Fall Plant Sale - Sat., October 10!

This year our fall plant sale fundraiser will be at Twigs & Leaves Nursery in South St. Petersburg, on Oct. 10, from 10 am to 5 pm. A few more volunteers are needed between the hours of noon and 3 pm to assist customers with their questions and plant selections. If you’d like to be a part of this fun event, contact Jan Allyn at (727)244-0312 or Bruce Turley at (727)595-2073.

Three informational mini-sessions are planned:
10:30 am — Anne Kramer, Landscape Architect, will speak about "A Case Study of the Landscape Design Process." You may know Anne’s work from Pinellas County’s roadway beautification program.

Noon — Pam Traas, author of the book Gardening for Florida’s Butterflies will give a fun presentation on her specialty.

2:00 pm — Pinellas Chapter president Bill Bilodeau will give advice on "Maintaining Your Native Plant Landscape."

For more information, call Twigs & Leaves at (727) 822-5400.

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Pinellas Chapter FNPS Presidents
(in order of tenure from left to right)
Photo held by Marcia of our first president Judith Buhrman (deceased), Marcia Warren, Barbara Hoffman, Bruce Turley, (Katy Roberts, absent), Alexa Wilcox-Huegel, Cathy Quindiagan, Bill Bilodeau
August Field Trip Memories...
by Alexa Wilcox-Huegel

The morning breezes were a bit cool for swimming at 8:00 am when we first arrived at Ft. DeSoto County Park, so our knowledgeable leader, Barb Hoffman, led a short hike through a beautiful coastal mangrove habitat, showing us the differences between the various types of mangroves. Red mangroves have those wonderful prop roots… a very distinguishing feature…… Black mangroves have pneumatophores…… little finger-like roots that stick up all over above the muck……and White mangroves have glands on the leaves that excrete the excess salt. The “fourth” mangrove, Buttonwood, was also there, but in less numbers. It was fun to stand back and look at the overall picture seeing the different leaf shapes, colors and textures woven together. As we hiked out to the point of the island peninsula, we also saw some of the typical coastal natives such as Florida privet (Forestiera segregata) and Christmasberry (Lycium carolinianum). Along with these, we saw some huge saffron plums (Sideroxylon celastrinum) with their wonderful old gnarly trunks. Makes you wonder how many hurricanes they have withstood.

After the short walk, we were warmed up and ready to tackle the Bay in search of seagrasses and the wildlife that depend on them. As we donned our masks and headed out to the grass flats of Ft. DeSoto, we saw firsthand what Barb had taught us about the various types of seagrasses. It became very evident why grasses are the nurseries of the undersea world. Later, as we pulled up the seine nets, we found lots of tiny shrimp, young needle fish, and numerous other fish that we couldn’t readily identify. We even had a couple tiny puffer fish, looking like little blobs in our nets until they puffed themselves up to the size of a thumbnail.

What better way to spend a hot August day, than snorkeling the Bay with friends and learning more about native seagrasses and sea life? Our thanks go out to Barb Hoffman for planning such a fun and educational trip. And, thanks to Pinellas County for preserving this wonderful spot that makes life here so enjoyable.

November Elections

It is that time of year when we present to our membership a slate of officers to guide us through the 2010 year. The election is held at our annual November meeting. For the 2010 term, the nominating committee proposes the following slate of officers and directors.

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

Returning Directors:
Bill Bilodeau
Danie Cutler

New Directors:
Mary Saunders
Ginny Nelson
Wilma Holly
Mary Jackson

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Chapter Calendar

October Program: Wed. Oct. 7
7:00 p.m. Pinellas County Extension, Largo
Speaker: Craig Huegel, Ph.D.
Topic: Florida’s Sandhill Community
Chapter member, Dr. Craig Huegel, will provide an in-depth look at one of Florida’s most beautiful and interesting natural communities; the Florida Sandhill. Sandhills are one of the most diverse ecosystems in North America, but are now globally imperiled. Once common to much of Florida, only 5% remains intact today. Join us for a very visual tour of some of its most interesting plants and wildlife.

Sat., October 10: Fall Plant Sale (article page 1)

October Field Trip (with Camping/Overnight option)
Sat., October 17
Sandhill Ecosystem in Ocala National Forest.

