

The Understory

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

October - November 2010

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Save the Date: Dec. 1, 2010

Doors open at 6:30 pm for silent auction of nature-inspired items and exhibits by over 12 environmental groups.

Our keynote speaker will be world-renown scientist and speaker, Dr. Stephen Buchmann, author of *Forgotten Pollinators* and numerous other publications on the important topic of the mutual dependence of plants and their animal pollinators and the fragility of this system in the face of habitat destruction and environmental poisoning. Dr. Buchmann is President and founder of The Bee Works and comes to us from Tucson, Arizona.

President's Message

By: Alexa Wilcox-Huegel

Fall is always one of the busiest times of the year for our Chapter and this year is no exception. We have lots of fun and exciting events coming up. One of the most important responsibilities we will have this fall is the opportunity to vote our opinions at the ballot box. While the Governor's race and US Senate race have been highlighted in the general media, to me one of the other most important issues we will see on the ballot is the Hometown Democracy Amendment; Amendment # 4. In light of the lack of vision or foresight of so many of our politicians, it seems this amendment is one of the most important chances we have to keep some control in the hands of the people. Please see the article elsewhere in this newsletter about Amendment 4. There has been a lot of misleading information about it.

By the time you get this newsletter, our 4th Annual Native Landscape tour will be over. This has become one of our biggest outreach events of the year; our opportunity to show the world... well, more realistically, the County, how exciting an 'all or mostly' native yard can be. Thanks to all of you who volunteered to help: the Landscape Committee, comprised of Jim McGinity, Bill Bilodeau, Mary Jackson, Michael Adams and Mike Stallings, and all of you who worked in the homeowners' yards or helped with publicity, photos, signs, etc.

The next big event (besides our October 6th, membership meeting) is the Fall Native Plant Sale and Festival on October 9th (see flier p. 2) This event will be a little different from previous plant sales as we will have a number of extra happenings. The Plant Sale is another event where we will need your volunteer help and, as those of you who have helped with this event in the past know, it is also a fun and effective way to learn lots more about native plants. This fall we will have some great talks, experts on **(continued page 3)**

Florida Native Plant Society, Pinellas Chapter

FALL Native Plant Festival

Saturday, October 9, 2010

9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Wilcox Nursery & Florist

12501 Indian Rocks Rd, Largo

(727) 595-2073



Event will include:

- Ø Native plant specialists to advise and assist with plant choices
- Ø Educational talks: See topics and times listed below
- Ø Information on composting, use of rain barrels, best mulch for your site
- Ø Author, Dr. Craig Huegel will be speaking and autographing his book:
Landscaping for Wildlife with Florida's Native Plants
- Ø Nature Photography prints - Christina Evans, professional photographer
- Ø Nature inspired ceramics and art to enhance your outdoor spaces
- Ø Information on installing ponds or water features to attract wildlife to your landscape.
- Ø Potted Herbs for your 'Kitchen Garden'; Farm fresh produce
- Ø Special & unique selection of hard to find *native wildflowers*

Educational talks:

10:00 am: **Designing Your Landscape with Native Plants:** Jason Beck, landscape designer will give insight & advice on 'going native' in your landscape.

11:00 am: **Landscaping for Wildlife:** Dr. Craig Huegel, author & wildlife biologist, will show you how to provide the food & habitat needed to attract butterflies & birds to your yard

12:00 pm: **Gardening in the Shade:** Bruce Turley, landscape designer, horticulturist & nursery owner, will help you make your shady areas more beautiful and interesting.

1:00 pm: **Maintaining a Native Landscape:** Bill Bilodeau, landscape design and maintenance. Tending a native landscape is different from a formal landscape. Done properly you will need less water, fertilizers and NO pesticides. Learn the difference and the how-to's.

composting, rain barrels, water features, nature-inspired art, and nature photography. (And great pizza for the volunteers!!)

Since fall is one of Florida's great seasons for wildflowers, our October field trip will be a peaceful and relaxing day in the country (near Brooksville) with an easy hike and picnic to enjoy nature and some of Florida's beautiful wildflowers.

That brings us to November. This year, we are bringing back the tradition of a pot-luck dinner for our November meeting. This meeting will focus on the friendships we've built and the fun (and work) we have had over the last year, with a year-long photo review of some of the things we have done (camping, kayaking), places we've been, and beautiful plants and natural areas we've seen. This will also be a time to say some thank-you's to those who have gone above and beyond the normal volunteering that every volunteer organization needs. You will have the opportunity to vote on a new Board of Directors, and get a preview of the programs and field trips we are proposing for 2011!

