



Serenoa Notes

The Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society September, 2009

In Memory of Michael Kenton

From Karen Fraley, Around the Bend Nature Tours:

On July 14, 2009, the world lost a great friend and botanist, Michael Wayne Kenton, age 64 after a three-year battle with brain cancer.

Mike was a founder of both the Serenoa and Nature Coast chapters of the Florida Native Plant Society. He owned Environmental Equities Nursery in Hudson that carried over 450 species of native Florida plants. For those that interacted with Mike, we know he had a great personality, sense of humor and a no-nonsense approach to getting things done. He was a great botanist, educator and mentor to the native plant movement. He was involved in so many projects over the years that it boggles the mind; from purchasing the land that was to become Moccasin Lake Nature Park, to creating the amazing nature trail at the JB Starkey Wilderness Preserve in Pasco County (in addition to at least four others on the Gulf Coast), to designing the award-winning median on SR 64 east in Manatee County that we are fighting to preserve. These are only a few of the many, many programs that Mike has implemented over the years. Mike was always a willing teacher; he loved to share his expertise and knowledge with anyone who was there to listen. Hiking with Mike was a real treat—he had so much to teach as we walked into the wilderness—and he loved every minute of it. Mike is survived by his wife Judy, who took him all over the country in the past three years to visit the wild

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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Mike presenting Home Landscaping Award to Jean Evoy





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Visit our chapter on the Florida
Native Plant society website:
www.fnps.org

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places that he so loved. We look forward to Judy joining us on our future Serenoa field trips to share in the healing of nature.

From Tom Heitzman, Sweetbay Nursery:

Mike Kenton, who ran and owned Environmental Equities Nursery in Hudson, FL was truly a native plant advocate. He grew many rare, unusual, and hard to find native plants. The list of species he carried was quite extensive, mostly due to his expertise on propagating. If you were looking for a one-of-a-kind plant, it could most likely be found at Mike's nursery.

In 1998, he went to work for Manatee County as their county forester and began incorporating native plants into many of the county's roadway projects. Two projects that come to mind are Bayshore Gardens Parkway median, and median plantings along US 19 and US 41 in the northern part of the county. Both these are 100% native and both still stand as a lasting memory of Mike's work.

Mike was always willing to give advice on native plants. Whether it was a species identification or what plant to use, he always had an answer. Mike's love of native plants and jovial character will truly be missed.

A Memory from Dave Feagles:

We all know Mike was a kind, generous, soft-spoken man. He did, however, have a problem with stupidity. If it was a simple ignorance he would try to educate it. If there was thoughtless bigoted stupidity, that was another matter. This brings to mind Bradenton's scheme to become the Crepe Myrtle capitol of the USA. Understand, that much consideration and conversation had already occurred regarding the importance of using native plants in the landscape. In addition, through Mike's stewardship, a great number of projects had successfully incorporated native plants in their design. Therefore, to use a non-native shrub to put Bradenton "on the map" was crassly inappropriate.

So, I remember Mike standing in front of one of city of Bradenton's "finest" who was prattling on and on about the "unique" statement and "sense of place" that the Crepe Myrtle would provide. Mike's eyes began to widen, his complexion reddened and with a silent look of outraged indignation, which shouted so loudly that his antagonist rapidly mumbled his way into silence. Mike never left you wondering where he was coming from. I learned from him that being direct is the best antidote to BS.

From Brooks Armstrong, Pine Lily Nursery:

I knew Mike Kenton from our mutual involvement in the nursery business and Association of Florida Native Nurseries, as well as our membership on the board of our chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society. His nursery was small but most definitely had the greatest variety of Florida native plants in the state. He ran this business on the side

continued on page 4

Horse Sugar –Paul Wills

It isn't particularly rare, but be prepared for blank looks when you shake a limb of a shrub or small tree and ask your botanizing companions, "Isn't this one horse sugar?"

"Horse sugar? Never heard of it." That's likely to be the answer, for this native plant—known in botany as *Symplocos tinctoria*—does have a way of receding into the background of understudy plants. It is modest and has quite a lot to be modest about.

But it can be found over most of Florida and other Southern states, including stream banks in several counties right around here. And it was identified by the experts as native to Florida more than 230 years ago. It was spotted by botanist William Bartram—who didn't miss much as he wandered in unsettled Florida—as he crossed the St. Mary's river from Georgia into Florida in 1773.

Furthermore, the national champion for size grew in Florida. In fact, it was in the woody yard of a long-ago editor of the Tallahassee Democrat, Malcolm Johnson, who was an expert botanizer himself. The National Register of Big Trees still has the measurements, no doubt, but my memory is that it was around thirty feet high, with a trunk diameter of a bit over a foot. It was impressive at that size, particularly in the spring when the fuzzy white blossoms appeared just before the bright green, spring leaves.

