforts for incredibly many, many years. I do not know how many years our friend has done this for the group, but I know it has been for longer than I can remember. This spring has been a special challenge for her with a painful and trying bout with a back problem. We wish her a healthy and comfortable full recovery. Thank you Joy! Consider calling Joy and having her prelist you for the fall plant sale.

We appreciate the contributions of CINDY PEACOCK, a chapter board member and coordinating extension service employee for helping us with a great location to vend at Earthfest and for making sure we had all the provisions that we needed.

Our multi-tasker, JAN ALLYN presented one of our "In Harmony with Nature" outreach programs during the day at Earthfest. Native plant education well done, Jan!

Everyone else that helped to tag and move plants to the sales locations, greet and help the public with gaining a new understanding of Florida native plants, handle money (and balance!!!), clean up, and on and on with many of the duties of the weekend, include: MARIE HUGHES, KATY ROBERTS, JASON BECK, CATHY QUINDIAGON, BILL BILODEAU, MARY ANN BEEKMAN, LISA CURRY, ROBERTA RIENFRANK, LATOYA BROWN, NANCY SMITH, CHRISTINE WHITE, ROSE TAYLOR, ELIZABETH FRANCE, and JOYCE LINNA. Thank you a million times!

RAY WUNDERLICH donated many fine native plants that helped the bottom line on these sales. Ray is a special resource to this group and has single handedly made a big difference to the coffers of the organization at our sales as well the monthly silent auction of plants at our general meetings. Thanks for the green thumb and benevolence, Ray!

Treasurer JANE WILLIAMS is honored for pulling off a superb balanced day end and for enduring the headache of sorting all the inventories and paperwork for the event. Thanks for taking it all the way to the bank, Jane!

How about that President, BILL BILODEAU, for coming all the way back from the state conference in Gainesville to support the chapter sale! That is devotion!

Thank you again, one and all! - Bruce Turley

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

***Without the dedication and hard work of our volunteers,
we wouldn't accomplish our goals.***

Conservation Corner

Air Potato Day

Ray Wunderlich III - Conservation Chairperson

It was the size of a football. An ugly grotesque hairy brown mass akin to a smaller “Jabba The Hutt”. Safe, it thought, growing for years in its earthen den, free from the likes of danger, clinging, twining, growing and producing its offspring in the oak canopy at Little Bayou Park in St Petersburg. Then came the silver potato bandit. Mounting up next to his side his noble “steed” the silver shovel - its glistening reflection matched only by the man’s silver hair. The bandit came to conquer these hairy interlopers - a match made in heaven, witnessed by few, memorable to all. He developed a strategy, went to task, and soon these Jabba like masses, smug as they were, found themselves in the bandit’s lair. On and on he toiled, the shovel now his saber, finding satisfaction in every rooty orb he captured, then slayed. You don’t mess with the silver shoveled bandit.

Others stayed too this March 31st for the nearly 50 people came to battle and dislodge a truckload of the creepy



potatoes, but none could match the bandit’s amount. When the bandit finished his slayings he, undeterred, strode to the park’s interior and proceeded to pack mule debris from its place. Others followed and soon the entire center of the park was clear of other non-native invasive debris cut earlier. Many asked, “Who was that silver potato bandit?” as he walked off into the sunset with his silver shovel firmly at his side. Most thought he was a myth or legend, his service so extraordinary. But no, they saw for themselves his great duty, for this man is Bill Bilodeau, the bandit that just doesn’t quit.

Shell Key Stakeholders' Meeting Brings Accord

On April 24th Pinellas County's Environmental Lands Division hosted a stakeholders' meeting for those interested in the management of Shell Key, a small island off the Pinellas Bayway between Pass-A-Grille and Tierra Verde. Shell Key is an important nesting area for beach-nesting birds, and a resting spot for other migrating shorebirds, including the Red Knot. The current management plan for Shell Key was written in 2000, and it is currently being revised. As detailed in recent news media, there have been numerous problems on the island caused by irresponsible visitors who leave behind trash, human and dog excrement, and camping equipment, who stray into prohibited areas and destroy bird nests, and who allow their dogs to run free and disrupt shorebird nesting. Trash left behind attracts wild raccoons which also devastate bird nests.