Your Board is already planning for the big December Conservation Celebration, our joint meeting with St. Petersburg Audubon and the Pinellas Cooperative Extension, joined by most of the County's other environmental organizations. As in the past, all of us will bring exhibits and information to share. We have a nationally known keynote speaker, Dr. Stephen Buchmann, co-author of the bestseller and ecologically ground-breaking work "The Forgotten Pollinators." Dr. Buchmann will have some of his books for sale, and we will also have the annual Silent Auction, which includes art, gardening aids, getaways, and plants. Don't forget your checkbook and help support our two organizations! Our wonderful FNPS volunteers have once again worked enough hours at the Cooperative Extension office for us to use this facility for another year. I especially want to thank Cindy Peacock and Wilma Holley for helping to set up the room for us every month and for all they do to make our meetings run smoothly. We really appreciate your dedication.

Alexa

Welcome New Members!

Deann Baker, Tiffany Custer, Laura Lesieur, John & Monica Pinnell

Chapter Calendar

October Program: Wednesday, October 6, 7:00 pm, Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo.

Program Topic: Wildflowers for Wildlife

Speaker: Craig Huegel, PhD

Join us, Wednesday October 6, as Chapter member and author, Craig Huegel, PhD, presents an informative and visual look at the importance of wildflowers and other groundcovers for wildlife. Wildlife landscapes have traditionally focused on using native trees and shrubs to create habitat while virtually ignoring the importance of groundcovers, while landscaping with wildflowers, native grasses and ferns has considered aesthetics more than function. Craig will refocus our attention on the habitat value of our native groundcovers and present a case for using some of the best in our home landscapes. Beauty can have function. Come and see for yourself.

October Field Trip: Saturday, October 23

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

Location: McKethan Lake Trail and Sandhills, Withlacoochie State Forest, US Hwy 41, Brooksville.

Time: To Carpool, meet at 7:45 am at Perkins Pancake House, Gulf to Bay, just east of US 19. We will leave promptly at 8:00 am.

If you drive up separately, meet at 9:30 am at McKethan Lake Day Use Area parking lot, right off US Hwy 41, seven miles north of Brooksville. See directions below.

Description: The Withlacoochee State Forest contains a wide variety of habitats especially worth exploring in the fall. The Citrus Tract, north of Brooksville, is especially rich in plants and wildflowers, and we will spend the morning seeing some of them in the peak of blooming. We will meet at the main visitor area at McKethan Lake Day Use Area and then carpool/walk to a sandhill site across the street where we should see dozens of wonderful wildflowers – including four species of blazing star. This will be a very short stroll off trail. After this, we will head back to walk the two mile McKethan Lake Trail which is mostly shady and goes through hammock habitat. When we are finished, we will be back at the picnic tables where we will have lunch before heading home.

Bring: Closed toe, walking shoes or boots, and long pants highly recommended. Bring water, (Lunch for later) insect repellent, and binoculars if you have them. There is

Chapter Calendar, continued

a small fee (used to be \$2.00, might be \$4.00 now) for day use of the State Forest facilities.

Sign-up / Information: Contact Alexa Wilcox-Huegel at e-mail: alexa776@tampabay.rr.com or call (727) 422-4792 and leave a message if you do not have email.

Directions to McKethan Lake: Trailhead Location: Day use fee required at this location.

From the south: From US Hwy. 50 in Brooksville, go east on 50, turn north onto US 41 (signs may say Floral City or Inverness) go N for seven miles, The entrance road is just past Lake Lindsay Rd. (CR 476), the second paved road on the left, just past that intersection. The parking lot is just inside the entrance of the park.

If you are coming *from Citrus County:* At the intersection of SR 44 and US Hwy. 41 in Inverness, go south on US Highway 41 for 12 miles. Turn right at the McKethan Lake Day Use Area sign. The entrance road is the second paved road north of the intersection of Hwy. 41 and Lake Lindsay Rd. . The trailhead is on the right at the end of the paved one-way road that circles around the lake.

November Program: Wednesday, Nov. 3, 7:00 pm, Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Rd, Largo. We will start the evening off with some special thanks, and elect the officers and Board of Directors for 2011. Then its **Pot Luck**. Bring something to share . . . finger foods, bucket of chicken, casserole, dessert . . . and enjoy a relaxing, laid-back, fun evening talking to friends over dinner, along with a Power Point presentation reviewing what we have done, where we have gone and the beauty of nature we have seen in the past year.

