

The Nature Coastline

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

May - June 2013

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 7:00 p.m. at Land O' Lakes Community Center, 5401 Land O'Lakes Blvd (US 41) Land O' Lakes, FL 34639 in the back meeting room with entrance off the courtyard on the south side of the building.

May 14 meeting: "Incorporating Native Wildflowers into the Landscape" Pam Brown, retired Extension Agent from Pinellas County will cover the definition of wildflowers, some basic landscaping information that pertains to 'right plant, right place, why native wildflowers are important in our landscapes, along with examples of some of the more common or easily available native wildflowers to plant into the landscape.

Upon retiring from the University of Florida Extension as the Urban Horticulture Extension Agent in Pinellas County, Pam was granted Emeritus Extension Agent status. Pam grew up in Florida but lived outside the state for 26 years. Before coming to Pinellas County Extension, Pam taught horticulture classes at Tidewater Community College in Chesapeake, VA. She holds a BS degree in Biology from Stetson University and an MS degree in Horticulture from Virginia Tech.

In addition, she has started her own company, Pampered Gardeners, LLC. Pam serves as a gardening coach or mentor, working hand in hand with gardeners who want to do their own gardening by giving them the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully plan, develop, manage and maintain their landscapes. She is passionate about gardening and enjoys working with people.

June 11 meeting: What is a Plant Community? Shirley Denton will talk about the basics of what a plant community is, how it relates to other terms such as natural community and ecosystem. She will explain the concept of a plant community and provide some examples and help us understand why plants are important in all of this.

Shirley is past president of FNPS and Suncoast Chapter president, an accomplished plant ecologist and one of the most knowledgeable people in the state on the Florida environment. She is also a talented photographer. Her excellent photos of native plants can be seen on the FNPS website as well as on the Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants at <http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/> and her own website <http://www.shirleydenton.com/>. Shirley is one of the heroes of FNPS for her many years of work with FNPS, most recently the design and implementation of the current website.

Field Trip: Saturday May 25th, 9:00am at Withlacoochee State Forest in Citrus County

Our field trip will take us to some impressive karst features in the sandhills of the Withlacoochee State Forest, including Dames Cave and Lizzie Hart sinkhole. Our guides will be Sid Taylor and John Miller. With their knowledge of the area this will be a walk you will not want to miss.

Sid Taylor has been the resident park ranger at Tillis Hill Rec. Area for 18 years. She is a Florida Naturalist and Botanist (UCF, 1991) and has had a 25 year career in Parks and Recreation. At Withlacoochee State Forest she has interpreted a collection of old photos dating back to the early 1930s to tell the history of our State Forest.

John Charles Miller is a groundwater geologist and writer of speculative fiction and other strange little stories. He resides in Tampa, Florida. He worked as a groundwater geologist for almost 40 years, in both the US and Latin America. He was one of the earliest Peace Corps Volunteers, serving under President John F. Kennedy from 1962 to 1964 in the Dominican Republic. He is fluent in Spanish. John is the author of ***Citrus White Gold***, an intriguing walk into 1890s Citrus County, Florida. In January 2012, he published a collection of 24 quite varied short stories, ***You Can't Pick Up Raindrops***. Both books are available in print and as eBooks from Amazon. In November 2012, his story ***Las Ruedas*** was selected from almost 300 entries as the #2 short story in the Florida Writers Association annual collection, ***My Wheels***.

Walking the trail will be moderately easy. It is a half-mile hike through overgrown sandhill. Overgrown sandhill is a long-unburned pine community in the process of being displaced by oaks. Under a normal burn regime, the oaks would maintain an understory shrub-like stature with the pines forming an open-canopy overstory. In the absence of fire, the oaks grow until they become part of the overstory, and the canopy becomes more closed. This unfortunate circumstance will provide us with more shade than is normally found in a sandhill. We will see a wide variety of "scrub oaks" including turkey, and post, and bluejack. The closest facilities are five miles away at the Tillis Hill Recreation Area. Be sure to wear appropriate clothing, carry water, insect spray, camera and binoculars.

Directions:

Meet at 9:00 at the yellow gate on the east side of CR491 in Citrus County, across from Lone Court, about a mile north of the Citrus/Hernando County line and about a half mile north of CR480. If coming from west Pasco, take US19 north to CR476 (Centralia Rd.) Turn east (right) on CR476 and continue to CR 491. Turn north (left) on CR491 and proceed into Citrus County.