The Field Trip is to one of the most wonderful sandhill areas left in Florida; the Riverside Island Tract in Ocala National Forest. What makes the Riverside Island Tract so special is that it is one of the few remaining longleaf pine forests that has been managed appropriately with prescribed fire for decades. The conditions present when the first settlers came to Florida have been largely maintained and the great diversity of plants and wildlife are intact. The overstory of longleaf pine is open and park-like and the understory is dominated by wiregrass and a wide variety of wildflowers. The fall season shows this ecosystem at its most beautiful. We will see several species of blazing stars, Florida paintbrush, golden asters, and much much more. We will plan to visit several distinct areas within the Tract to see the response of these plants to fire; visiting areas that have recently burned and those that were burned more than a year ago.

This is an easy hike and we will not be straying too far from our vehicles at any one time. We plan to drive to different areas and explore for a while in each. Please wear appropriate clothing and closed toe shoes. We may encounter chiggers, so bring repellant to spray your boots and pant legs. You will want to also bring a hat, sunscreen, and plenty of drinking water. Cameras and binoculars also are recommended. This is a prime area for red-cockaded woodpeckers and we are likely to see some, along with fox squirrels and other sandhill wildlife. Bring a lunch and join us after the morning hike for a quick dip in Juniper Springs and a short hike to see the rare yellow Florida anise in its natural habitat.

Dr. Craig Huegel will be our leader for this trip. You will need to purchase a day pass to enter Ocala National Forest. The cost per car is $4.00. For more information, and details of carpooling times and meeting places, please contact Alexa Wilcox-Huegel @ alexa776@tampabay.rr.com or (727) 422-4792.

Camping Option: Craig & Alexa are going to camp for the weekend at beautiful Juniper Springs Campground inside Ocala National Forest - a short distance from the
hiking spot - and they invite anyone else who is interested in camping to make reservations with them. (They are tent-camping, but RV areas are available as well). If you are interested in camping, please contact Alexa asap to make reservations: (727) 422-4792.

Below is a website to get info, see site map and see some pictures of Juniper Springs(Craig & Alexa will be in campsite # 79 in the Fern Hammock section)

http://www.recreation.gov

If you stay overnight, please plan to join us for a closer look at some of the scrub ecosystem also present in Ocala National Forest. Craig and Alexa will lead a short walk on Sunday morning to look at some of the plants and wildlife. There are some real rarities here and maybe we’ll get lucky and see them.

**November Program: Wed. Nov. 4**
7:00 p.m. Pinellas County Extension, Largo
Special slide presentation of Chapter highlights of the year with pictures of field trips and projects our Chapter has done as well as photos of our members. This meeting is also our annual election of new officers and board of directors.

**November Field Trip**
Clam Bayou. Hike through the Chapter’s restoration project area and join us for the potluck picnic lunch to follow. Bring a dish to share. More details to follow.

**December Program: Tuesday, Dec. 8**
**Conservation Celebration** (see page 11)
Speaker: We are pleased to announce that Douglas Tallamy, Ph.D., and author of *Bringing Nature Home*, will be our Conservation Celebration speaker on Tuesday, December 8. Dr. Tallamy is an entomologist and wildlife ecologist who teaches at the University of Delaware. With the publication of his book, he has become nationally known and currently maintains a heavy speaking schedule around the country. His underlying theme that we need to plant more native plants in our human environments to protect wildlife biodiversity throughout the nation is a powerful message. In his talks, he reveals depths of ecology and the food web which allows the listener an enhanced understanding and appreciation for the whole system. His discussion of insects as part of the process is utterly fascinating and his visuals are very engaging. Along with the speaker, this event will also feature a silent auction, awards, and light edibles. Please join us at this annual joint meeting of the St. Petersburg Audubon Society and the Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society.

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**President’s Message**

As I write this, we are approaching our Chapter’s third annual landscape tour. For the tour committee, the preparation is intense and homeowners are “sprucing up” (curious term) their properties to welcome the general public. “It’s show time.” To me, this tour represents something significant . . . that these homeowners with sites on the tour have been willing to bring native plants into their private spaces in an extensive way and to live intimately with them every day. It is a marriage of sorts with trials, tribulations, and many joyful surprises. I very much respect the qualities of these people…the courage to be different and to step out of the mainstream way of doing landscaping, the willingness to experiment often with unknown plants and plant combinations, and the generosity to share their knowledge and experience with others. A hearty thank you to each of the tour homeowners for demonstrating in real concrete terms the fulfillment of the FNPS mission to preserve, conserve, and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

Important chapter developments coming up this fall season include:
- Election of officers and board members for 2010
- Planning of programs and field trips for next year
- Selection of the Chapter Award winner for outstanding support of our mission
- Conservation Celebration, our annual joint meeting with St. Petersburg Audubon in early December

If as a member you wish to make suggestions regarding any of these topics, please contact me billbilodeau@verizon.net or 727-488-3163.