Aware that a contingent of boaters was preparing to make vociferous objections to tightening restrictions at Shell Key, County staff pulled out all the stops and prepared a two-hour presentation that outlined the original goals for the management plan, the current problems, and the solutions that have been proposed. Nancy Douglass of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission gave a presentation on the life history of the Red Knot, a little bird that migrates an astonishing long way each year. While it does not nest at Shell Key, the island is a vital respite for it on its long journey, a place for it to rest and recover. Law Enforcement officers for Environmental Management presented a video that was irrefutable evidence of the drinking and irresponsible behavior that they witness on a regular basis.

At least a dozen people spoke during the public comment section of the meeting. There was very little of the expected friction between boaters and the environmental community. All agreed they wanted Shell Key to be a safe and healthy place for wildlife and humans, and that additional restrictions of some kind are needed to achieve that end, as well as a better educational outreach program to make people understand the reasons behind the restrictions. An earlier stakeholders' meeting produced a list of 16 recommendations to amend the management plan, and it seems likely that most of them will be adopted in some form. The list may be found in the April minutes of the Environmental Science Forum: <http://www.pinellascounty.org/scienceforum/>.
- Jan Allyn

Events of Interest

May 22nd, Biological Diversity Day -

7:00 PM - Lecture by Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Nobel Peace Prize Nominee and past Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)

June 9th, World Environment / World Ocean Day -

10:00 AM - Discussion: "Youth, Women, and the Seas" with Philippe Cousteau and Dr. Noel Brown

Following the Panel discussion - Kristin Hoffman in Concert

7:00 PM - Panel Discussion Ed Begley, Jr. (moderator) with Philippe Cousteau and Dr. Noel Brown

8:45 PM - Robert Aviles & Insight in Concert

For more information visit <http://globalhealing.net/id/> or email info@mahaffeytheater.com or call **727/892-5798**

Household Electronics and Chemical Mobile Collection

May 19th, Indian Rocks Beach City Hall and Treasure Island Community Center

Bring in your household electronics and/or chemicals for safe disposal. Free to Residents of Pinellas County. To get a list of what to bring, contact Pinellas County Utilities at **727/464-7500** or visit their website at

<http://pinellascounty.org/utilities/hazardous.htm>

Pinellas Living Green Expo

June 16th, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

June 17th, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

The Coliseum/Sunshine Center, Downtown St. Petersburg

Provides real solutions people can implement to live better, healthier lives with less impact on the environment, and it connects people who are interested in making a positive impact in their lives and communities. This two day event will provide information, ideas, resources, products and motivation to live more sustainably. Admission, Info Sessions, Environmental Film Festival and exhibits are FREE. For more information visit www.pinellaslivinggreenexpo.org

Ultra Low Flow Toilet (ULFT) Rebate Program

Rebates of up to \$100 are available for each high flow toilet replaced with an ultra low flow (1.6 gallons per flush or less) toilet to single family, multi family, and commercial customers. This program **ends September 30, 2007**. Apply **NOW** for your ULFT Rebate by calling **727/725-2604** or email your request for an application at PinellasULFTRebates@hotmail.com



Pinellas Living Green Expo



FREE Admission

Saturday, June 16
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sunday, June 17
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The Coliseum/Sunshine Center,
St. Petersburg

Save Money. Save The Environment.

The second annual **Pinellas Living Green Expo** is a **FREE**, fun-filled family event that helps residents make informed decisions and take action to lead more healthy and sustainable lives with less impact on the environment. This two-day event will provide information, ideas, resources, products and motivation to live more sustainably through exhibits, info sessions and an environmental film festival.

Some Expo Info Session Topics include:

- Green Building & Energy Conservation • The Healthy Landscape • Composting
- Available & Affordable Green Construction for Florida • How to make a rain barrel
- Florida's Environmental History • Reducing Residential Pollution

An Environmental Film Festival is also planned!

