



# Serenoa Notes

The Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

February, 2009

## It's a Natural! –Marilyn K. McDonald

A former astronaut and I have something in common: both of us have joined the National Wildlife Federation's innovative BACKYARD WILDLIFE HABITAT™ program. In order to join we had to have our backyards certified by the NWF committee that drew up the two page Habitat Certification Application. It is thorough but guides the novice and the pro equally well.

Any site can be recognized as a NWF Certified Habitat regardless of size, whether it's your backyard, an apartment or rooftop garden. It can be a business, school, place of worship, park or community garden. Sites must provide the 4 basic components of habitat needed by all wildlife: *food, water, cover, and places to raise young*. You should also practice sustainable gardening techniques such as eliminating pesticides, conserving water and planting native plant species.

In 2006, at the FNPS conference in Daytona Beach Shores, I met a young NWF volunteer. Struck by her enthusiasm about the need for backyard habitats, I realized that we had been doing this for 21 years at our investment rental and had already completed most of the work. The NWF would help us organize and certify it.

Our Habitat is a suburban yard between ¼ and ½ acre on a pond. We had already removed a hodge-podge of diseased, messy, invasive exotic plants from the east side of the house and back yard. The saving grace was the huge slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) by the pond. We had one of the

### Monthly meetings at Selby Gardens:

Every third Monday.  
811 South Palm Ave. Sarasota.  
Doors open at 7:00 p.m,  
business meeting at 7:30,  
followed by program.  
Everyone welcome!

### In this issue:

- Deer Tongue and Catesby Lilies 3
- Lovegrass 4
- Thank you! 5
- Restoration Horticulture Degree 5
- New Disease on Sabal Palm 6
- Serenoa Chapter Grants 6
- Xeriscaping Statute 7
- New Members 7
- Membership Enrollment 7
- Events Calendar 8

Sunshine Mimosa flowers,  
*Mimosa strigillosa*



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four major components required for a habitat—*water*. The new irrigation system pumped water from the pond thereby removing the need to use city water. We also qualified under sustainable gardening practices by eliminating chemical pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

Planting native plants would conserve water, reduce soil erosion, and provide food, cover and places for animals to raise their young. We found the perfect spot for a sweet acacia (*Acacia farnesiana*) next to the lanai in a low traffic area where it wafted sweet perfume from its yellow flowers. The thorns provided a good escape for birds and a nesting site that would discourage predators. A beautiful fiddlewood (*Citharexylum fruticosum*) replaced a raggedy palm in the front side yard. An evergreen, it gives the yard a lush feeling. The tubular white flowers are fragrant from spring to fall and attracts lots of pollinators. The berries are a treat for many birds. It is well on its way to 20 feet tall and has required no maintenance whatsoever.

Our native plantings on the east side of the house use the neighbor's privacy fence as backdrop for a free flowing, evergreen, informal hedge comprised of firebush (*Hamelia patens*), Walter's viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*), cocoplum (*Chrysobalanus icaco*), several wild coffees (*Psychotria nervosa*), and myrsine (*Rapanea guinensis*). The hedge provides seeds, flowers, pods, fruits, and berries to attract birds as well as cover and places to raise young. We screened a chain link fence with firebush and added wild coffees as understory to the slash pines and to a buffer zone near to the pond. Sunshine mimosa (*Mimosa strigillosa*) was used as a ground cover for the entire backyard.

Last spring we saw a small water thrush crossing the yard. This is a newcomer to a growing list of visitors. We encourage mallard ducks and the much-maligned muscovy ducks which are great garden helpers as they enjoy the protein from cinch bugs, mole crickets, and palmetto bugs. Baby ducklings are adorable to watch but sadly, as nature dictates, they may become food for the great blue herons and egrets—which fish in the pond—as well as red-shouldered hawks. A pair of playful otters, squirrels, terns, mourning doves, anhinga, and a growing number and variety of songbirds, pollinators, and butterflies have also visited our backyard habitat. (NWF requires all pet cats be kept indoors. That darling kitty we know as Muffin is an excellent hunter. Even though we feed her well, she and others like her take a terrible toll on wildlife every year.)

Hanging my official NWF certification sign on the backyard fence, I felt a surge of hope. The astronaut and I join countless others who feel the same joy in reaching out to the “least of these” in a world growing smaller, more fragile, monochromatic, and threatened. NWF has been helping people nurture wildlife for over 30 years. FNPS and the NWF are natural partners in something bigger than each of them, healing the earth one yard at a time.