-- Bill Bilodeau
Plant Profile: Blazing Stars – Part 2
by Craig Huegel

Last fall, I wrote about many of the more common blazing stars. This time around, I thought it might be fun to look at some of the less common species. To me, fall is the season of blazing stars. I know that a great many other wildflowers are also coming into their own at this time, but what dominates my attention are the blazing stars; sometimes referred to as “gayfeathers.”

Blazing stars are plants of the open. They do not do well in shade – even for a half day. All of them are native to sunny locations. A very few tolerate “wet feet,” but most also require well-drained soils. A few are somewhat diminutive and grow no taller than 2-3 feet, but most are robust and reach heights of 4-5 feet at blooming time. Therefore, they need a setting where they don’t look out of place. Small planting areas rarely accent their attributes. They can look out of place in tight quarters, but given a somewhat expansive landscape setting, they are breathtaking in mass. Never plant blazing stars individually – unless your long-term goal is to collect seed and eventually fill your plantings in.

I have written extensively about blazing stars in my wildflower blog. You may wish to check it out if you are looking for even more information than I can provide here: http://hawthornhillwildflowers.blogspot.com/

Seventeen species of blazing stars have been described for Florida. A few of these are rare endemics, found nowhere else in the world. One species is a semitropical found only in south Florida and the Bahamas. Others are quite rare in Florida, but rather common to the states to our north. Over the years, I have grown most of them and many make very interesting additions to a mixed wildflower landscape. The common ones I have described previously are:

- Liatris gracilis – Graceful blazing star
- L. elegans – Elegant blazing star
- L. chapmanii – Chapman’s blazing star
- L. tenuifolia – Scrub blazing star
- L. spicata – Dense blazing star

Here’s a few of the most interesting less-common species:

Rough blazing star – Liatris aspera

Though sometimes referred to as “tall blazing star”, I prefer to call this wonderful wildflower by the literal translation of its Latin name, *L. aspera*, meaning “rough.” Besides, it is not very tall in comparison with many other native Florida blazing stars; rarely getting taller than 2-3 feet.

Rough blazing star is a rather rare plant in Florida, but it is one of the most widely distributed species in North America. In Florida, it is documented only from 5 counties in the extreme north; Jackson, Leon, Wakulla, Columbia, and Alachua. In the rest of the continent, it occurs in nearly every state in the eastern half (from North Dakota south to Texas and east to the Atlantic) and most of eastern Canada. In all of its range, it occurs in sunny locations on well-drained soils. In our Pinellas County garden, rough blazing star emerges from its winter dormancy in early spring, but remains as a basal rosette of dull blue-green leaves until late summer. At this time, it sends it’s somewhat zigzag flower stalk upward and the large, scaly button-like flower buds soon follow.

It is these large flower heads that make rough blazing star one of the showiest of the blazing stars. Each head is nearly an inch across and comprised of a great many deep lavender flowers. Unlike many of the others, most of the buds open at about the same time - so while the blooming season does not last as long, it is a spectacular show while it lasts.
Garber’s blazing star – *Liatris garberi*
Garber’s blazing star (*Liatris garberi*) is a somewhat “tropical” blazing star and is restricted to the southern half of the Florida peninsula and the Bahamas. This is a species of moist open habitats and it is most common in the understory of wet flatwoods. As such, it is only one of two species (*L. spicata* is the other) that tolerates poor drainage.

Garber’s blazing star shares many of the characteristics of the genus. It overwinters underground and re-emerges in the spring as a basal rosette of grasslike leaves. In the early summer, it begins to send its flower stalk upward. Blooming occurs in late August and early September on flower stalks that rarely stand taller than 2 feet. This is decidedly earlier than most other species and is a good field clue to aid in its identification. The stems are slightly “hairy” and the flower buds are held away from the main stem by short stalks. Each bud contains less than 10 rich lavender flowers. What also distinguishes Garber’s blazing star from other species is its finger-like corm. While other blazing stars have rounded corms that look like a typical bulb, Garber’s is decidedly finger-like (like a Mandrake root) with at least three “fingers”; sometimes more.