In addition to our sponsors, some of the exhibitors include:

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| • Abike, LLC | • Integrity Organics | • St. Petersburg Audubon Society |
| • Advanced Film Solutions, Inc. | • It's Our Nature, Inc. | • The Ecuadorian Iguana |
| • Citizen ^{RE} Solar | • Nature's Variety | • University of South Florida |
| • City Beautiful Commission | • Opus Foundation | • Wildlife Haven Rehab |
| • Clear Choice Windows & More | • Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society | |
| • Day Light Concepts, LLC | • Real Building | |
| • Eco-\$mart, Inc. | • Solar Source | |
| • EcoInsulate | • Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) | |
| • Florida Voices For Animals | | |
| • Hotwire Enterprises | | |

Still accepting applications for Exhibitors!



MityMo Design • PSTA
Aveda • Grady Pridgen, Inc. • Healthy Home
Mister Landscaper • Mohawk Paper •
Nature's Food Patch • Precision Litho Service, Inc.
The Sembler Company • Tampa Bay Water
TradeWinds Beach Resort

www.PinellasLivingGreenExpo.org

Weedon Island Preserve

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| Saturday, May 19th Interpretive Trail Sign Opening Celebration | 10:00 am to 12:00 pm | Saturday, June 16th Back in Time | 10:30 am to 11:30 am |
| Saturday, May 26th Guided Hike | 9:00 am to 11:00 am | Thursday, June 21 From Sea to Shining Sea: 200 Years of America's Coastal Survey - Exhibit Opening | 10:00 am to 4:00 pm |
| Sunday, May 27th Great Weedon Bird Quest | 8:00 am to 9:30 am | Thursday, June 28 NOAA: Celebrating 200 Years of Science, Service, and Stewardship | 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm |
| Sunday, June 3rd Photography Hike | 8:00 am to 10:00 am | Contact Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center at (727) 453-6500 or visit www.pinellascounty.org/Environment/pagesHTML/se10.html to learn more about these and upcoming programs. Learn about the history of the Preserve by visiting their homepage at www.weedonislandcenter.org | |
| Friday, June 8th Ecological Research Along Florida's Gulf Coast | 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm | | |
| Saturday, June 9th Plankton -The Hidden World of the Estuary | 10:00 am to 12:00 pm | | |

Brooker Creek Preserve

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|---|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Saturday, May 19th Spring Butterfly Count | 9:30 am to 2:00 pm | Saturday, June 9th A Whining in Your Ear - Mosquitoes | 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm |
| Saturday, May 19th Edible Insects | 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm | Wednesday, June 13th Moths - Denizens of the Night | 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm |
| Wednesday, May 23rd Upland Ecology Presentation | 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm | Saturday, June 16th How to Get the Most From Your Digital Camera | 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm |
| Saturday, May 26th Guided Hike | 9:00 am to 11:00 am | Sunday, June 17th African Drum Circle | 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm |
| Saturday, May 26th Upland Ecology Field Excursion | 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm | Thursday, June 21st The Great Naturalists Reading Series | 10:00 am to 12:00 pm |
| Saturday, June 2nd Ecological Research on Florida's Gulf Coast | 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm | Saturday, June 23rd Florida's Alligators | 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm |
| Sunday, June 3rd Is It Poisonous? - Learning to Identify Florida's Venomous Snakes. | 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm | Contact Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center at (727) 453-6800 or visit www.pinellascounty.org/Environment/pagesHTML/se10.html | |

Learn how to become a Friend of Brooker Creek at <http://www.friendsofbrookercreekpreserve.org/>
Members of the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve receive a discount on admission fees.

Quintessential Quinoa

At a recent chapter meeting, Dr. Anna Dixon, Archaeological Laboratory Director for Pan-American Research Consultants, gave a new meaning to the concept of “Florida Dining”. Attendees got to sample a variety of delicious and healthy native foods and the “black drink”, a tea produced from the Yaupon Holly that has been traditionally used as a ceremonial drink by Native Americans because of its stimulating (high caffeine) properties. The highlight on the menu was Quinoa Pilaf, a mixture of quinoa, assorted fresh vegetables, and nuts. All of these ingredients have been cultivated and used by indigenous peoples of North America.

