In summer we reap the rewards of our native plantings. Lots of butterflies, bees, birds, colorful flowers and, of course, selective weeding makes our hot summers bearable, if not enjoyable. Plants move themselves around, become prolific and surprise us. Our native gardens or landscapes, are always changing. In my yard, some passionvine has moved into the privet senna and necklace pod. I know I should pull it or move it, but the flowers are so beautiful and the zebra longwings and gulf fritillaries are happy, so how can I be so cruel? Oh well, fall and winter are coming and then I can pull it out. Good decision, Right?

Yes, fall will be here and our chapter, the Nature Coast Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, will be having a lively and full season.

Our Native Landscape tour will be October 7, 2017. Nancy Heusted and her committee have been firming up the details. We will need docents, people who would like to sell their crafts and plants, and volunteers who would like to organize a treasure hunt for prizes. This is going to be a fabulous tour. The properties are beautiful and with your help the day will be very successful.

Anyone want to help out doing a “paint a rock” session at the Community Center Camp this summer? We would like the kids to do something that would help them learn about native plants and why not use the demo garden plants at their own camp? Let me know if you would like to help. We will supply rocks, paint and pictures of the plants. (They do have camp counselors).

Annie Johnson, our Vice President, has taken on the project of encouraging the county roads department to plant natives along roadways. We would like this to be a chapter project, so if you have an interest or know the right people, please let Annie know and get involved.

Christmas is not that far away! We will be doing the “Silent Auction” for our party this year. So, plan on donating something special and maybe joining the committee to collect the items.

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Meetings/Programs

Forensic Botany: How Bad Guys Can Bark Up the Wrong Tree!
Speaker: David Hall
July 11

Discover how botanists can destroy an alibi, place someone or something somewhere, and help determine time since death.

Speaker Bio: David W. Hall, Ph.D., currently owns and operates an environmental and forensic consulting firm in Gainesville. He was previously employed at the University of Florida as the Director of the Plant Identification and Information Services. Dr. Hall holds Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from Georgia Southern University and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in botany from the University of Florida. He is a recognized expert in forensics and plant identification and has published 13 books and over 150 articles.

In addition to short courses, workshops, talks and seminars on forensic botany, plant identification and other botanical subjects, Dr. Hall has given expert testimony in many civil and criminal cases for both the prosecution and the defense.

Movie Night: The Forgotten Coast: Return to Wild Florida
August 8

Following in the footsteps of a wandering Florida black bear three friends leave civilization and become immersed in a vast and unexplored wildlife corridor stretching from the Everglades to the Florida-Alabama border.

The rugged thousand mile journey by foot, paddle, and bike traverses Florida’s Forgotten Coast - a wilderness that has the potential to change the way we see the natural world.

To suggest a program contact Pat Kelly at (352) 588-0266 or patriciak03@gmail.com

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The Florida State Fair exhibit now has a theme: “Creating Habitat”. The name may change, but the subject is set. If you have plants that would be appropriate for creating habitat, whether for insects, pollinators, mammals or birds, please put some in pots and care for them. We will need them for February.

Check out Peggy Gretchen’s Plant Profile in the newsletter. It is a page worth printing and saving. Peggy does a thorough job researching every plant.

And check out our website and especially our Facebook page. Gail Parsons does a beautiful job adding pictures and wonderful articles. You can get to the Facebook page from the website; pasconativeplants.org. We have a great opportunity to spread the word about native plants by sharing our Facebook page with our friends.

We also want to know what YOU want in the newsletter. What about a Q&A section? I believe that if you have a question about planting or native plants, others have the same question. Why not use the newsletter to help us communicate? How about interviews with individual members? How about sharing information about how you converted your yard from exotic to native? Email me and let me know what you would like to see in the newsletter.

Thank you for being such wonderful members. Oh... and don’t forget to renew your membership!

Jonnie Spitler, President
I first heard the term Nascar Botanizing during a talk by St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Ranger Scott Davis at a Pinellas Chapter meeting this spring. The term describes what happens when flying along the mostly empty roads through all the forests in the Panhandle. Suddenly, you glimpse a flash of color or an unusual shape and the brakes go on. You jump out to find a milkweed, an unusual wildflower or a field of pitcher plants looking like they came from an alien world.

It seemed like a long way to go for a field trip. But the events planned were just too tantalizing to miss. A chance to spend an afternoon with Scott Davis, see his milkweed nursery at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, then go out Nascar Botanizing with one of the most knowledgeable people in FNPS. Scott led us to many sites with native milkweed that he has mapped in his program to support Monarch butterflies.

Next, a second day of exploring the marvelous Panhandle spring wildflowers with Eleanor Dietrich, the local maven of wildflowers. She knew the best places along SR 65 and had us putting on the brakes often! Wading through a field of otherworldly pitcher plants was an awe-inspiring experience.