If coming from east Pasco, take US41 north to US98. Turn north/west on US98 and continue to CR491. Turn north (right) on CR491 and proceed into Citrus County.

Field trip Thursday, June 13, 2013, 10am: Eureka Springs Regional Park, located at 6400 Eureka Springs Rd, Tampa, FL 33610. This site was developed into a botanical garden of rare and unusual plants as a result of many years of work by Albert Greensburg, who donated the site to Hillsborough County in 1967. The 31 acre park is the only botanical garden in the Hillsborough Park system, and features a greenhouse, interpretive trails, boardwalks, and a picnic area. The boardwalk meanders through a shady natural swamp area with many natives. The native trails are self-guided

and interesting. Bring lunch for a picnic at the newly renovated picnic area. Walking is easy and clean modern amenities are available. This is a great walk for the whole family.

NOTE: FIELD TRIP is on the THURSDAY after our regular monthly meeting.

Directions: From either East or West Pasco County, take I-75 South to I-4West via exit 261 toward Tampa. Take Exit 7 toward US-92/US-301. Merge onto US-301 toward Zephyrhills/Vandenberg Airport. Turn right onto Sligh Ave for .3m. Turn right onto Maple Lane which becomes Eureka Springs Rd. Travel 1.3 m where Eureka Springs Regional Park will be on the left. Anyone interested in carpooling can meet at the Synovus bank on SR-56 near the I-75 entrance at 9:15am.



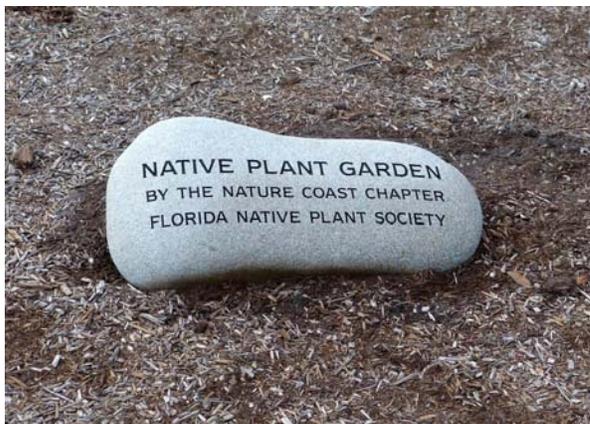
Message from Julie Wert, President, Nature Coast Chapter:

Nature Coast Chapter joined a coalition of conservation organizations from across the state, large and small, to support the Florida Water and Land Legacy Amendment Campaign. Our mission is the conservation, preservation and restoration of native plants and their communities. This amendment, if passed, will make it possible again to preserve the things we care about.

I hope everyone has signed petition by now and at least gotten their friends, family and neighbors to sign. If you want to do more or need petitions, call me! If you've been gathering signatures at events, thank you! For more information, visit www.floridawaterlandlegacy.org

Katie MacMillen reports that the native plant demonstration garden at Upper Cotee Preserve, partially funded with a grant and labor from Nature Coast Chapter, is doing well. Planted were 464 native plants of approximately 50 species, with signs designating the appropriate habitat. Visitors will be able to identify many plants in the garden and know which conditions they would need in their own yard to use such plants.

If you'd like to visit, the Upper Cotee Preserve is open sunrise to sunset, 365 days a week. There's also an existing nature trail, a nearly-completed boardwalk and a newly installed playground. The address is 17135 Minneola Dr. Spring Hill, FL 34610, off SR 52 just west of US 41 and east of the Suncoast Parkway.





Dedication of the Native Plant Garden

The weather gods' graced us Tuesday morning, March 19th, because in spite of a bad forecast, the weather was beautiful for the dedication of the native plant garden that our chapter planted at the entrance to Werner Boyce Salt Springs State Park on U.S. Highway 19, just north of Ridge Road. The garden was inspired by Gorgon O'Connor, an active member of our chapter, who died last year. Since her passion was native plants and their benefit to the environment, and she was also a Ranger at the Park since its inception in 2000 and until shortly before she died, it seemed like a "no brainer" to put a native garden in the Park where she worked. The garden also remembers Susan Beach Vaughn, who also died last year and who was for several years an officer in our Nature Coast Chapter, as well as a dedicated volunteer of the Park.