For more information visit [www.nwf.org/bwh](http://www.nwf.org/bwh) or call 1-800-822-9919

# Deer Tongue and Catesby Lilies

Paul Wills

When you call that pretty, little fall-blooming plant a deer tongue, be sure you know what you are talking about. Otherwise, you could wind up like me—wrong. Relying on common names can do you in that way. FNPS members who visited the prairie on the recent field trip saw the real McCoy. I couldn't go but they said without doubt they saw *Carphephorus paniculatus* and I believe them. What I've always called deer tongue turns out to be a very close relative *C. odoratissima* which native plant expert Rufino Osorio and others call the vanilla plant.

Blossoms of the two plants don't look much alike but the leaves do. Both are shaped like a deer's tongue. The leaves of the vanilla plant were once a valuable commodity in Northeast Florida, gathered by woodsmen and sold to tobacco companies for mixing into pipe tobacco. That's where I first saw it. It was universally called deer tongue up there and no doubt still is.

The drying leaves have a distinctive fragrance, due to coumarone, an aromatic remindful of vanilla. When the leaves are about half-dry, it carries over into the pipe tobacco smoke.

Deer tongue flowers, which are different from those of either the vanilla plant or another close relative named paintbrush (*C. corymbosus*) grow as small, pink heads somewhat scattered up and down a husky spike. Rufino pictures paintbrush flowers also as pink but form a flat-topped head, while those of vanilla plants are also flat-topped but are a brilliant purple.

All three are striking native plants that brighten up our prairies and pine flatwoods in summer and fall. Their colors seem brighter with a bit of shade; the vanilla plant requires a dampish location.

Mixed in with the deer tongue, people on the FNPS field trip found flowering Catesby lilies, certainly one Florida's most elegant wildflowers. A more common name is pine lily, but I think that sounds ordinary for an extraordinary flower. Its botanical name is *Lilium catesbaei* after the Englishman Mark Catesby, who found it while botanizing in the Carolinas before the mid-1700s.

Considered threatened, the Catesby is found sparsely throughout Florida where it sometimes can be spotted along a roadside, flaunting its striking colors above the open grass. It has six separated petals, yellow at the base, with purple spots, and the remainder of each petal is bright orange or sometimes clear red. They are arranged in a sort of cup pointing stiffly upward from the top of the stem, then recurving backward and down. The flower is sizeable, often four or so inches in diameter at the top of the cup. The seedpod is a brown capsule half the length of a man's thumb.

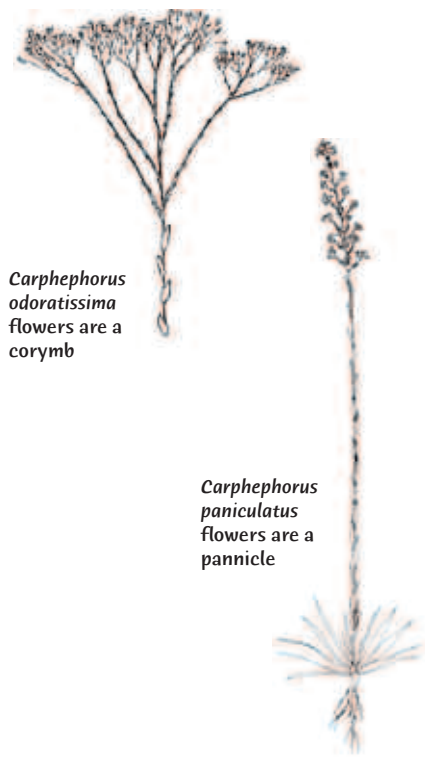
This single stem, one-bloom lily, which grows from Louisiana to Vir-



Pine Lily, Catesby Lily

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"Nobody sees a flower—really—it is so small it takes time—we haven't time—and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time."  
—Georgia O'Keefe



*Carphephorus odoratissima*  
flowers are a  
corymb

*Carphephorus paniculatus*  
flowers are a  
panicle

ginia, probably is more common in our area than in the most of its range. I've heard reports from people who found them by the hundreds on a single outing on the Kissimmee flatlands, though I never have been that lucky. Since it is a listed species, it cannot be dug in the wild.

It is a difficult flower to cultivate. Even if you were to find it in a nursery, you would find that it tends to decline and die, despite the best of care, and the flowers are said to be duller and smaller in a garden than they are in the wild. This wildflower is simply one of the most appealing of the huge, complex lily family and is determined to stay untamed.

