



The Nature Coastline

Newsletter of the Nature Coast Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

Jan-Feb 2011

Nature Coast Chapter meetings, field trips, and activities are open to FNPS members and the public alike. Monthly meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at St. Marks Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall located at 7922 State Road 52, Hudson, 34667. The hall is one mile west of Little road on the south side of State Road 52 next to St. Michael's Catholic Church. Parking for the Fellowship Hall is at the rear of the property. Executive Committee meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday at 6 p.m. at the New Port Richey Library, 5939 Main St. in New Port Richey, 34652. Executive Committee meetings are open to all members; ask at the circulation desk for room location.

Upcoming meetings and events:

January 11th meeting: *Florida's Incredible Wild Edibles*

Presented by Judie Bradley of the Chinsegut Nature Center in Hernando County. Have you ever wondered what wild plants were edible, or how palatable they might be? Then you won't want to miss this program! Come see and taste a sampling of wild edibles, most of which are easily found locally.

Jan 15th Field Trip: Saturday, at 10am: Marchman Technical School, New Port Richey

This is a Saturday trip!

Marchman had a horticultural department about 10 years ago. A garden club (Seven Springs Garden Club) with the help of the Florida Growers Association created a lovely native garden at the school. It has since been neglected but is a good example of a suburban native garden and fountain. There is a beautiful example of an oakleaf hydrangea, mature firebush, gamma grass and many other specimens (contd p. 2..)

February 8th meeting: *Florida Native Shrubs* A PowerPoint presentation by Nature Coast Chapter member and Pasco Master Gardener, Peggy Gretchen. This is an introduction to some of the many beautiful Florida native shrubs useful for our landscapes in Central Florida. Please join us!

Feb 13th Field Trip: Sunday, at 10am: Nature Coast Botanical Gardens, Spring Hill

This is a good trip to reinforce and identify the plants from Peggy's native shrub program. The Nature Coast Botanical gardens has transformed 3/5 acres into 17 themed gardens, including a Florida native plant garden, a butterfly garden, a desert-scape, and a waterfall garden, to name but a few. The Gardens are free of charge and we will self-tour at our leisure.

Directions: The Gardens are located at 1489 Parker Avenue, Spring Hill, FL 34606. Take US 19 to Spring Hill Dr in Hernando County. Go east on Spring hill Dr 0.4 miles to Parker Ave. Turn left (north) on Parker. The Gardens will be on the left (west) side.



*Welcome new member Jacqueline Kadish. Thank you renewed members:
David M. Barnard, Betty Candelora, Peter and Lois Day, & Elaine Fortier*

Chapter contact information

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Chapter website: pasconativeplants.org

Meetings and events contd..

(Jan 15 field trip contd. from p. 1.)

...This is a working field trip if you are able. Peter Day will be the coordinator and point person. Bring your tools and be ready to put in a few hours of physical labor and at the same time enjoy the garden. Some of the plants may be dormant at that time, but the fruits of our labor will be there to see as Spring arrives. Come and enjoy the garden even if you are not able to help. Directions: Marchman is located at 7825 Campus Dr, New Port Richey. It is a continuation of Lemon St, just west of the intersection of Little Rd and Ridge Rd. The entrance to the school is on the right between 2 chain link fences. The garden is at the visitors parking lot at the side of the Administration office of the school not far from the entrance.

Dec. 14th Annual Holiday Pot Luck Dinner: We encourage you to bring a favorite dish to share at the pot luck. Native plants, some books, and a small tree will be part of the drawing; members should bring decorations for the tree. There will also be a voluntary gift exchange for those who wish to participate. Bring something garden related for about \$10 (Mark if gender specific).

Returning by popular request is the non-narrated digital slide show. Put together by Susan Vaughn and Julie Wert from photos, many taken by members, it includes a collage of native plants and natural plant communities, birds, butterflies and fun field trip outings which will run in the background while we eat, socialize and exchange gifts. Don't forget, spouses are invited!

Plant profile

SPARKLEBERRY

by Peggy A. Gretchen

FNPS Member

Pasco Master Gardener

Botanical Name: *Vaccinium arboreum*

Common Name: Sparkleberry, Farkleberry, Tree Huckleberry

Family: Ericaceae (Heath)

Type of Plant: Native deciduous large shrub or small tree with glossy green leaves, profuse spring flowers, and summer/fall fruit (not sweet); a slender, sometimes twisted trunk, with attractive reddish-brown peeling bark, an irregular, open crown of crooked branches, and beautiful red to purple fall foliage. The largest of our native blueberries! Height: 6 – 30 ft. Width: 4 – 15 ft. __

How to Identify:

Leaves: Alternate, elliptic, widest at or above the middle, margins usually entire, shiny upper surface, 1 – 2 in. long. Turning red to purple in the fall before dropping.