Garber’s blazing star is well-behaved in the garden. Because of its shorter stature, it is not prone to falling over like many of the taller species. Its small size allows it to fit nearly anywhere, but it is best used near the front of the planting bed or near walking trails so it can be easily admired.

Gholson’s blazing star only occurs in the deep sandy ridges around Torreya State Park in extreme north Florida, just west of Tallahassee. As such, it joins a number of other very rare plants found only in this region of the state. It is listed as a state Endangered species; not because it is uncommon in its natural range, but because its natural distribution is so restricted.

Like nearly all blazing stars, Gholson’s is deciduous. It makes its appearance in early spring as a basal rosette of thin leaves, but starts its upward growth almost immediately. Mature specimens eventually reach 3 feet tall or more before flowering in early fall. Gholson’s blazing star produces a great many flower buds along its main stalk, but the flowers are small and each bud produces only a few flowers. These buds are noticeably held away from the main stem by stalks - quite similar to that of the graceful blazing star. Like most species in this genus, Gholson’s blooms in early fall and the flowers attract butterflies, small bees, and a number of other pollinators.

Although restricted in its natural range, we have grown this species in our Pinellas County landscape for several years with great success. Give this species good drainage and plenty of sun. It will do well with other blazing stars and in a mixed wildflower planting of other sandhill or scrub species.

Gholson’s blazing star – *Liatris gholsoni*
Named for one of Florida’s most respected modern botanists, Angus Gholson, *Liatris gholsoni* is only recently described as a new species of blazing star and is quite rare. At first glance, it appears identical to the common graceful blazing star (*L. gracilis*), but there are stark differences in the way the leaves come off the main stem, the length of the flower stalk, and the “hairs” on the stem and leaves.

**Liatris gholsoni**
**Scaly blazing star – *Liatris squarrosa***

Scaly blazing star (*Liatris squarrosa*) is a rather rare component of Florida’s native flora; occurring in only 4 counties in the extreme northern part of the state. It is a rather widespread species elsewhere, however, and is found throughout much of the eastern half of the nation – except the most northern states.

Like many of our blazing stars, it occurs in upland sites where it has well-drained soils and plenty of sunshine. In Florida, this includes dry open woodland edges, calcareous openings, and open pinelands. Scaly blazing star begins blooming in July (much earlier than most species in this genus) and is finished by August/September. Unlike most members of this genus, it rarely exceeds 2 feet in height and is often multi-stemmed. The flower buds are rather few per stem and include about 10-15 flowers each.

Despite this, scaly blazing star is quite showy when in bloom. Individual flowers are deep lavender in color and the flower buds are rather large. The common name is derived from the noticeable hooked scales that surround each bud – a feature that makes identification quite easy.

**Appalachian blazing star – *Liatris squarrulosa***

Appalachian or southern blazing star (*Liatris squarrulosa*) is quite rare in Florida - occurring in only Gadsden and Okaloosa Counties in the panhandle. It is rather common, however, to much of the Southeast and Midwest in well-drained soils and open, sunny habitats. Throughout its range it is a rather variable species.

This is another fall-blooming blazing star and in our yard it begins in late August and continues into September. The buds are large and contain a great many light lavender flowers. They are enclosed in scaly bracts. Appalachian blazing star is also rather tall. By blooming season, the wand-like flower stalk is 3-4 feet tall. The coarse and twisted leaves go all the way to the top of the stalk and partially hide the developing buds. Like others in this genus, it is deciduous. The basal leaves develop in early spring, but it begins to elongate shortly thereafter. The leaves and stems are not “hairy”, but they are a bit “scurfy”.

Despite the nearly identical spelling of the Latin names of this species and the scaly blazing star, they are quite different species. I have not grown this species for very long and do not yet know how well it will persist over time. From my experience, however, it is not so much the natural range of a species that determines its hardiness in our landscapes, but our ability to meet its soil, water, and sun needs – the microclimate conditions.
Another Hot Landscape Tour Success
by Jim McGinity

The third annual Native Plant Landscape tour was held on Saturday, September 26th and Sunday, September 27th. Although the surveys and registration information are still coming in, it appears that the event was very successful. Several hundred people attended either one or both of the tours, with the large majority being non-members of the Florida Native Plant Society. As was the case last year, we gained a few new members of our Chapter and, hopefully, planted the seed with many more.