November Field Trip: Sunday, November 7
You must sign up for all Field Trips — see info below.
Location: Crooked Lake Sandhill and Prairie, Babson Park, Polk County

Time: Meet at 7:00 am at Perkins Pancake House, Gulf to Bay, just east of US 19, if you wish to carpool. If you drive up separately, meet at 9:30 am at Crooked Lake Sandhill parking lot, Babson Park. See directions below.

Description: Crooked Lake Sandhill and Crooked Lake Prairie are two separate but adjacent properties, purchased by Polk County and managed as part of their environmental lands program. Crooked Lake Sandhill is one of the best remaining examples of sandhill habitat in Polk County. An open canopy of longleaf pines

characterizes the sandhill ecosystem. The property has a rich understory of native grasses and wildflowers. Wildlife observed on site include bald eagles, ospreys, bobcats, foxes, and gopher tortoises. Nine rare plant species and four rare animal species may be observed from the nature trail (0.8 miles). We will walk this trail and then take a short drive to Crooked Lake Prairie. This property was purchased by Polk County in 1997. Crooked Lake is designated as an Outstanding Florida Water. Much of the land is open with little shade. Cactus is abundant, and care must be taken when hiking the property. The site includes wet and dry prairie, pine flatwoods, marsh, lake shore and oak scrub. Wildlife here includes bald eagles, turkey, deer, gopher tortoises, scrub-jays, and an array of wading birds. When we are finished walking the short loop trail, we will be back at the entrance where we will have lunch before heading home. Wear good walking shoes or boots, and bring water, insect repellent, and binoculars if you have them.

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

Directions to Crooked Lake Sandhill: We will take I-275 to I-4 and follow this to the exit at U.S. 27. From U.S. 27, turn east on C.R. 640. Continue south on S.R. 17 through the town of Babson Park. Turn right onto Hollister Road. The site entrance is located at the intersection of Wes Mann Road and Hollister Road. This trip is about 95 miles and should take us about two hours. We will have maps available at the November Chapter meeting.

November Elections: Proposed officers and Board of Directors for 2011

It is that time of year when we present our membership with a slate of officers to guide us through the 2011 year. The nominating committee proposes the following:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| President: | Alexa Wilcox |
| Vice President: | Mary Jackson |
| Secretary: | Jan Allyn |
| Treasurer: | Jane Williams |
| Chapter Representative: | Debbie Chayet |
| Directors: | Mary Ann Beekman, Frank Brandt, Tiffany Custer, Andrew Karpinski, Ginny Nelson, Mary Sanders |

Plant Profile: Sunflowers

By: Craig Huegel

It makes sense that in a land as sunny as Florida, we would have many sunflowers in our native flora. Florida is home to 16 separate species of native sunflowers, and a few commonly grown non-natives such as Jerusalem artichoke (*H. tuberosus*) and annual sunflower (*H. annuus*); the source of commercial sunflower seeds. For the most part, sunflowers are deciduous perennials that thrive in open sunny locations. Many become quite tall and are common to moist soil habitats, but there are notable exceptions that make wonderful additions to drier sites. Nearly all spread throughout the landscape by underground suckers and eventually form dense colonies in areas where their habitat needs are met, and most have broad yellow-petal flowers that make them showy additions to the landscape. Only a few, however, are generally available through commercial sources. Hopefully, more will be grown in the future. Sunflowers are excellent nectar sources for bees and butterflies and it is rare to see any of them in bloom that don't have something pollinating the flowers. The seeds are important wildlife food as well. Doves, finches and a host of other seed-eating birds often flock to a patch of sunflowers once the seed ripens. Below are descriptions of some of my favorites.

Narrowleaf sunflower (*H. angustifolius*) is extremely common throughout the northern two-thirds of Florida and can be grown even further south if added to a landscape with the proper growing conditions. This species prefers the moist soils found at the edges of open wetlands and ditches. Although it is somewhat adaptable to drier sites, it will fail if kept too dry for too long - especially during the heat of summer. This is one of our tallest species and grows rapidly each summer to its mature height of six feet or more. Flowering occurs in late summer and early fall. The flower heads are composed of yellow ray petals surrounding a dark central disk. As this plant suckers aggressively in moist soil, it will eventually colonize large areas. This can be a problem in the wrong location,



Narrowleaf sunflower
H. angustifolius

but spectacular at the edge of ponds or in swales where it can be confined by adjacent uplands. Do not use this plant in small landscape settings as it is simply too large.



