



Serenoa Notes

The Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

March 2014

Rare Plants of Serenoa Chapter's Territory –Bruce Holst, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens

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!

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The area comprised by the Serenoa Chapter (De Soto, Hardee, Manatee, Sarasota) has a rich and interesting flora with nearly 1,500 species of plants. Of these, approximately 1,100 are species considered native to Florida and around 400 species are naturalized exotics. Of the natives, there are 56 species and 5 subspecies/varieties found in our area that are listed as endangered or threatened by our government agencies. That may sound like a relatively low number, especially when compared to the many hundreds listed in other areas such as Pine Rockland in SE Florida, the Tropical Hammocks of the Florida Keys, or the Scrub of the Lake Wales Ridge. Several factors may be responsible for this low level of rarity, such as the long interglacial periods when most of western Florida was under water, the fact that we don't have soils with high edaphic specialization (i.e., our soils are fairly common and widespread), and finally, the fact that we don't have much exposed rock where rare species are often found.

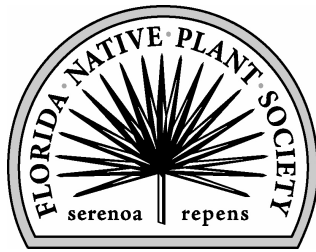
Of course all plants are interesting in their own way, but among our rarities there are some beautiful species (in my eye) that might help us promote conservation of all plants and their habitats. These are the tar-

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PHOTO BY BRUCE HOLST

Right: Nearly mature fruit of aboriginal prickly apple cactus



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Rare Plants, continued from page 1

get of an informal effort by Selby Gardens to help educate visitors through our native plant displays. After getting the appropriate permissions from the state and local governments and private landowners, we initially have targeted three species from which to collect seed and cuttings. These are:

Aboriginal pricklyapple cactus (*Harrisia aboriginum*, Cactaceae; State-Endangered). This is a handsome thin-columnar cactus found in coastal scrubby hammocks, always where there is a bit of sun. Their flowers are magnificent should you be lucky enough to experience one since they only bloom at night, and the fruits are large and yellow at maturity. Our populations of aboriginal pricklyapple cacti are the *northernmost* of the species and found in distressingly low numbers. Last year we were successful at germinating seed collected on a nearby barrier island. When the plants are of size, hopefully this year we will plant some out both at Selby Gardens and at the headquarters of the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast in Osprey. We will also maintain a number of plants in our research collection for possible future outplantings. This species is purported to be in a listing process at the Federal Government level, but it is not clear when or if that will happen.

Maidenberry (*Crossopetalum rhacoma*, Celastraceae; State-Threatened). This is one of my favorite plants in this area, in part because of its rarity. It is a thin, almost wiry shrub at times with small, glossy, opposite leaves that are scalloped on the edges. The flowers are inconspicuous and green, similar to the Florida mayten, but the fruits are a bright, lustrous red that are sure to be sought after by birds. I learned of this plant from collections made at a small preserve near a condominium complex on Longboat Key, but later discovered an unknown population slightly



PHOTO BY BRUCE HOLST

Lustrous red fruits of the maidenberry



PHOTO BY BRUCE HOLST

Flowers and young fruits of the maidenberry

further north near where my in-laws had a place. I so much enjoyed visiting the small patch growing in a remnant cedar hammock next to a golf course that included other rare coastal scrub species. Unfortunately, I arrived one day to find the entire thicket was bulldozed save the cedars, and replaced with plumbago and vinca. Ironically, it may have been the presence of Brazilian pepper around the edges that triggered the golf course to plow it all under, I suspect, bowing to pressure from LBK to remove exotics along Gulf of Mexico Dr. With the loss of these plants the last remaining miniscule population at the aforementioned condominium is now some *150 miles* distant from its closest known kin in Monroe Co. (Please let me know if you are aware of other populations in the area... and keep a sharp eye out when visiting any shell mound!).