Based on feedback received from attendees last year, the tour committee made a few improvements on last year’s successful tour. The dates of the tour were moved back a week in an effort to allow more plant species in the various landscapes to be in bloom. This seemed to be effective as more species were in full bloom, including the cassias, marlberry and dotted horsemint. Also, the addition of plant labels for an average of 15 – 20 plants in each yard this year allowed tour participants to more easily identify some of the plants. Committee member Michaele Adams created laminated plant labels that were mounted on attractive curved bamboo stakes. Look for an increasing number of labeled plants on future tours.

Again, the north and south tours were on two consecutive days, which seems to work well for this event. The tours had a nice mix of landscape types - offering something for everyone. The committee made a special effort to select some newly installed landscapes to allow participants to see what these landscapes look like in their younger stages. The hope is that it will reduce the intimidation factor often experienced when people new to landscaping see mature, established landscapes. Maybe some of the newer landscapes this year will be highlighted in a few years to show how they look with a few more years of growth.

Often, it is unclear if our educational message about the benefits of using native plants in the landscape makes a difference, but this year we had concrete
evidence that it does. Homeowners Frank and Linda Brandt attended the tour for the first time last year (since they had just relocated from Arizona). After experiencing the tour, they changed the direction of their landscaping plans and have begun converting their conventional landscape using Florida native plants. In addition, they have interspersed vegetables and herbs with their natives in their backyard; resulting in an attractive mix. The north tour included the Brandt’s landscape. It is an amazing testimony of the impact this Chapter event can have on individuals. Stay tuned for photographs from this year’s tour on the website and during the November and December members programs.

As is usually the case with any big event, it takes a group of dedicated, hard-working individuals to pull it off. I would like to extend a special thanks to the planning committee (Bill Bilodeau, Mary Sanders, Micheele Adams and Claudia Lewis) for many (sweaty) months of planning and hard work. Also, we would not have a tour without the gracious homeowners who prepare their landscapes for viewing by hundreds of interested people. Their passion and excitement for their native landscapes really makes for a rich, educational experience for all involved. We appreciate the support of all those people who attended this year and encourage everyone to come out next year.
OFFICERS
President: Bill Bilodeau 322-9695
Vice-President: Jim McGinity
Secretary: Melody Staunton
Treasurer: Jane Williams 447-7394
Chapter Rep: Deborah Chayet  
dchayet@verizon.net
Past President: Cathy Quindiagan 327-7573

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS-AT-LARGE
Danie Cutler, Bruce Turley

Welcome New Members!
Debra Davies, Dianne Fecteau,
Lynette Pittman

Pinellas Chapter
FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
P.O. Box 1661
Pinellas Park, FL 33780-1661

Pinellas Chapter Info Line:
(727) 544-7341

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

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

STANDING COMMITTEES
Conservation: open
Education-Displays: Marie Hughes 521-1261
   --Scholarships: Cindy Peacock 787-4031
   --Special Events/Festivals: Cindy Peacock
Field Trips: open
Membership: Cathy Quindiagan
Newsletter Editor: Craig Huegel 422-6583,
   Huegelec55@aol.com
   and Cathy Vogelsong 518-1026
Publicity: Janie Bridges 483-9162 or
   janiebridges59@yahoo.com
Sales --Merchandise: Rose Taylor 821-8267
   --Plants: Bruce Turley 595-2073

COORDINATORS
Budget: Jane Williams 447-7394
Hospitality: Mary Ann Beekman
Volunteer Coordinator: Laurie Bowen 709-1015
Web Master/Pinellas News: Jan Allyn 399-1022

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free within the state (800-435-7352, reg. no. CH4271). Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state. (FDACS/DPI Cert. #47222877). Original artwork by Cathy Vogelsong.
Pinellas Native Plant Society, St. Petersburg Audubon Society and Pinellas/UF Extension
Invite you to our annual

Holiday Conservation Celebration

Tues., Dec. 8, 2009

Presenting “Bringing Nature Home” by Dr. Douglas Tallamy

Dr. Douglas Tallamy, Professor of Entomology, University of Delaware, and nationally recognized author of “Bringing Nature Home,” will help us better understand the interaction between insects, wildlife and native plants, and explain how “we as gardeners can profoundly impact the diversity of life in our yards, towns and planet.”

6:30 -- Mix & Mingle
Environmental Exhibits
Silent Auction
Light snacks

7:30 -- Welcome
Conservation Awards

8:00 - 9:00 -- Program

Public Invited * Free Admission * Program Begins at 8:00
Pinellas Extension Service, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo
Map & Info: http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/map.shtml
www.stpeteaudubon.org * www.fnps.org/chapters/pinellas