Beach/Dune sunflower (*H. debilis*) may be the most widely grown native sunflower in Florida and available from a wide variety of commercial growers. Native to coastal dunes along the east coast of Florida to around Titusville and the west coast north to Pinellas County, it can be grown outside this range if given well-drained soils and plenty of sun. The only conditions that will kill it are soils that remain wet or excessively cold temperatures. Freezing temperatures will damage the above-ground foliage, but it will resprout unless exposed to prolonged cold in the low 20's F or below. In better conditions, it may bloom year round and spreads outward from the main clump to form a large colony many feet across. The east coast form (*H. debilis* ssp. *debilis*) tends to stand taller (about 1-2 feet) than the west coast form (*H. debilis* ssp. *vestitus*), which is quite prostrate. Use this species to cover open sandy areas in full sun and be prepared to prune it occasionally to maintain it where it is wanted. It makes a showy border wildflower if used alone, but can be added to mixed coastal plantings.

Rayless sunflower (*H. radula*) is the most unusual member of this genus in Florida. As its common name suggests, the typical yellow petals of the ray flowers are absent or greatly reduced, and all that remains is the central disk. While these purplish tubular flowers attract a wide assortment of butterflies and other

pollinators, they are not showy. The aesthetics of this plant lies in its strangeness and in its foliage. Rayless sunflower inhabits open pinelands and fields and prefers soils that are seasonally moist. It is quite adaptable, though, to typical landscape settings and does not require supplemental watering except in periods of extreme prolonged drought. The broad, deep green, rounded hairy leaves hug the ground and the plants form extensive colonies over time. Blooming occurs in the late summer and fall and persists for many weeks. The flower stalks stand 1-2 feet above the basal leaves and each plant may produce several. Use this plant in a mixed wildflower setting with species that have showier blooms. In a mixed setting, its unusual flowers and attractive foliage add a unique element to the overall landscape and the butterflies it attracts make its inclusion quite worthwhile.



Rayless sunflower
H. radula

Photos by
Craig Huegel

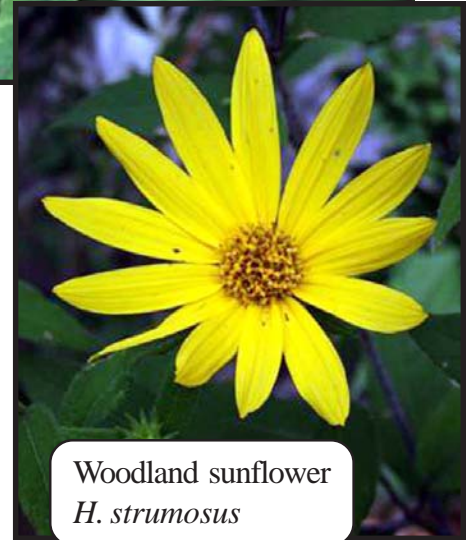


Resindot sunflower
H. resinusus

Resindot sunflower (*H. resinusus*) is one of our few native sunflowers resident to deep sandy inland habitats. As such, it can be used in settings where most other native sunflowers fail. It occurs naturally in only three central panhandle counties, but is common in states immediately north of us. Resindot sunflower gets its name from the many glands that dot the upper surfaces of its leaves. The broad deep-green leaves are rough to the touch and the tiny hairs that cover the leaves and stems are visible on close examination. This is a large deciduous species that may reach six feet tall or more by late summer. Numerous side stems are produced and the ends of all the branches produce multiple flower buds. The fully opened flower heads may be three inches across. Both the ray and disk flowers are bright yellow. Because of its size, use this species near the back of a mixed wildflower planting or interior to a more-extensive landscape. It is adaptable to most landscape settings, but needs good drainage and high sunlight for best performance. Although naturally rare in Florida, I have grown it for years in several Pinellas County landscapes and believe it can be used in most parts of the state if given the conditions it prefers. Resindot sunflower will sucker, but not as aggressively as most and usually only near the parent plant.

