

The Nature Coastline

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

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.



September - October 2013



September 10 Making Better Choices for a Healthy Watershed

Pasco County is bordered on the east by the Green Swamp and the west by the coastal marshes of the Gulf. The health of the watersheds and the plants living in them can impact our quality of life. Water pollution continues to be a major problem in central Florida. The days of single-source pollution such as oil spills, factories or sewage treatment plants have past. Today, non-point pollution or when stormwater runs over the land and picks up pollution is the primary source. The presentation provides an overview of the Tampa Bay watershed, the important connection between Florida's environment and economy, what people can do to help, and where they can get help.

The slide program is presented by the Hillsborough River Watershed Alliance (HRWA), a non-profit environmental organization that provides for education, research, and community forums since 1992. John Walkinshaw is the Executive Director of the HRWA. He has over 25 years of experience in water resources management. John manages projects that involve water quality, water supply, and watershed management. He has presented at numerous national and regional conferences on water supply and water quality topics. In addition to the HRWA, John works as an environmental consultant and a communication/marketing project manager. He consults on various environmental regulatory programs and conducts public outreach throughout Florida. John is a board member on several statewide environmental organizations. He has an undergraduate degree in Communications and a Master's degree in Communication Management.

October 8 Creating a Backyard Wildlife Habitat

In a time when much of the native landscape has been altered, many of the plants that support wildlife are missing. In this program we will learn ways we can create backyard wildlife habitats. We will learn which plants to use to provide food, protection, and nesting, and create an environment in your yard that will attract wildlife. From birds and butterflies, to bugs and bunnies - learn how to attract, protect, and nurture the flora and fauna that make Florida special and help support life in our unique peninsular State.

Rita Grant, long-time member of the Florida Native Plant Society, is a Master Gardener who is dedicated to sharing the benefits of native plants with the community, and informing them about the hazards of invasive exotic plant species. She also operates a native plant nursery, and helps ensure that plant species appropriate to our area are available.

During her presentation Rita will provide a list of native plants well suited to support wildlife, and discuss safety issues for the species you attract, including control of pets and toxic substances.

Field Trips:

September 15 Kayak trip to discover the Salt Springs at Werner Boyce Salt Springs State Park, Port Richey on Sunday, September 15, 2013 at 9am. We will launch at Brasher Park, 4951 Koons Rd, Port Richey and paddle the Salt Springs Paddle Trail through Werner Boyce State Park, the only state park in Pasco County. Janice Howie, our Conservation Chairperson, will be our guide. Jan knows the area very well because of her volunteer work and was instrumental in creating the Gorgon O'Conner Memorial Garden at the park and honoring Susan Vaughn. The Salt Spring Run is located near the southern boundary of Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park and is the most accessible of the tidal streams in the park. The trip is fairly easy and we should see many interesting natural sights. We may see jumping mullet in the lagoon, dolphins in the open water, stumps of trees from the Turpentine era in the hammocks. We will stop at the interpretative center to see a video of two German divers going into the Salt Springs 320' deep before paddling to the Spring. We will eat our picnic lunch along the way and possibly see river otters. Bring your lunch, water, sunscreen, bug spray and a hat. **If you plan to rent a kayak, Gill Dawg Marina will deliver and pick up the kayaks at Brasher Park. The cost for 4 hours, 9am to 1pm, is \$40. Jonnie Spittler will be reserving the kayak rentals and needs to know who will be attending and have the money by September 10th at our September meeting.**

Directions to Brasher Park launch sight: From US 19 in Port Richey, just South of Ridge Rd, turn west onto Bay Blvd (South of Walmart). Follow to Old Post Rd and turn right. Travel to Koons Rd, turn left and drive to the end to the launch area.