So what exactly is quinoa? Quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*) originated in the Andean region of South America, where it has been an important food for 6,000 years to indigenous peoples. Related *Chenopodium* species, such as Pitseed Goosefoot (*Chenopodium berlandieri*) was grown and domesticated in North America before corn agriculture became popular. Evidence for domestication and the extensive use of *C. berlandieri* by Native Americans comes from several archeological sites in Florida. Evidence from these sites show that *Chenopodium* seeds were smaller and had a thicker seed coat. As this grain became domesticated, the process of selection produced seeds that were larger with thinner coats.

Quinoa and related *Chenopodium* species was of great nutritional importance to Native Americans. Today, the seeds have come to be highly appreciated for its nutritional value. Quinoa has high protein content (12%–18%), contains a balanced set of essential amino acids such as lysine, methionine and cystine; and is a good source of fiber and elements (e.g. phosphorus, magnesium and iron). Quinoa is gluten free and considered easy to digest.

Naturally, quinoa has a coating of bitter-tasting saponins, making it essentially unpalatable. Traditionally, removing the saponins involved soaking the grain in water for a few hours, then rinsing it in ample running water either in a fine strainer or in cheesecloth. Most quinoa sold commercially in the U.S. has been pre-washed to remove this coating. Today, the pre-washed varieties take just 15 minutes to prepare. Quinoa is a very versatile food and can be substituted for almost any grain in almost any recipe. So, if you are looking for a healthy meal, try adding quinoa to your cooking repertoire. - Nancy Smith

Quinoa Pilaf (vegan and gluten-free)

From the kitchen of Anna Dixon

4-6 servings

- 1 cup quinoa, washed and drained (if not using the pre-washed variety)
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cup water or broth
- celery leaves, cilantro or other herbs, to taste
- 1 small red bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 3-4 small summer squash (crookneck, zucchini or mixture), diced
- 1 small can hearts of palm, diced (optional)
- 1 bunch green onions, sliced into rounds
- 1/2 cup sunflower seeds, toasted or raw
- 1/4 cup walnuts (black or English) or any other nut you like
- 2-3 Tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- lime or lemon juice, to taste
- salt and pepper, to taste (optional)

Wash and drain quinoa well (if not pre-washed), using fine strainer or cloth-lined colander. It is important to rinse the quinoa since this removes natural saponins, which can taste bitter. Heat oil in medium saucepan or wok and toss quinoa in, stirring to coat all grain with the oil. Stir and cook until slightly opaque and fragrant, taking care not to scorch the grain. Stir in 2 cups water or broth and your choice of fresh or dry herbs and bring to boil; reduce heat to simmer and cover. Let steam for about 15 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Fluff with fork and put aside to cool.

While quinoa is cooling, wash and chop the vegetables and place in large bowl. Add cooled and fluffed quinoa, tossing it with the olive oil and lime juice until coated. Chill or serve at room temperature. Before serving, stir in toasted or raw sunflower seeds and your choice of other nuts and serve with extra lime juice and seeds on the side for garnish.

This makes a nutritious meal served with some juicy sliced tomatoes on the side. Substitute other vegetables and greens from your garden as they come into season. Add tofu or soy/dairy cheese for even more protein.

Weedon Island Field Trip

Ethnobotany at Weedon Island

Florida has a rich ethnobotanical history, and as residents, we are very fortunate to live in an area with numerous cultural resources. Participants on the Weedon Island field trip on April 7th got to learn about the diverse ethnobotanical uses of many native plants. The field trip was led by naturalist, David Spencer, who provided detailed information on plants that have been culturally important for Native Americans and early settlers in Florida, and at Weedon Island, many of these plants can be easily observed along a hiking trail. During our field trip we learned that indigenous peoples of Florida used native plants for many purposes including food, fiber (e.g. clothing, baskets, ropes), medicine, religion, transportation (e.g. dugout canoes), housing materials, and tools. Some highlights of the field trip include:

Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*): boiling the leaves produces the “black drink”; a highly caffeinated tea that was used in ceremonies to communicate with the upper world.