Florida mayten (*Maytenus phyllanthoides*, Celastraceae; State-Threatened). The Florida mayten is an odd shrub and when you see it you think it should be in a desert somewhere, because of its thick, grayish, leathery-succulent leaves and stems. In our area, I have seen it on the bay side of barrier islands, and only a handful of plants in one location in all of Sarasota Co. I have seen it flourish, however, on Mullet Key in Pinellas Co. and Stump Pass Beach in Charlotte Co., and its naturally known distribution in Florida extends all the way north to Levy Co. and south to the Florida Keys (elsewhere it occurs from Texas to Mexico). Other than the grayish foliage and tiny green flowers, the only hint of color is seen when the fruits open to reveal a seed covered with a pale orange or reddish aril.

While we have successfully propagated the aboriginal pricklyapple, the maidenberry and Florida mayten are proving harder, with only a few seeds germinating and a few cuttings taking root. We have plans, however, to gather additional material, and were glad to see that at least the Florida mayten seems to be spreading around the mother plant that I first saw many years ago.

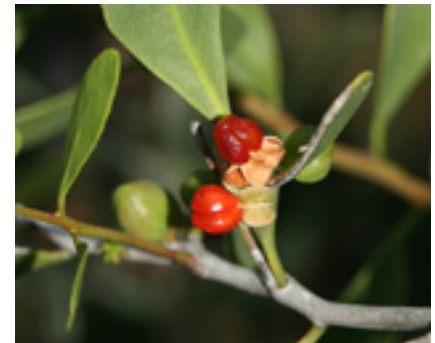


PHOTO BY BRUCE HOLST

Open fruits of the Florida mayten

Acknowledgments. We thank Mark Richardson of Longboat Key Parks and Rec., Lee Amos of the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, and Jerris Foote of Sarasota Co. Parks and Recreation for assistance with permits, for providing access to certain properties. A special thanks also to Selby Gardens volunteer Larry Swift for assistance with the field work, and to the Selby Gardens Horticulture staff.

Bad Pruning Practices Ruin Trees –Nancy West

Trees in your yard are an investment in time, money, and the environment. They also provide beauty, shade and habitats for birds, bugs and other plants.

Good pruning practices keep your tree healthy, but poor pruning practices can damage a tree for its lifetime and possibly kill it. If your trees need a lot of pruning, always consider hiring a certified licensed arborist. <http://www.floridaisa.org/hiring.php>

If you want to do your own pruning, then watch or read information on the care of trees on the Internet. Two good websites: <http://hort.ufl.edu/woody/pruning.shtml>; and this 10-minute video demonstrating the 3-cut method: <http://youtu.be/W9ZjIkBwTCw>

Also from arboricultural research:

- Do not use pruning paint.
- Do not trim more than 1/3 of the tree at one time.

Tree articles

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep276> Pruning Shade Trees in Landscapes: A Plan for Training Shade Trees

<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G6885> Protecting trees during construction