Here I have to admit that the most amazing find was not a Florida native. But it was wonderful to see a colony of Venus Flytrap, Dionaea muscipula, growing wild along the side of the road, with striking white blooms, with their traps open and hungry, ready to snap on your finger. The surprise delighted us all.

The next time you hear of a tempting event, like going botanizing with a Native Plant Chapter, especially with an expert, take a chance. Get out there, see the marvelous plants and wildlife that exist in Florida’s wild places. Keep your eyes open for the unusual and get ready to put your brakes on. It’s out there, we just have to go experience it!
Eight members of Nature Coast Chapter attended an exceptionally well done FNPS 37th Annual Conference May 18-21 at Westgate River Ranch Resort in the heart of Central Florida. We enjoyed many high quality programs, field trips, and social events.

Some of us had the opportunity to explore the final phase of the Kissimmee River Restoration by pontoon boat—the world's largest river restoration. When complete, some 43 miles of meandering Kissimmee River flow will be restored. However, it will take many more years for native plant habitats, such as the broadleaf marshes, and the native fish and wildlife to recover. That is the goal!

In the "Conservation in Florida" program, we learned that Pasco County, through its ELAMP program, has generated $75 million since 2004 for environmental lands acquisition. Something to be proud of!

In the "Update from the UF/IFAS Assessment of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas", we learned how Florida is among the top four geographic areas in the U.S. for invasive plants. See assessment.ifas.ufl.edu.

We learned that trying to identify native plants while driving at 60 mph is called NASCAR Botany. We learned in "Breaking the Rules" about designing landscapes based on plant communities and to match the plants to the soil, not the soil to the plant. We learned about the Monarch/Milkweed Initiative and the Milkweed Mapping Project at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. If you see wild populations of native milkweeds, report them to: monarchmilkweedinitiative@gmail.com.

OE (protozoan) infected monarchs from non-native scarlet milkweeds commonly sold, Asclepias curassivica, are still a problem. This can be reduced by cutting back your non-native milkweed in November.

And, we learned so much more and had fun doing it! So, plan to join us next year in Miami for another great FNPS Conference!

Peggy Gretchen
Jonnie is very good at delegating. Starting in early January 2017, she asked me to design the garden. There were many considerations in the design: nothing thorny, nothing toxic as children and adults often transgress the space. It had to show off native plants to inspire home gardeners to use them.

The team met several times to tweak the design. Of course, each person had their favorite plants. Size had to be considered because the space is limited.

Much as we may like certain plants, native white plumbago can spread too much. Who would prune it? As with many ‘public’ gardens, maintenance is a concern. Soil and sunlight/shade determined which plants would thrive. What plants would naturally grow in the conditions at the garden? Julie Wert is very knowledgeable; her contributions were invaluable. Mary Ellen Gotto, although a “newbie” to Florida and its native plants, still had a lot to suggest.

Thankfully, detainees from Pasco Detention Center removed the old existing plants. Jonnie and Julie had to spray Roundup (sorry folks) to eliminate torpedo grass; if not, the garden would not survive the competition with the weeds.

Many weeks passed until the county installed irrigation. The plantings were in two parts. The first planting was for the foundation plants: trees, shrubs, perennials. On March 9, 2017, we could plant. Julie brought some plants from her garden, as did Mary Ellen. Greg Jones of Rainbow’s End Nursery in Wesley Chapel sent plants via Jonnie. I made a 5 hour drive to Green Isle Gardens in Groveland, Fl. to get plants. I was a kid in a toy store – no restrictions of a plant sale list. YeeHaw! Some plants also came from my inventory.

Any expenses of the garden of the garden and plants were in a budget created by a generous donation from Jennifer Seney’s defunct homeowner’s association. Thank you so much!!! We hope you come see what you have assisted in creating.

Jonnie Spitler, Julie Wert, Peggy Gretchen, Mary Ellen Gotto, Rebecca Dance, me and, my (young man) friend, Tae put in the first plants. Tae was wonderful. After having worked all night, he dug holes, chopped roots with an axe, watered until all the plants were in their new homes.

Three weeks later, 30 March, the second planting of Florida flowers were spaced throughout the garden. The same volunteers planted the filler flowers. The irrigation was not on for the first 2 weeks, but all survived. Two

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Demonstration Garden continued....

weeks later, with Jonnie and Karen Watrous spreading newspapers, the prisoners spread pine bark mulch.

The second planting of the Florida flowers came from Karen Watrous, Julie Wert, Annie Johnson, Jonnie Spitler and others. Whew; we planted a lot of Florida native plants in a small space. Some will grow to fill in their place; others may die. A garden is always a work in progress. Enjoy the beauty of our labors. See how many plants you can identify before looking at the labels Pat Kelly will be making.