October 11 Brooker Creek Headwaters Nature Preserve, October 11, 2013, FRIDAY, 10am. Address: 17917 Brown Rd, Lutz, FL 33558. Our tour will be led by Gail Parsons, a Nature Coast Chapter member of the Native Plant Society. Gail is also a member of the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society. She has a wealth of information and leads walks at the Brooker Creek Preserve as well as other Hillsborough County ELAPP and SWFMWD properties. Gail will provide a plant list from the preserve. Containing the largest area of contiguous natural habitat remaining in northwest Hillsborough County, 1,111 acres, public ownership of this preserve ensures protection of important wildlife habitat and the site's wetlands, which serve as the headwaters of the Brooker Creek System, This property includes a mosaic of forested swamps, floodplains and low-lying uplands. The uplands include pine flatwoods, xeric oak hammocks, and mixed hardwood and pine prairies. We will walk a couple of miles, and examine the glorious colors and sounds of fall in Florida. Our target plants are the Catesby's lily, the Hooded Pitcher plant, the Sundew and other fall wildflowers. Dress appropriately and carry water. Bring binoculars to catch sightings of the many birds. We will have lunch at a nearby restaurant to discuss all the wonderful observations of native plants and birds and maybe even compare pictures.

Directions: From Pasco County, take the Suncoast Pkwy/SR589-Toll South to exit 14, Van Dyke Rd. Turn right onto Van Dyke Rd and right onto Brown Rd, (the street after Ramblewood) just beside the Presbyterian Church. The entrance to the preserve is on the right.

New Members: Welcome one and all!

Ted C. Apelt, Judy Kulwicki, Debra K. Tribbey, Marianne Ellis, Mary Flanigan, Myra Knapp, and Susan Parr.





Message from Julie Wert, President, Nature Coast Chapter:

This rainy summer has had many of us inside but we can still pursue our passion for native plants with a wonderful tool available to us on our computers. Take a few minutes and type in or click on www.fnps.org. Start with the home page and read the news as it relates to FNPS.

Then scroll down and read the articles posted there by the excellent volunteer writers. As I write this the lead article is a short video about air potato, the kudzu of Florida. If you don't know what an air potato looks like, this is the place to find out.

You can read about the Florida Water and Land Legacy Campaign going digital and a three part article about attracting and creating habitat for native pollinators in your yard, complete with wonderful photos to inspire you. If you're looking for native plants there's an article explaining how to use the website, complete with details and pictures of how and where to click, for finding what native plants are suitable for your area and conditions.

Speakers at recent Conferences, including this year, have presented the exciting idea of Earth Jurisprudence and our Earth having moral rights. If this idea intrigues you, explore the articles from the FNPS weblog or blog, on the Home Page.

All those links at the top of the page are there for you, including Chapters, Events, Resources and Member resources. Under Events, then Society Calendar, you can find out what's happening in our Chapter and others around the State. Maybe there's a speaker or field trip that interests you in a nearby area. Check it out and see what you might be missing, all at your fingertips!

In the past I have written and spoken about the struggle that environmentalist have had with the Southwest Florida Water Management District attempt to establish minimum flow levels at a point where the rivers of the Nature Coast would be degraded by up to 15%. In other words, they wanted to take too much water out of the rivers, and at those levels, the rivers would be damaged severely. Now there is a process started by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to determine what and how much bad stuff we are putting into the rivers. A little background first.

In 1972, Congress passed the Federal Clean Water Act. States were required to make sure that waterways were healthy and report to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Unfortunately in Florida and other states, this was ignored and no standards were never determined. Recently, Earthjustice, backed by other environmental groups, sued the EPA for not forcing Florida to comply with the Clean Water Act. The EPA then forced the Florida DEP to take action. Earthjustice's hope was that the EPA would step in and determine standards themselves, but this is not what happened, and the DEP will be determining standards. Many felt that the DEP determining fresh water standards was like the "fox guarding the hen house". However, once standards are set by the DEP, they will have to be approved by the EPA.

So, here we are today, 41 years later, and the DEP is setting standards for the Weeki Wachee River and Springs. The DEP held a meeting at Weeki Wachee in June where they proposed a Total Maximum Daily Limit (TMDL) for nitrates of 0.35 mg/L, a 56.8% reduction of current levels. Nitrates are what are currently causing a terrible lyngbia algae bloom that is smothering out native grasses and therefore decreasing habitat for other native species. Significant sources for nitrates are fertilizers, septic tanks, atmospheric deposition of nitrogen, and animal waste. As you would expect, nitrate levels in the River and Springs have increased in direct proportion to population growth in the watershed. Phosphorous, which is a source of pollution in other areas, is not a factor in the Weeki Wachee.