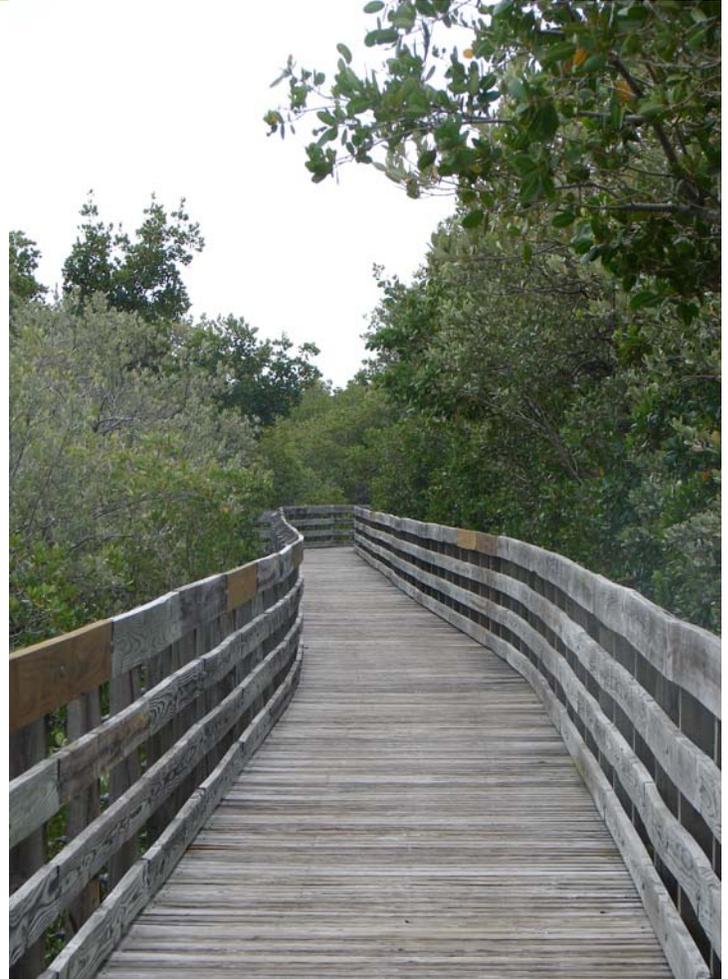
Sabal palmetto (*Serenoa repens*): fruits were used as food; leaves were used as fiber (for thatched roofs, ropes, mats). Today, extracts from the berries are used to alleviate symptoms of an enlarged prostate.

Poison ivy: 22 medicines have been made from this plant. Poison ivy contains allergens and its application to lesions and wounds kills bacteria.

Sabal palm or cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*): leaves were used for thatched homes, clothes, ropes, and fishing nets.

Passion flower (*Passiflora incarnata*): all parts of the plant were ground and boiled as it contains cyanogenic glycosides, compounds that can alleviate internal pain.

To learn more about the ethnobotanical uses of native plants, read “50 Common Native Plants



Important in Florida's Ethnobotanical History”, which can be downloaded at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW152>.

Weedon Island Preserve is a wonderful and quiet place to observe many species of native plants and explore its many diverse terrestrial and aquatic communities. In addition to its wonderful boardwalks and hiking trails, the preserve has an extensive cultural history consisting of a large shell midden and burial mound complex. To learn more about the natural history of Weedon Island, visit <http://www.weedonislandcenter.org>.
- Nancy Smith

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

Adding Color to Hammocks - Conclusion

THE UNDERSTORY

I have been writing for some time now about the challenges of adding color into the shady areas of your landscape. In previous articles, I have written about the woody species that I have found most useful in providing color. In this one, I will complete the series by describing a few of my favorite herbaceous plants that will add the color many of us desire.