Thanks to all who contributed. If I missed recognizing you, or if I missed a plant, sorry. Annie

A Gardener's Version of "Summertime"
(Music by George Gershwin, Lyrics by Dubose Heyward)

Summertime, and the weather is humid.
Lubbers are jumping, and the bidens are high.
The rains are comin'; the garden is growin'.
So hush, little voice,
It's too hot to weed.

Remember: to remove weed seeds, especially bidens/Spanish needles and Caesar weed burrs, use a flea comb. Make sure you remove them over a trash can, tarp, newspapers or wherever you want them to grow, or not.
**CARDINAL FLOWER**

*Botanical Name:* Lobelia cardinialis  
*Common Name:* Cardinal Flower  
*Family:* Campanulaceae (Bellflower or Lobelia)  
*Type of Plant:* Native erect perennial wildflower, typically short-lived.  
*Usual Height:* 2 – 4 ft. Can grow to 6 ft. in the wild. Garden grown plants are shorter and more robust.  
*Width:* less than 1 ft.

**How to Identify:**

*Leaves:* Alternate, elliptic to lanceolate or spatulate, margins toothed, up to 7 in. long and 2 in. wide, basal leaves much larger than stem leaves. Dark green when well situated.

*Flowers:* Showy, scarlet red; tubular at the base and two-lipped, with the uppermost lip having two lobes, the lower lip enlarged with three lobes; up to 1.5 in. long. Borne in an erect, elongated raceme (unbranched cluster of numerous single-stalked flowers) at the stem tip. White and rose-pink flowered forms or cultivars are known.

*Flowering Time:* Summer – Fall. July – October.

*Fruit:* A conspicuous small brown capsule. Tiny seeds ripen in fall.

**Habitat:** Occasional in floodplain forests, marshes, bogs, wet edges of streams, and spring runs.

**Distribution:** Panhandle, North Florida, and Central Florida. Eastern United States and west to California.  
*Hardiness Zones:* 2 – 9.

**Landscape Use / Wildlife Benefit:** A strikingly beautiful perennial wildflower for use in consistently moist to wet areas, along small streams, and to beautify edges of retention ponds, canal banks, and drainage swales. Use in a wildflower garden with other moisture loving wildflowers, groundcovers, or ferns. The showy red flowers attract humans and hummingbirds alike! The flowers provide nectar for hummingbirds and butterflies. Hummingbirds, in turn, pollinate the cardinal flower. More attractive and longer lasting when planted in groups (3 – 5), about 1 ft. on center. Each plant produces a single flower stalk. Try growing in containers without drainage, as I do. This really works! I have had mine for many years, and they keep growing and blooming and multiplying. So easy!

**Cultivation:**

*Soil:* Fertile, organic, acidic, poorly drained. Will tolerate sandy soils with regular irrigation and partially shady location.

*Light:* Full sun to partial shade. Performs best in partial shade.

*Water:* Consistently moist to wet (prefers) conditions needed to thrive. Not drought-tolerant. Cardinal flower will adapt to moist shady sites or wet sunny sites in the garden, but cannot tolerate both dry and sunny sites – leaves will become pale and chlorotic. Will grow in shallow standing water, and may prefer this. Typically short-lived (2 – 3 years) in most gardens due to moist, rather than wet, conditions.

*Miscellaneous:* Individual plants sometimes die after flowering. Cardinal flower will persist and spread in the garden by self-sown seed and by producing “pups” (small plantlets) off the sides of the main rosette, if conditions are optimal. Or, you may annually harvest and plant garden produced seeds. Dormant during winter, forming a basal leaf cluster or rosette. Cannot tolerate heavy mulching; use light mulch or no mulch, especially when in the rosette stage. Keep rosettes clear of debris throughout winter and early spring, or they will die. Mark locations in your garden as needed. Prune old flowering stems after they have gone to seed. Low salt-tolerance.

**Propagation:** By seed – germinates readily. Collect seeds in early fall when capsules are tan and papery. Plant immediately or store them dry at 40 degrees F. and sow them in greenhouse in January – February, or sow outside in March. Since seeds are very small, try snipping entire stalks of mature capsules, storing and drying them for a few days in a paper bag, then shake and collect the loosened seeds. Also, propagate by root division of basal offshoots (spring or fall), cuttings (summer), or layering.

**Comment:** Cardinal flower has been a favorite in wildflower gardens since colonial times, especially in the South. It is now a threatened species in Florida.

**Availability:** Readily available from Florida native nurseries. See www.plantrealflorida.org!

**References:**