The figure of 0.35 mg/L was determined by research in the lab and in the Suwannee River. One possible problem is that the DEP does not have any data about when lyngbia became a problem in the Weeki, and there may be evidence that the nitrate levels may have been much lower than 0.35 mg/L when the Spring was already clogged with algae. Hopefully, a adequate TMDL will be set to restore the River to its former glory and biological health. After the TMDL is set and approved by the EPA, a Basic Management Plan will be formalized to implement the changes necessary to get the nitrate levels to reach the TMDL. This will all take some time, but after waiting 41 years to set a standard, it is better late than never.

Jan Howie, Conservation Chairman

Chapter contact information

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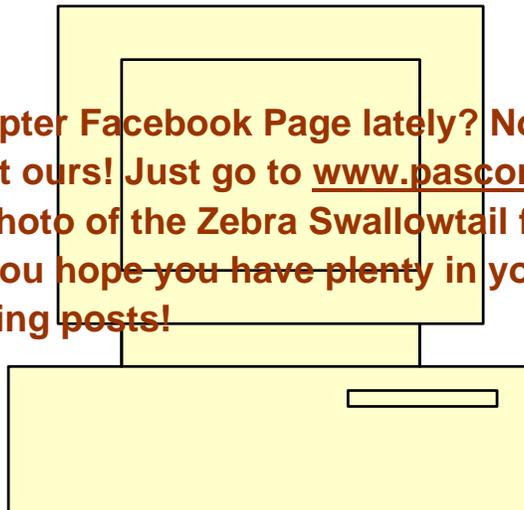
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Chapter website: pasconativeplants.org

Have you looked at the Chapter Facebook Page lately? No, you don't need to have your own FB page to look at ours! Just go to www.pasconativeplants.org and click on the FB logo, so easy. The photo of the Zebra Swallowtail feeding on the frogfruit, *Phyla nodiflora*, will make you hope you have plenty in your yard! Thanks to David Peterson for all the interesting posts!



GEORGIA CALAMINT

Peggy A. Gretchen, FNPS Member, Pasco Master Gardener

Botanical Name: Calamintha georgiana

Common Name: Georgia Calamint, Georgia Savory, Georgia Basil

Family: Lamiaceae (mint)

Type of Plant: Native semi-evergreen perennial dwarf shrubby wildflower / groundcover. Eventually develops a woody trunk. One of several native calamints and the easiest to grow. Height: up to 2 ft. Width: up to 2 ft. Spacing: 2 – 3 ft. or more. Do not crowd. Allow space between them.

How to Identify:

Leaves: Opposite, narrow, entire, 3/8 – 1.5 in. long,, mostly oval to lanceolate, on slender branches (green when young, turning brown and woody with age); aromatic. Square stems.

Flowers: Small but showy, tubular, whitish-pink to lavender, borne mostly in 3-flowered clusters from the leaf axils. Individual flowers are 2 lipped, with lowermost lip deeply lobed. Flowering Time: Fall.

Fruit: A tiny dry brown nutlet.

Habitat: Sandhills and dry, sandy woodlands, roadsides, and wooded borders of rivers and streams.

Distribution: Rare in Florida panhandle. North Carolina to Louisiana, including Georgia, mostly East Gulf Coastal Plain. Hardiness Zones: 8 – 9.

Landscape Use / Wildlife Benefit: A beautiful and interesting dwarf shrubby wildflower / groundcover for dry, sunny sites. Use them as an accent or in mass plantings for attractive foliage, late season color, and to feed hummingbirds and butterflies (nectar rich). If your soil is not sandy and well-drained, use them and similar plants, such as Conradina (Scrub Mint), in a raised bed or in a fast-draining pot in a sunny spot.

Cultivation:

Soil: Sandy, acidic to neutral, very well-drained.

Light: Full sun (best) – partial sun.

Water: Dry to moist, but well-drained. Drought-tolerant once established.