It has long been perhaps my favorite wildflower. A friend painted one for me in its precise size and color; that picture has a prominent place on my wall.

*The Home Garden Self-Pronouncing Dictionary of Plant Names*,  
edited by Ralph Bailey, 1948:

*paniculatus* – pan-ik-ye-lay-tus: having a type of flower cluster  
classified as a panicle.

*odoratissimus* – oh-dor-at-tiss-im-us: very fragrant

*corymbosus* – kor-im-boh-sus: with corymbs

If you have not checked out the website [Killerplants.com](http://Killerplants.com), then you are missing some great tidbits of information about plants. Here is an example and excerpt:

### Why is it called lovegrass? –Chelsie Vandaveer

Lovegrass is a common name referring to the 300+ species of *Eragrostis*. It is found in temperate and tropical zones around the world. The name, lovegrass, first appeared in print in 1702, but it is thought much older and may well date to the Middle Ages.”

The genus was named by Nathanael Mattaeus von Wolf and published in *Genera Plantarum* in 1776. According to *Gray's Manual of Botany*, the botanical name was constructed “from the Greek, Eros, god of love, and agrostis, a grass....”

When the caryopses (grass fruit each containing a seed) are ripe, the panicles break easily away from the plant and are tumbled on the wind to disperse the seeds.

The panicles also break away with the passage of animals or people over the grass. The panicles loosely catch on fur or clothing. But the pieces do not stay put. Caught under a pants leg, the panicle creeps upward with each step. From personal experience, it is an extremely disconcerting sensation like something alive between the skin and the jeans.

And, at least, anecdotally, it is said the name lovegrass, and hence, *Eragrostis* derived from this tendency; the panicles creeping up under the long skirts and petticoats of women walking through pastures.

<http://www.killerplants.com/whats-in-a-name/20031017.asp>



*Eragrostis spectabilis*, Purple love grass

## Serenoa Chapter September Field Trip

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Terra Ceia Preserve State Park, a park jointly managed by the state and the water management district (SWFMD) is undergoing major restoration. Right now, budget cuts threaten this park, which could be closed next June.

There has not been a newsletter since last April and so this ‘thank you’ is way over due. The 2008 FNPS Conference was hosted by Serenoa, Mangrove, Suncoast and Hillsborough Chapters. Volunteers from our chapter were outstanding and made this one of the best conferences. About 40 people put in their time and their expertise to make this a successful conference. As the president of this chapter, I could not be more thankful that we have such great people in our chapter. Thank you again.

From Executive Director Karina Veaudry, “2008 Conference Revenue—after chapter incentives paid, \$25,600. In FNPS History—most revenue of any conference. Thank you everyone who participated!”

Serenoa Chapter members who volunteered their time: Richard Andrews, Charlie Andrews, Nancy and Brooks Armstrong, Jane Beach, Richard Beaupre, Tawyna Bissell, Steve Black, Carol Ann and Lee Breyer, Margaret Dahl, Nancy Edmondson, Trish and Bob Egolf, Jean Evoy, Dave Feagles, Mary Foster, Karen Fraley, Elizabeth Gandy, Tom Heitzman, Heather Hill, Bruce Holst, Anne Honahan, Tracey Hooper, Martha Horton, Greta Man, Kat McConnell, Wilda Meier, Elissa Mirabelli, Maryanne Owens, Russell Owens, Cathy Page, Belinda Perry, Annemarie Post, Betsy Roberts, Laurel Schiller, Ann and Tim Seidenkranz, Julia Teofilak, Charlotte Thomas, Erica Timmerman, Anita West, Matt Willey I apologize if I missed anyone.

## Thank You! Nancy West

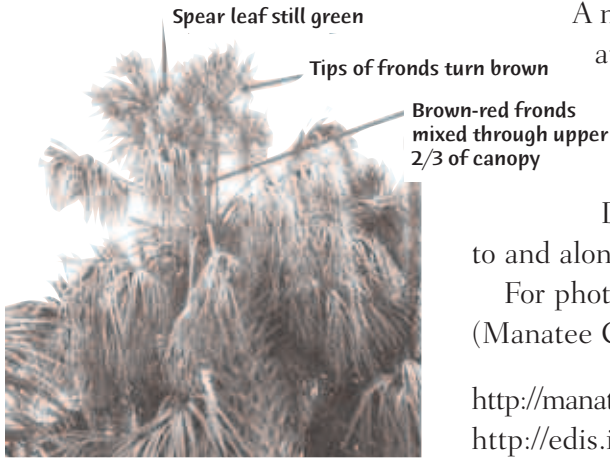
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“This specialization prepares students to apply horticultural-based knowledge to the establishment, management and protection of plant communities. This background will allow students to be proficient in many aspects of applied plant science, including native/rare plant propagation, ex situ plant conservation, weed control, nursery production of native plants, and planting design and specification.”