Flowers: Numerous small, white, bell or urn-shaped, long-stalked, fragrant. Borne in showy, elongated clusters in the spring. Flowering Time: Usually April – May.

Fruit: A ¼ in. rounded, black, shiny drupe or berry. Edible, but not sweet. Favored by birds and other wildlife. Ripens in the fall.

Habitat: Hammocks (upland mixed forest), flatwoods, sandhills, scrub.

Distribution: Panhandle and North Florida southward to Central peninsular Florida, including Pasco County. Also north to Virginia and west to Texas and Kansas. Hardiness Zones: 7 – 10.

Landscape Use / Wildlife Benefit: Excellent ornamental flowering specimen tree or large shrub for sunny or shady areas. Use as a background shrub in perennial borders or beds. Also useful in the mixed understory of a naturalistic landscape when planted beneath larger trees. In spring, the showy profusion of blooms attracts butterflies and other native pollinators (nectar). By fall, the fruits are ripe and eaten by many birds and other wildlife. The foliage is very attractive, too! A fully mature sparkleberry also provides nesting cover for songbirds.

Cultivation:

Soil: Prefers acidic, sandy; but will adapt to a much wider range of soil types and pH than do the other native blueberries and members of the genus, such as azaleas.

Light: Full sun – partial shade. Does best in filtered sunlight (such as under a pine tree) or where it receives sun for only half of the day. Does well in shade, but flowers better in sunnier locations

Water: Prefers moist, but well-drained conditions. Drought-tolerant once established.

Miscellaneous: Slow growing, but moderately long-lived and carefree!

Propagation: By seed or cuttings.

Availability: See your AFNN (Association of Florida Native Nurseries) Directory!

Comment: Sparkleberry fruit may be used for making jams or jellies; however, you will need plenty of sugar, as the fruits are bland and not especially good for human consumption.

References:

Huegel, Craig N., Native Plant Landscaping for Florida Wildlife, Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida, 2010.

Nelson, Gil, Florida's Best Native Landscape Plants, Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida, 2003.

Osorio, Rufino, A Gardener's Guide to Florida's Native Plants, Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida, 2001.

Taylor, Walter Kingsley, Florida Wildflowers in their Natural Communities, Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida, 1998.

Wunderlin, Richard P., Guide to the Vascular Plants of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida, 1998.

Nature Coast Coalition Conference

Submitted by Jan Howie, Nature Coast Chapter of FNPS representative to the Nature Coast Coalition

The Nature Coast Coalition Conference was held on November 13th at the Visitor Center at Crystal River State Park. For those of you not familiar with the Nature Coast Coalition, it is loosely formed coalition of environmental groups in the nature coast. The nature coast consists of 9 counties, from Wakulla in the north to Pasco in the south. The purpose of the coalition is to act as a unified voice to advocate for preserving the unique nature of the environment our area. With the strength of several groups acting as one, the hope is that we can join resources and be more effective. While there were fewer attendees this year, the conference was a very informative and productive. Several members of our chapter were in attendance and had positive comments about the experience.

The first speakers were two professors from University of Florida, Steven Noll and David Tegeder, who spoke about their book, *Ditch of Dreams: The Cross Florida Barge Canal and Struggle for Florida's Future*. The amazing thing about this story was that most work on the barge canal, which would have been an ecological disaster, was stopped due to the efforts and mobilization of one woman, Marjorie Carr. This should be an inspiration to those of us hoping to effect change today. And the personal message I received is to never underestimate the power of a determined woman! The right of way for what was to be the barge canal is now a park, the Marjorie Carr Cross Florida Greenway. However, the struggle is not yet over, as the flow of the Ocklawaha River is not fully returned to its natural course because of the Kirkpatrick Dam and Rodman Reservoir that it creates.