Woodland sunflower (*H. strumosus*) is another tall sunflower mostly confined naturally to the Florida panhandle. Like the resindot sunflower, however, it can

be successfully grown well south of its range if given the proper growing conditions. As its name suggests, woodland sunflower



Woodland sunflower
H. strumosus

occurs in open woodlands and at the edges of shady woodlands. It performs best, when not planted in full sun and given soil that is somewhat moist. It has quite a bit of drought tolerance when given filtered or part sun, but it will succumb quickly if summer rains are spotty and extra moisture is not supplied. Woodland sunflower is a very lanky plant with a rather thin aspect. It reaches six feet tall or more by its late summer blooming season and flowers for many weeks. The flower heads are nearly three inches across and the bright yellow ray petals are more pointed than most other species. Given the right conditions, woodland sunflower suckers extensively in the landscape and over a year or two may produce hundreds of individual stems. It will limit its spread to those areas that are neither too shady nor sunny, but is difficult to control elsewhere.

Field Trip: Kayaking the Ocklawaha River

(8/7/10) By: Craig Huegel

On Saturday, August 7, the Chapter's monthly field trip took the form of our annual kayak/canoe trip; this time to the famous Ocklawaha River north of Ocala. About a dozen Chapter members made the trip to the Ocala State Forest entry point and met up with Lars Anderson of Adventure Outpost. Lars has led us on some of our best water trips and this year was no exception. We put in at the bridge just below Rodman Dam about 10 am and soon were in the old channel, uninfluenced by the dam's affects. Here, the channel narrowed and we were paddling beneath a canopy of mature riparian forest trees – cypress (*Taxodium distichans*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvatica*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), and many more. Common to the understory was swamp dogwood (*Cornus foemina*), but the highlights to me were the wetland wildflowers – most notably, scarlet hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*), swamp marsh mallow (*Kosteletzkya virginica*), crinum lily (*Crinum americanum*), and the fiery red spikes of cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*).

We paddled leisurely until about noon and pulled off at an historic paddleboat stop along the river. Here we got out, walked a bit in the scrub along a nature trail and took in the Indian midden and the historical information provided at the kiosk. Our stay was cut a bit short, however, by a torrential down pour. We were thankful for the roofs over the kiosks as many of us waited out the 20-minute rain beneath them.

Back on the river, we paddled a while longer before the take out point; finishing the trip about 3 pm. It was a great day on a beautiful river and all of us were enriched by our experiences. The Ocklawaha is steeped in history and the scenery is outstanding. If you couldn't make this trip with us, you may wish to explore it a bit on your own someday in the future.

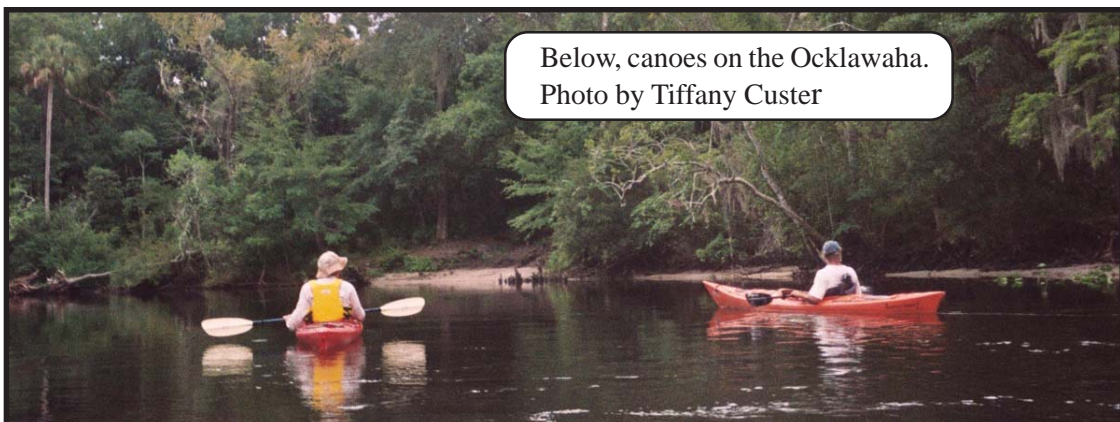
The following are comments from Anne

Kramer, one of our members and participants: For me this outing was an 11 hour joyful journey, portal to portal. Two thirds of the time was spent in the car where I had the pleasure of getting to know Ellen and Janie better. The conversation was never dull and time flew by. The other third of the journey was on the river, meeting up with more FNPS friends and hearing about their adventures. A nice family from Gainesville was in our group going on a family outing together before sending their son away to college. Together we got soaked as we waited out a deluge. This actually made the trip more exciting and memorable as we were out of our element. The physical exercise was great along with the beauty of the lobelia, hibiscus, and crinum lily. As I write this, the bruise on my hip from capsizing in the kayak is coming into full color and tenderness and keeping my memories alive.

Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) and Janie Bridges in her rainsuit. Photos by Ellen Clayton



Below, canoes on the Ocklawaha. Photo by Tiffany Custer



What Is Amendment 4 - Hometown Democracy?

By: Alexa Wilcox-Huegel

The Florida Hometown Democracy Amendment was put on the ballot by a non-partisan, citizen's initiative. Why did they go to such efforts? Because they believe that giving the citizens a say in the growth of their communities is the only way to have a sustainable future. Over and over again, local governments throughout the state have ignored the pleas of their citizens and changed their comprehensive plans to allow more development than was intended. When huge new areas are developed, the costs to build new roads, install utilities, build stormwater and sewer systems, construct new schools, etc. are passed on to everyone in the form of higher taxes. When we overbuild or build too fast, this affects everyone. The Hometown Democracy Amendment will give 'we the people' a say in that growth. Amendment 4 will NOT stop growth. In fact, in Pinellas County alone there are enough permits for new development and/or density changes to almost DOUBLE our current population. What it will do is give the voters a chance to decide whether or not they want the density of an area changed from 100 houses to 400 condominiums, or an area currently zoned for mobile homes to now allow 5-story high rises. Some communities may WANT to increase their density, and they will be able to say that at the polls when they vote. Those areas (in particular the beach communities) who have had enough of their small village-style communities being overtaken by high rise condominiums will have the opportunity to say NO.

One of the arguments against Hometown Democracy is that voters don't really know what is best, but the reality is that far too often the elected officials do not listen to the people. Can we trust *them* to know what is best? Experience has proven that we cannot. Amendment 4 doesn't cost voters or local governments anything because it doesn't require special elections. Votes will happen on the next regularly scheduled Election Day. It does not mean we have to run to the polls every other month; we only have to vote if the local government (cities or counties) want to make a significant CHANGE to the comprehensive plan that is already in place. In other words, if they want to change the rules, we get to vote on it. And we may want to vote Yes. The opponents keep forgetting that.

I think it is very telling when we consider who the opposition to Amendment 4 is: they are largely fronted by developers and big business, people who make money from huge growth at OUR expense. They get the profit, we get the taxes and headaches of dealing with having our beautiful natural areas decimated and paved over.

Amendment 4 gives the voters the right to decide what they think is best for their community and will also help our elected officials be more thoughtful and deliberate in their decisions about land-use changes, knowing that the people will be able to solidify or overturn those decisions.

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Past President: Bill Bilodeau

Board of Directors Members-at-Large:

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

2010 Committee Chairs/ Coordinators:

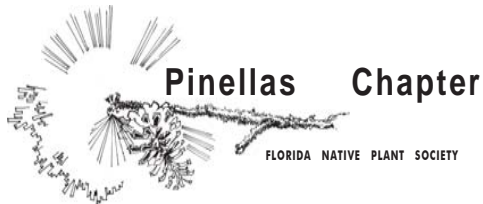
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Programs/ Special Events: Alexa Wilcox-Huegel
Publicity: Danie Cutler
Sales/Merchandise: Jane Williams & Jan Allyn
Volunteer Coordinator: Mary Sanders
Speakers Bureau: Bill Bilodeau
Web Master/Pinellas News: Jan Allyn

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

See Directory of phone numbers
and e-mail addresses on page 8

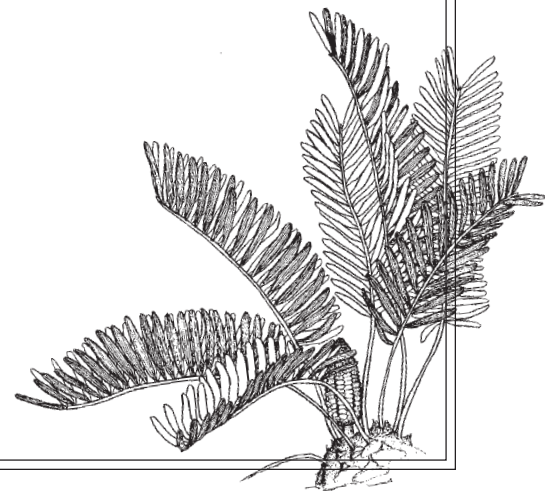


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FNPS Bulletin Board
<http://fnps.org/phpBB>



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