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/programs/majors/landscapeids.html>

## University of Florida, Restoration Horticulture Degree

# New Disease on Sabal Palm, *Sabal palmetto*



**Cabbage Palm: Mid-stage symptoms of new phytoplasma disease**

A new serious threat to our state tree was first reported in Manatee and Hillsborough Counties in 2007. This disease is caused by the same phytoplasma (cell wall-less bacterium) that causes Texas Phoenix Palm Decline. It is most likely transmitted by a plant hopper of unknown species.

Dead and dying trees are easy to find along US 41 in Palmetto and along I-75 southbound near exit 228

For photographs and disease symptoms, check out Peggie Dessaint's (Manatee County Horticulture Agent) website below and other sites:

<http://manateehort.ifas.ufl.edu/CabbagePalm-NewPhytoplasmaDisease.htm>

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/PP146>

[http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/Hort/Pubs/Palm Diseases Caused by Phytoplasmas-FAQ.pdf](http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/Hort/Pubs/Palm_Diseases_Caused_by_Phytoplasmas-FAQ.pdf)

## Serenoa Chapter Grants Awarded in 2008

**School District of DeSoto County**, Science Teacher Anita Forester, Environmental Learning Lab/Outdoor Classroom, Arcadia. \$500 for native plants for an Outdoor Classroom Memory Garden in memory of the Outdoor classroom mascot for 25 years, Sandy, a pig-tailed Macaque monkey.

“Creation of the memory garden has required teamwork and community caring of the highest order. I am truly amazed at the generosity. We’ve really just started. The garden continues to grow into being. We have a mediation bench, a watering system, and the beginnings of a native-plant-learning-garden. Also, plans are in place for a special butterfly section, a bridge, and stepping-stones.”  
—Anita Forester

**Ballard Elementary School**, Bradenton, Annual Beautify Ballard Day, \$500, Redesign of the landscape with native plants. Matching grants from Manatee Audubon and Toyota

**Anna Maria Island Elementary School**, Anna Maria Island, Master Gardener Christine Callahan, \$500 for Rain Garden plants, melaleuca mulch.

“The Rain Garden will be planted with native plants and will reduce non-point pollution by filtering stormwater runoff before it reaches the estuary. By changing our landscape to Florida-friendly, we set an example for our 300 students, their families and the community who visit our campus.”

**Tampa Bay Estuary Program**, \$500, to offset printing of the “Identification and Control of Non-Native Invasive Plants in the Tampa Bay Area”, a popular spiral bound publication given away at events.

Applications for a Serenoa Chapter Grant can be found at <http://www.fnps.org>. Go to Serenoa Chapter’s page—Announcement section. Or please call the President, listed on the first page of this newsletter.

# Florida Statute Defends Xeriscaping

Title XXVIII Chapter 373

Homeowners' association documents, including declarations of covenants, articles of incorporation, or bylaws, entered after October 1, 2001, may not prohibit any property owner from implementing Xeriscape or Florida-friendly landscape, as defined in s.373.185 (1), on his or her land.

(b) "Xeriscape" or "Florida-friendly landscape" means quality landscapes that conserve water and protect the environment and are adaptable to local conditions and which are drought tolerant. The principles of Xeriscape include planning and design, appropriate choice of plants, soil analysis which may include the use of solid waste compost, efficient irrigation, practical use of turf, appropriate use of mulches, and proper maintenance.

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm>

The firefly's flame is something for which science has no name.  
I can think of nothing eerier,  
Than flying around with an unidentified glow,  
on a person's posterior.