A main focus of the Conference was to get information about the **Tarmac King Rd. Mine in Levy County** and to develop a strategy to get this project cancelled, or at the very least, improved so that it would not be so harmful to the environment. Dan Hillard and Dan Schofield of Withlacoochee Area Residents (W.A.R.) were able to explain why this lime rock mine would be detrimental to the water quality and water supply for Levy County. This mine will be on 4,800 acres in an area already designated as environmental sensitive, and 2,359 of those acres are wetlands with several springs. The mine developers are requesting to drill to 120', which will certainly affect the aquifer, and use 13 million gallons of water per day. Much of that water will be recirculated, but not in the pristine condition it was in when it left the aquifer. A special exception to the Levy County Comprehensive Plan is needed for this project to proceed, but that will likely be passed. The Army Corp of Engineers has not yet made their Environmental Impact Statement, but they are expected to sign off on the mine also.

Our last speaker was Sue Mullins, an environmental **lobbyist for the Florida State Legislature**. She represents several groups including FNPS, and as you can imagine, she did not have much positive to say about passing environmental legislation in the next four years. Several of the bills that Governor Crist vetoed have already been passed in the special session just held, and some of these will have a negative impact on the environment. Governor Scott will likely reduce the size of government, slash the budget, and privatize many services. For him, everything is quantifiable. A couple of bright spots might be that Senator Paula Dockery, an environmentalist from Lakeland, is on Scott's transition team, and Jeff Atwater, the new Attorney General, is a moderate. Also, the environmental issue that is most likely to have some success is Everglades Restoration, as Scott was impressed by an aerial tour that he had of the region. Sue's recommendations for effective activism on the local level include sending grievances in writing to government officials, not just by e-mail; having a wide variety of people at public meetings; and always following up with a thank you note to the appropriate officials.

In the afternoon session, facilitated by Marianne Gengenback, it was decided to work towards developing a more formal structure for the Nature Coast Coalition by forming a 501.3C corporation with tax exempt status, and develop bylaws for the organization. This would require a financial input from member organizations of \$100 or less. We also decided to try to influence Levy County Commissioners and the Army Corp of Engineers to deny the permit for the Tarmac Mine, and if these efforts were not successful, to make this a state-wide issue and hope that the regional Environmental Protection Agency will disapprove it. Up to now in Florida, the EPA has never denied a permit that the Army Corp has approved.

Chapter announcements:

Special thanks and welcome to Jonnie Spitler for her participation as our new Field Trip Coordinator.

We still need a Program Coordinator! Please consider making a modest donation of your time to our chapter and volunteer to do this important job.

The Florida Native Plant Society's 31st annual conference has been announced. The dates are May 19-22 at the Sheraton Orlando North, Maitland. More Conference Information including a preliminary schedule and field trips is available now at:

<https://www.fnps.org/pages/conference/> or check the bulletin board at our meeting.

Editors note: this electronic document allows for live links to email addresses and sites. Click an address and you are already emailing. I could include links to the things you create online like a [picture](#) or [slideshow](#) (Susan Beach Vaughn).



Photo by Annie Johnson: chapter trip to Aripeka sandhill, Hudson, FL 10/17/2010

Notes from Julie Wert, Chapter President

It's a new year and we want to welcome our new field trip coordinator, Jonnie Spitzler! She's started the job, inspiring us all by exploring new places for us to go and having fun as well. If you have any ideas or have visited somewhere you want to share, please contact her at rspitler@verizon.net or 813-948-8472.

We still need a speaker coordinator. It's primarily a managerial job since suggestions for speakers come from an informal committee, anyone with a good idea! Coordination is the hard part. I know there's someone out there with the organizational skills to get the details put together and we need you! Call me (727-863-1363) or email me at aripekajule@verizon.net for more information.

Our Chapter representative, Marilyn Smullen, has been attending the annual FNPS Conference for many years. She had a great idea to inspire members of our chapter to go to the Conference this year. We'll be offering a "scholarship" to the May 19-22, 2011, FNPS Conference in Maitland. Interested members can submit their names for the drawing any time until the March meeting. The Chapter will pay for your registration for two days, \$175. You must be willing to pay your own hotel accommodation, special events and meals not included in the registration. If this is the opportunity you've been waiting for, check your calendar and visit <https://www.fnps.org/pages/conference/> for Conference information including the preliminary schedule and, best of all, field trips. Submit your name at meetings or contact a chapter officer to put your name in the hat!

Don't forget to support the Florida Native Plant Society by using GoodShop to earn money every time you shop online. Go to www.fnps.org for the logo in the upper right hand corner to automatically select Florida Native Plant Society - Melbourne, and then go to your favorite store to see how much they donate!

The purpose of the Florida Native Plant Society is the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

FNPS Website: www.fnps.org



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Newsletter Publication

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