For the most part, shady understories are not regions where wildflowers abound. Hammock understories, for the most part, are not populated by pollinating insects, but by those that feed on plant parts and those that feed on those that eat plant parts. Butterflies, for example, that make their homes in hammocks most often feed on decaying fruit, sap, dung and other non-floriferous things. There just aren't enough flowers to survive on. That makes finding flowering understory plants more difficult.

One major exception is those species that emerge and quickly bloom in the understory of deciduous forests. Travel throughout the Panhandle in places like Apalachicola Bluffs and Ravines in the early spring and you will find a wealth of beautiful wildflowers in the open understory. Species such as columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), and the four species of native trillium (*Trillium* spp.) all fit into this category. And, while we may be able to create conditions that will allow these species to persist here in Pinellas County, the fact remains that most, if not all, would be more work than they warrant. (I am speaking from experience, but I like a good challenge.)

In this region of the state, our hammocks are often shady most of the year. We don't get a good cold winter that allows our deciduous trees to lose their leaves in late fall and keep them barren until spring. Truth is, most of our maples and oaks lose their leaves and get new ones in the span of a week or two during most years and this makes it difficult on spring wildflowers that need a bit more time in the sun in order to flower.

Despite this, there are a few really good wildflowers for shady locations. If there wasn't, there would be no need for this article. Below, I describe some of my favorites.

Frostweed (Winged Stem) (*Verbesina virginica*)

Frostweed goes by a number of common names and it is one of several in this genus of rather tall lanky understory wildflowers that can provide color in shady locations. The other common species to our region have bright yellow flowers and are great choices also, but they are not commonly available from any of the native nurseries. Frostweed, however, has made the list and is not too difficult to find. This species produces a crown of white flowers in the very late fall or early winter. At this stage, it often stands 4-feet tall or greater. One frostweed does not engender much wow factor, but when planted in a grouping they can be quite beautiful. The first time I saw this plant was at Highlands Hammock State Park, near Sebring. It was early winter and few other plants remained in bloom. Along the entire edge of the hammock, near an old citrus grove, was a solid line of wingstem in full bloom. Their white blooms made a spectacular show – aided greatly by many dozens of swallowtail butterflies that were busily nectaring on them. Frostweed benefits by getting a bit of full sun during part of the day. When grown in deep shade, it will get lankier and will not bloom as profusely.

Giant ironweed (*Vernonia gigantea*)

I owe my first exposure to this plant to Candy Weller who had a small colony in her shady yard and who shared runners with the rest of the Chapter. Today, a few more outlets are available to acquire this plant which is good, because it has a lot to offer. Like frostweed, giant ironweed is a perennial that gets rather tall by blooming season and prefers a bit of sunlight to improve flowering and keep it from getting too lanky. In the wild, giant ironweed is a plant that seems to find the small pockets of sunlight that fall within gaps of the canopy. Like all members of this genus, it produces many small deep-lavender flowers in numerous panicles. What makes this species the best of the genus is its size and robust nature. Giant ironweed tends to bloom in the fall, but may bloom a bit earlier and later. It is a good butterfly nectar source. I have found this species to be quite adaptable, but it suffers greatly in soils that are too droughty or in situations where it gets too much sunlight.

Tampa verbena (*Glandularia tampensis*)

Tampa verbena is a state-listed Endangered species and this seems largely the result of its growing-condition requirements. It is very easy to propagate and today is widely available from a number of nursery sources. When given the environment that it requires, it is easy to grow, but I killed a number of them before I discovered what I needed to do to keep them happy. In the wild, Tampa verbena occurs at the edge of moist hammocks or in interior disturbed areas where it gets some shade and a little bit of sunlight. This species thrives in moderately disturbed areas, such as the edge of trails or mowed trails. It quickly disappears when the canopy around it closes up or when it gets crowded out by more vigorous competitors. It hates getting too dry for very long, getting too much sun or too little. It tolerates calcareous soils, but also occurs in typical acidic ones. When its conditions are met (and sometimes this is easier in a home landscape than in nature), Tampa verbena blooms profusely in spurts throughout much of the year.