PHOTO BY NANCY WEST

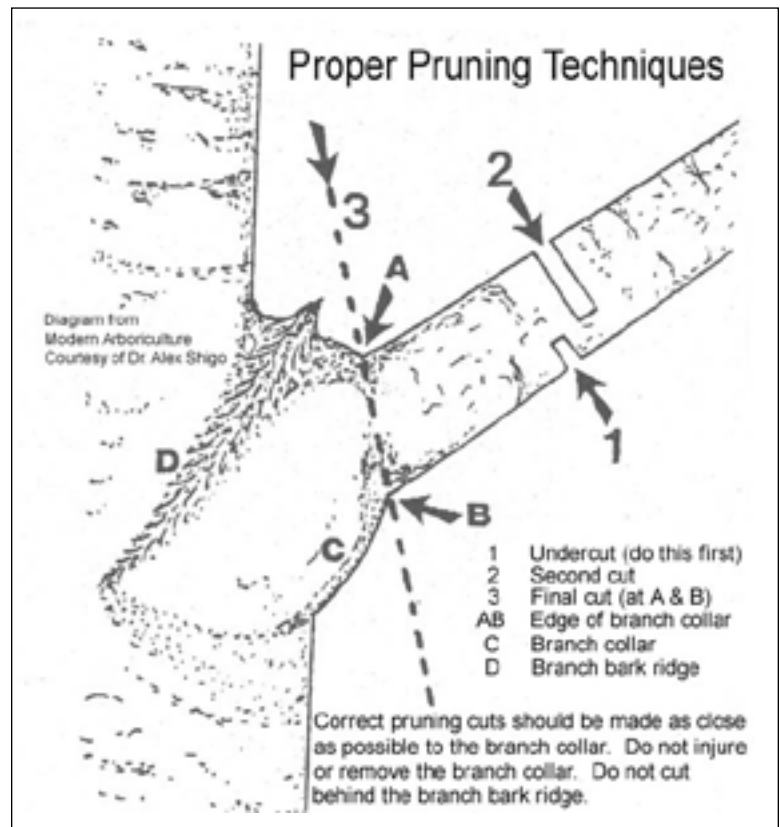


This cut was done properly. The cut was made outside of the branch collar allowing the callus to heal over the cut. Donut shaped calluses indicates a good cut.

Extensive wood rot is visible in this poorly pruned branch. The callus cannot close over this branch that was cut too far from the branch collar.

Volunteers Needed

Don't forget that there are always FNPS events that need volunteers! Several upcoming events include the Native Plant Sale on April 5 at Sweet Bay Nursery and Earth Day on April 27 at Oscar Scherer State Park. Please consider committing some of your time to help these events be both fun and successful for everyone. It is a great way to learn a lot and hob-nob with friends, old and new!



Looking for Pawpaw –Fran Palmeri

Spring comes early in Florida so just a month into winter I start looking for pawpaw. *Asimina reticulata* or netted pawpaw has been known to bloom in late January at Oscar Scherer State Park.

Soon after driving out east (Route 70 or 64) I pass pastures dotted with these plants, some of them big enough to be called shrubs or even small trees. Though not easy to grow in gardens pawpaw are not picky where they grow in the wild though they prefer dry sandy areas. Often I see them climbing up barbed wire fences along a road.

I'm not the only one looking. The zebra swallowtail butterfly seeks this plant out to nectar on and lay its eggs. Pawpaw is the ONLY plant it uses to raise its young.

Ten species of pawpaw and six hybrids can be found in Florida. Three species—*A. manasota*, *A. obovata* and *A. tetramera*—are endemic to the state. *A. triloba* can be found as far north as Canada. Also called custard apple, the fruit tastes a bit like banana. If you eat it, keep in mind that some people are allergic to it. The fruit spoils quickly so you have to beat the gopher tortoise and other animals to it!

In the 1700's the "papaw" aroused the curiosity of British gardeners like Peter Collinson who lusted after exotic additions to their landscapes. For years he corresponded with John Bartram, Philadelphia naturalist and nurseryman (Bartram's Garden) who at his request sent Collinson "a jar of Papaw flowers and fruit." John's son William noted a number of different species of the plant he called *Annona* on his four year excursion down the southeastern coastal plain. His beautiful drawing of *A. obovata* and *A. pygmaea* which he sent to his patron, John Fothergill, is reproduced in his book *Travels*.

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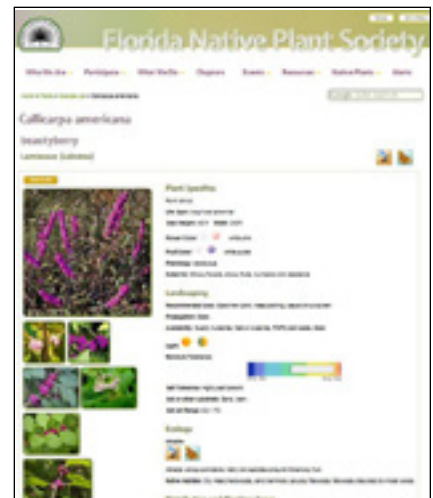
Netted pawpaw, *Asimina reticulata*