Miscellaneous: Easy to grow! May prune in late winter or early spring. Not a long-lived species – can live 5 – 7 years with good drainage and sunshine..

Propagation: By fresh seed; softwood or semi-hardwood tip cuttings. Easily and widely propagated.

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

Comment: Related native species in Florida include: Calamintha ashei (Ashe's Calamint) and C. coccinea (Scarlet Calamint, or Red Basil), both found in scrub and sandhills of north and central Florida. Scarlet Calamint, or Red Basil, is native in Pasco County. Both are available commercially and have great landscape potential. Calamintha dentata (Florida Calamint) is found in the Florida panhandle, but is not available commercially. These species all bloom spring to fall. All but C. coccinea are state-listed threatened or endangered species.

References:

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

Nelson, Gil, East Gulf Coastal Plain Wildflowers, Guilford, Connecticut, The Globe Pequot Press, 2005.

Wasowski, Sally, with Andy Wasowski, Gardening with Native Plants of the South, Dallas, Texas, Taylor Publishing Co., 1994.

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

NATURE COAST CHAPTER FALL NATIVE PLANT SALE!

When: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 10 AM TO 2 PM

Where: Behind the Land O'Lakes Community Center, 5401 Land O'Lakes Blvd./US 41, LOL 34639.

What: We will have a large variety of quality nursery grown Florida native plants for sale.

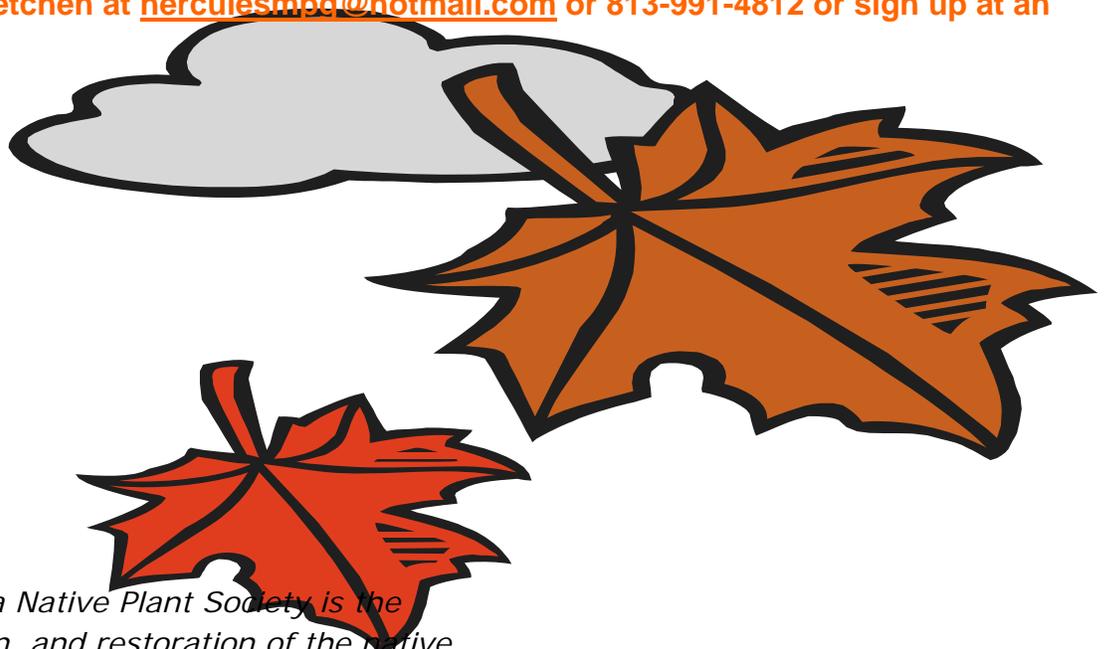
Also, books for sale.

And, a Pasco Master Gardener Information Table.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! Set up will begin at 8 AM. Bring wagons and plastic bags.

Please contact Peggy Gretchen at herculesmpg@hotmail.com or 813-991-4812 or sign up at an upcoming meeting.

THANKS!



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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