Mine bloom in the winter and early spring particularly, but flowering may take place at any time – especially after some good rains. Like all verbenas, it produces many flat heads (corymbs) of blooms that are especially attractive to butterflies. In this species, the flowers are rich light lavender. It is a fairly weak-stemmed plant, but may reach 2-3 feet tall if nothing knocks it down.

Violets (*Viola* spp.)

Florida is home to a number of native violets and all do pretty well in the understory of shady woodlands. Perhaps it's a result of my Wisconsin childhood, but I have always had a soft spot for all members of this genus. When happy, violets spread profusely. They have two types of flowers – the ones we admire for their color that are pollinated “normally” and cleistogamous ones that occur during the rest of the year and which never open. These latter flowers self pollinate and help to spread seed nearly year-round. All seed capsules split open sharply at maturity and “throw” seed some distance from the parent plant. Because of this, your violets will spread if you plant them. I enjoy this trait, as it helps to fill in whatever gaps I have in the landscape and they are always easy to weed when they come up elsewhere. Violets come in a variety of flower colors. At this latitude, all are essentially evergreen when we don't have hard freezes and generally don't exceed a few inches in height. Give them moist fertile soils and they can thrive in a wide variety of light conditions. Some of my favorites are:

Bog white violet (*V. lanceolata*): A white-flowered species of wet places with narrow lanceolate leaves. Found commonly nearly statewide.

Early Blue violet (*V. palmata*): A blue-flowered species of more upland areas with deeply incised, lobed leaves. Found commonly in north Florida to a bit south of us.

Common blue violet (*V. sororia*): The common blue-flowered violet of shady hammocks, found nearly statewide. This species has heart-shaped leaves without lobes.

Primroseleaf violet (*V. primulifolia*): The common white-flowered violet of moist hammocks and shady woodlands. It too has heart-shaped leaves without lobes and is difficult to identify from the common blue violet when not in bloom.

Walter's violet (*V. walteri*): A unique dark-blue flowered species that creeps slowly across the ground and forms a “mat” of sorts. Its flowers and leaves are small, but it eventually forms rather large colonies – with most flowering occurring along the outer edges. Walter's violet is a species of dry hammocks and does not get this far south naturally. It is adaptable, however, and has done very well for me here in Pinellas.

I hope that you found this series of articles to be helpful in making some landscape choices for the shady areas of your yard. Remember that every site has its own challenges, microclimates and conditions. Some things that have not worked well for me might do so for you and vice versa. It is just fine to experiment on your own – in fact I would prefer that you do. And, if you have some favorites of your own or some different experiences from me, please let me know. We all can learn from each other and my own understanding of things changes nearly weekly as I play in my yard. I wish you the best of luck in all of your gardening endeavors.

- Craig Huegel

Eco-Tips

I have received quite a few questions about what can be recycled and where. The answer to these questions can't be printed in such a small space. However, these answers can be found by visiting the Pinellas County Utilities Solid Waste website.

If you are looking for information on what materials can be recycled visit “The A to Z Guide for Recycling & Disposal in Pinellas County” webpage at www.pinellascounty.org/utilities/getridofit/

To find out more information about curbside and drop off locations by city, visit their webpage at www.pinellascounty.org/utilities/recycle-waste.htm

Do you have items that are slightly worn but still useful? You might consider a charitable donation to

several worthy organizations. Not sure where to contribute in your neighborhood? You can find a list of charitable organizations at www.pinellascounty.org/utilities/getridofit/thrift_store_charity_list.pdf

Do you have hazardous household chemicals that you need to dispose of responsibly? Look for a hazardous materials disposal location at www.pinellascounty.org/utilities/getridofit/chemicals_hazardous.pdf

Not internet savvy but still want to do your part to control waste? For more information write or call:

Pinellas County Department
of Solid Waste Operations
3095 114th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33716
727/464-7500