Bigflower pawpaw, *Asimina obovata*

The Updated Florida Native Plant Society Website

If you have not checked out the FNPS.org website, you are missing great upgrades— including their plant information page. Search for Beautyberry and you will find information on plant size, light requirement, soil preferences, bird, butterfly or pollinator attraction, plus color images of the plants. The site is mobile-friendly, so when you are in a nursery and want to know more about a specific plant, you can open the page on your smart phone. This is an example of part of the plant page:



Upcoming Events

- The proposed Water and Land Conservation Amendment gathered enough signed petitions to be placed on the November ballot! If passed, this amendment will provide dedicated funding for Florida's conservation lands. Getting on the ballot was a huge step, but more work is needed to spread the word and make sure voters get to the poles to make their voice heard. Visit www.voteyeson1fl.org.
- To stay current on what is happening in the battle against invasive plants and animals be sure to visit the website of the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC) at www.fleppc.org. In 2013 FLEPPC published its biennial update of its Invasive Plant List. While many of us are familiar with the plants we want, we need to stay just as familiar with those we don't! So check out the new list at www.fleppc.org/list/list.htm. FLEPPC is holding its annual symposium in conjunction with the Florida Chapter of the Wildlife Society April 28-May 1 at the Safety Harbor Resort and Spa. For registration information visit www.ftws.org/2014springconference/.

Pawpaw... *continued from page 5*

Starting in 1905, another plant enthusiast—Mary Francis Baker—traipsed about Florida in search of the new and beautiful. From then on she spent most of her time here, botanizing and writing plus hobnobbing with botanical “lights” like John Kunkel Small. Trained at her botanist mother’s knee, Baker was the most astute of botanizers. In 1912, she published *The Book of Grasses*. Her book *Florida Wild Flowers* was published in 1926 and was an inspiration for Walter Kingsley Taylor who dedicated his *Guide to Florida Wildflowers* to her.

Clearly Mary Francis Baker was enchanted with pawpaw. “The way these flowers grow—and grow and grow—recalls legends of bottled genii,” she wrote in *Florida Wild Flowers*. Describing *A. reticulata* she said “...in January brown knoblike buds appear and slowly enlarge until from them crinkled petals escape, that daily increase in size until in banners of creamy white, they droop below the budding leaves.”

In April 2011 botanist John Beckner and I visited Lake Blue Scrub, a 78-acre tract of scrub in the Winter Haven area where Baker had settled. We’d come to see the restoration undertaken by Bok Tower’s Rare Plant Conservation Program. It included plantings of *Lupinus aridorum* (now *L. westianus* var. *aridorum*)—the plant John had described. The beautiful rare lupine was much in evidence—but it was the tree-like *A. obovata*, largeflower pawpaw, spreading their branches like so many candle-labra that caught my fancy. A year later stopping by Hickory Lake Scrub Preserve in Polk County I was greeted by *A. obovata* trees lavishly covered with white blooms growing in a recently burned area.

In 2007 Terri Pietroburgo started a pawpaw nursery after looking for pawpaw for years in the wild. Terri now has a nursery in Leesburg that sells pawpaw (352-504-6494). You might also check with your local native plant nursery to see if they carry it.

Celebrate pawpaw—part of Florida’s plant heritage. Get out, look around and even plant some in a sandy area if you dare. Be prepared to coddle it, remembering that Mother Nature does it best!



PHOTO BY FRAN PALMER

Bigflower pawpaw, *Asimina obovata*

Serenoa Chapter Growth –Peter Price

From Dec. 2012 through Jan. 2014, our membership has increased 22% from 96 to 117 members. Various issues have been responsible this increase. Our excellent speakers and the field trips; my pestering people to be sure to renew their dues; and above all, you, the members. Our meetings and field trips provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere, and we all do share the common interest of native plants.

One event that brought a large membership increase was the fall plant sale. Non-members were encouraged to join FNPS at the sale in order to be

eligible for a 20 percent discount on their purchases. This resulted in five people joining at the event. This will be repeated at our spring plant festival on April 5th. Be sure to invite friends to attend, join, and take advantage of the discount.