—OGDEN NASH (1902 - 1971)

## Welcome New Members!

Heath Jorgenson, Bradenton  
Paul Anhberg, Bradenton  
Peggy Dessaint, Palmetto  
Donna Estevez, Bradenton

**Join now! Come to the meetings and field trips! Learn about conservation, restoration of native habitat, and landscaping with native plants.**

**Florida Native Plant Society Membership benefits:** *Serenoa Notes* quarterly newsletter • Member discounts at events • 1 year subscription to *The Palmetto*, a quarterly magazine • *Sabal Minor* bi-monthly newsletter

## FNPS Membership Enrollment

## Serenoa Chapter Newsletter

Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (day) \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Membership number, if renewing \_\_\_\_\_  Life: \$ 1000  Donor: \$ 250  Business: \$ 100

Supporting: \$ 100  Contributing: \$ 75  Nonprofit: \$ 50  Family: \$ 50  Individual/Renewal: \$ 35

Individual/New or Gift Membership: \$ 25  Full-time student: \$ 15  Library: \$ 15

Payment:  Check/MO  Visa  MC  Discover

Check/Money Order # \_\_\_\_\_ Please do not mail cash. Make checks payable to: FNPS

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_ 3-digit CV code on back \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_

Billing address & zip code if different from above \_\_\_\_\_

Credit card payments can be faxed to 815-361-9166, or mail this form to: FNPS P.O. Box 278 Melbourne, FL 32902-0278

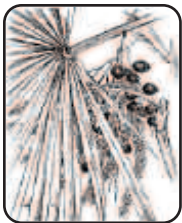
# Events Calendar

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**Monthly general meetings at Selby Gardens:** Every third Monday, Sept. through May at 7:00 P.M.; speaker begins at 7:30. Selby Botanical Gardens Activity Center, 811 South Palm Avenue, Sarasota. Everyone welcome!

**Carpool Meeting Points:** BRADENTON: Twelve Oaks Plaza, Bank of America building, on SR 70, ¼ mile west of I-75. SARASOTA: DaRuMa in Sarasota Crossings shopping center (5459 Fruitville Road).

- February 16 General Meeting—Native Plant Landscaping for the Barrier Islands** Mike Miller, a native plant landscape designer will speak on native plant landscaping for the barrier islands. He will also discuss his Anna Maria Island landscape projects.
- 21 9 a.m. Field Trip—Anna Maria Island** Mike Miller will give a tour of some of his landscape design projects such as City Hall, Historical Park, & the Sand Bar Restaurant. Carpool: Manatee 8:15, Sarasota 8:00
- March 7 10am-4pm Discover Lake Manatee State Park.** Fun for the entire family. Nature walks, wild animal exhibits, live entertainment, Jr. Fishing tournament and more. Serenoa Chapter will be there. Volunteers Needed! [www.floridastateparks.org/lakemanatee](http://www.floridastateparks.org/lakemanatee)
- March 16 General Meeting—Colt Creek State Park** Scott Spaulding, Manager of Colt Creek State Park will talk about the park's history, restoration and plant communities, which are mainly pine flatwoods and cypress domes. The 5,000-acre park opened to the public in January 2007 and has over 12 miles of trails.
- 21 9 a.m. Field Trip—Colt Creek State Park** Scott Spaulding will provide a tram tour of the park located in the Green Swamp Wilderness Area in NW Polk County. The park includes two major tributaries to the Withlacoochee River and a stand of 600 acres of longleaf pine. 16000 State Rd 471, Lakeland, FL. Carpool: Manatee 7:30, Sarasota 7:15
- April 19 Earth Day Celebration—Oscar Scherer State Park** Sarasota County Plant Sales, exhibits, music, guided walks, food, children's activities. Volunteers needed!
- 20 General Meeting Wicked Weeds—Invasives** Marina D'Abreau-Pryce, Hillsborough County Environmental Extension Agent will give a presentation on the identification and treatment/control methods that homeowners can use to eliminate those wicked weeds.
- 25 Earth Day Celebration—Felts' Audubon Preserve** Manatee County Plant Sales, exhibits, music, guided walks, food, children's activities. Volunteers needed!
- May 16 9 a.m. Field Trip—Jean Evoy's Property in DeSoto County** Jean Evoy, a Serenoa member, will give us a tour of her 450-acre property adjacent to the Peace River. The property is mixed oak-pine forestland interspersed with open grassy areas, cypress ponds, sloughs and seasonal wetlands. Carpool: Manatee 8:00, Sarasota 7:45
- 18 General Meeting—Native Pollinators** Fred Santana, an entomologist for Sarasota County, will speak about the future and importance of our native pollinators.
- 21-24 FNPS Conference—Palm Beach**
- June 8 World Ocean Day** To volunteer, call Nancy West, 941-748-1463 or email [srepens@gmail.com](mailto:srepens@gmail.com)



**The Serenoa Chapter  
of the Florida Native  
Plant Society**

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