The ceremony was attended by several of our chapter members, members of the Salt Springs Alliance, the community support organization for Werner Boyce Salt Springs State Park, and several State Park Rangers and Managers. Speakers included Karen Kirby, Ranger at Werner Boyce, Julie Wert, President of the Nature Coast Chapter of FNPS, Chris O' Connor, sister of Gorgon, Peter Krulder, Manager of Honeynoon Island State Park (and several other islands), Toby Brewer, Manager of Weeki Wachee State Park (former Manager of Werner Boyce Salt Springs State Park), and Jan Howie, Conservation Chair for our Nature Coast Chapter. There was no question that Gorgon's hard work and passion made a difference to the environment and in the lives of many she touched. Gorgon did not want any kind of memorial service for her, but hopefully she will forgive our indulgence, because the garden will have an educational value and promote her beloved native plants. If you haven't yet seen it, take a trip over to the recently opened Werner Boyce Salt Springs State Park. The garden looks great and you can also explore the trails that are open.

Jan Howie, Conservation Chair

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Chapter website: pasconativeplants.org



PURPLE CONEFLOWER

by Peggy A. Gretchen
FNPS Member
Pasco Master Gardener

Botanical Name: Echinacea purpurea

Common Name: Eastern Purple Coneflower

Family: Asteraceae or Compositae

Type of Plant: Native hardy perennial wildflower with erect stems and showy lavender-purple or rose-pink flowers. Treat as a short-lived perennial or even as an annual in central Florida. Height: 2 – 3 ft. Width: 2 – 3 ft. Native coneflowers are usually taller than cultivars.

How to Identify:

Leaves: Coarse, dark green, 3 – 6 in. long, alternate, simple, lance-shaped, usually with toothed margins.

Flowers: Showy, rounded heads of brownish-purple disk florets (cone-shaped center) surrounded by numerous lavender-purple to rose-pink ray florets, up to 4 in. across. Flowering Time: Spring to fall. Mostly summer.

Fruit: A tiny, inconspicuous achene.

Habitat: Limestone glades, open prairie, and clearings in calcareous hammocks. Disturbed areas, fields, and dry woods.

Distribution: Southeast U.S. from Virginia to the Ozarks and west to Texas; occurring naturally rarely in Florida in Gadsden and Jackson counties (Panhandle); but widely used throughout Florida in landscaping. Hardiness

Zones: 7 – 10.

Landscape Use / Wildlife Benefit: Excellent perennial wildflower for mixed wildflower / native grass or butterfly gardens in any sunny, well-drained site. Use along walkways, borders, shrub beds, and roadsides. Blooms profusely throughout an extended flowering period. Attracts many butterflies and pollinators to its very fragrant, nectar-rich flowers. When petals fall, the seed-bearing central disk remains to attract birds.

Cultivation:

Soil: Prefers well-drained, calcareous, alkaline soils, but adapts to a variety of well-drained sites – sandy to organic, fertile. Does not do well in acidic soils.

Light: Full sun best to part shade. Leggy and color will wash out in too much shade.

Water: Dry to average. Water regularly until established, then only if plant shows signs of distress. Drought-tolerant! Too much water may cause this plant to rot. Well-drained sites are essential.

Miscellaneous: Moderate salt-tolerance. Remove old flower heads to promote a long flowering period. Plants die back in cold weather, then leaf out each spring. Numerous cultivars and hybrids, including a white form. Makes a good long-lasting cut flower and can be used in dried arrangements.

Propagation: By seeds or division of clumps. Plant seeds in fall; will sprout the following spring. Try sowing seed in good potting soil in the fall and transplanting seedlings back into your landscape / garden in late winter.

Availability: See your FANN (Florida Association of Native Nurseries) Directory or www.plantrealflorida.org!

References:

Haehle, Robert G. and Joan Brookwell, Native Florida Plants, Houston, Texas, Gulf Publishing Company, 1999.

Huegel, Craig N., Native Wildflowers and Other Groundcovers for Florida Landscapes, Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida, 2012.

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

Trass, Pamela F., Gardening for Florida's Butterflies, St. Petersburg, Florida, Great Outdoors Publishing Company, 1999.

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

Newsletter Publication
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