New members who have joined the Serenoa Chapter in the last three months include Bruce Weaver, JoAnn Swan, Terri Noyes, Michael Lehner, Barbara Rao and Dava Stravinski. Be sure to greet these new members at our next meeting.

Serenoa Chapter Offers Grants

Our chapter offers grants to groups, such as schools, neighborhood associations, homeowner associations, businesses, non-profit organizations, and government organizations located in Manatee, DeSoto, Sarasota, and Hardee Counties. The purpose of these grants is to educate and display the importance and beauty of our native plants.

Grants up to \$500 are available to pay for Florida native plants, native plant landscape designer or architect. The project must be available for access by the public. Please visit this website to see other

information, restrictions and online grant application form: <http://serenoa.fnpschapters.org/index.php?id=fnps-serenoa-grant-application>

Last year we provided grants to

- Save Our Seabirds for “Holiday for the Birds”
- Palma Sola Gardens
- Reflections of Manatee for “Restore native habitat at Manatee Mineral Springs”

If you know of an organization that could use Serenoa’s grant funds, please let them know.

FNPS Membership Enrollment

Serenoa Chapter Newsletter

Name _____ E-mail _____ Phone (day) _____

Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Membership number, if renewing _____ **Dues:** ___ Life: \$1,000 ___ Donor: \$250 ___ Business or corporate: \$125

___ Supporting: \$100 ___ Contributing: \$75 ___ Not-for-profit organization: \$50 ___ Family or household: \$50

___ Individual: \$35 ___ Full-time student: \$15 ___ Library subscription: \$100

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 and zip code if different from above _____

Credit card payments can be faxed to (815) 361-9166; or mail this form to: FNPS, PO Box 278, Melbourne, FL 32902-0278

Florida Native Plant Society Membership benefits: *Serenoa Notes* newsletter, Member discounts at events, subscription to the quarterly magazine *Palmetto*, Bi-monthly newsletter *Sabal Minor*

Events Calendar

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!

- Mar. 17** GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. —RARE PLANTS OF FLORIDA. Michael Jenkins, Plant Conservation Biologist, Florida Forest Service will talk about some of Florida's listed species and what is being done to conserve them.
- Mar. 22** FIELD TRIP 10 A.M.—DEVIL'S MILLHOPPER GEOLOGICAL STATE PARK AND 1 P.M. SAN FELASCO HAMMOCK PRESERVE STATE PARK, ALACHUA COUNTY. We'll catch the 10 a.m. talk at Devil's Millhopper and explore the sinkhole with its rare plants. At 1 p.m. dendrologist Paul Proctor will lead us on a walk at San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park, a rare mature forest with thousands of plant species. Deciduous trees will be leafing out!
- Apr. 5** PLANT SALE 9 A.M. TO 3 P.M.—SWEET BAY NURSERY, 10824 ERIE ROAD, PARRISH, FL 34219, MANATEE COUNTY. <http://www.sweetbaynursery.com> Volunteers needed!
- Apr. 21** GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. —"SHOW AND TELL." Serenoans will have an opportunity to tell about their gardening adventures, plant finds or other plant-related subjects in a brief talk and/or slide show. (Bring photos on a flash drive).
- Apr. 27** EARTH DAY CELEBRATION 10 A.M. —OSCAR SCHERER STATE PARK, SARASOTA COUNTY. Exhibits, music, guided walks, food, plant sale. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.
- May 15–18** FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE, FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY, FORT MYERS. Field trips on May 15th and 18th. May 16th and 17th will feature keynote speakers, educational sessions, book signings, networking with native plant enthusiasts, and native plant sales. For more information visit: www.fnps.org/.
- May 19** GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. —A FLORIDA GARDEN AND ORCHID HOUSE. Biologist Elizabeth Gandy will talk about how she planned and planted her garden and how her passion for orchids was realized in an orchid house.
- May 24** FIELD TRIP 9 A.M.—ELIZABETH'S GARDEN, SARASOTA COUNTY. We'll tour the garden and orchid house.

The Serenoa Chapter
of the Florida Native
Plant Society
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