Locally, though, and in most places, it is a clumpy shrub of ten feet or so, with three or four canes. And if you pull off a mature leaf and bite it along the midrib, you do in fact get a sweet, not unpleasant taste. That's one of the reasons another name for it is common sweetleaf. But I prefer the more striking name horse sugar and, in fact, horses, mules and cows munch on the leaves.

The Native American Indians almost everywhere had a few medical uses for it, especially in teas for treating digestive and stomach ailments. But that was not its main use.

As the name "*tinctoria*" indicates, the most widespread use for it was as a yellow dye, used for this purpose by early Florida settlers and natives alike long before it was identified in the botany books. Leaves, bark and berries all contain the yellowing compounds. The small clustered berries are juicy, bluish red in color but mature to a dry brownish red.

The wood is so soft that it is good whittling material, and in fact can be turned carefully on a lathe without undue splitting. But the small size of the trunks rules out much of this use.

Planted in a yard as a curiosity or part of a native plant collection, the horse sugar should be in dampish, acidic soil and given sun protection by an overhanging tree. In some areas, the shrub is evergreen; in others, deciduous. The leaves are up to eight inches long, oval and thick but not leathery.

Like most plants, the horse sugar manufactures many, many com-



CHRIS EVANS, RIVER TO RIVER CWMA, BUGWOOD.ORG



Horse sugar, *Symplocos tinctoria*

CREDIT: CHRIS EVANS, RIVER TO RIVER CWMA, BUGWOOD.ORG

Another sad note, **Marie Collins** passed away May 18, 2009. Many of you may remember Marie as the small, spry woman who greeted us at the general meetings for several years. She shared many plants with all of her friends and insisted that you never say thank you for a plant, as that was bad luck. We miss her spirit and her smiling face. Memorial contributions can be donated to FNPS or to Palmetto Church of Christ.

pounds that may prove to be of use in medicines. But Dan Austin, a Florida expert writing about this forgettable plant, says that, in the U. S., no chemical studies seem to have been carried out so far on these compounds. However, Asians have found promising medical elements in their species of the plants.

Perhaps one day it will gain the spotlight as a mainstay in our medicine chests. Now, if it could just cure the common cold....

SERENOA CHAPTER OF THE FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
AND THE SARASOTA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM PRESENT

Florida Native Plant Sale

Friday and Saturday, October 2nd and 3rd 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
and Sunday October 4th 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

At **Tropiflora**

3530 Tallevast Road, Sarasota, Florida 34243

Large selection of native trees, shrubs, grasses,
and blooming wildflowers

For more information, call 941-794-8773 or 941-955-8085

VOLUNTEERS needed—all types: cashiers, set up, plant sales, plant
movers. Contact Nancy, ncywest@mac.com or 941-748-1463

Michael Kenton, *continued from page 2*

of his regular career as County Forester for Manatee County. His extensive knowledge and enthusiasm for native plants was so great. He always believed that native plants should be a greater part of the nursery industry. His last wishes were to start up a tissue culture lab to clone endangered and threatened natives for the plant industry. This idea of Mike's is probably the future for many of our disappearing native plants. Let's always keep that inspiration alive!

A Few of the Awards that Mike Kenton earned from FNPS:

- 2007 FNPS Mentor Award
- 2006 FNPS Silver Palmetto Award for service to the society.
- 2001 FNPS Transportation Award, 1st Place, East SR 64 Project (from Bradenton River east to Morgan Johnson Rd)
- 2000 FNPS Transportation Award, 1st Place, Bayshore Garden's Parkway, Manatee County

Memorial contributions for
Michael Kenton can be made to the
Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native
Plant Society or to Moffitt
Cancer Center.

Severe Pruning of Palms is not Eco-friendly

—Craig K. Chandler, University of Florida

A common practice in the landscape maintenance industry is to prune palm trees yearly—removing all but the top tier of leaves. This is often called hurricane pruning because it is thought to protect palms from high winds.

But according to John Bergeman of the University of Arizona, palms need no protection from high winds. Their flexible leaves and low wind resistance make them nearly storm-proof. Instead of protecting the palm from high winds, the practice actually weakens the canopy. The reason for this is that all fronds (leaves) in the head of a palm act together, with each frond layer supporting and adding strength to the one above. They all protect the bud and newly emerging spear leaf. The more leaves that are removed, the less strength and protection there is.

Palms manufacture food in their leaves. But palms are not as efficient as other types of trees at storing food. So palms are more dependent on their leaves to provide food for growth. With relatively few leaves, compared to other trees, removing even one green frond can significantly reduce a palm's ability to feed itself.

Some palms carry no more than thirty fronds at one time. Typically, as many as twenty fronds may be removed in hurricane pruning. That means the palm's ability to manufacture food has been reduced by two-thirds. Try to imagine if you had to survive on two-thirds less calories a day! If severe pruning is done on an annual basis, the palm's trunk can gradually decrease in diameter and becomes weak, making it more likely to break or shatter in a storm.

Palms also move nutrients from the older fronds to the new growth. When all of these older fronds are removed, so is the source of much of



Overpruned sabal palms



Healthy sabals in a street median

Florida is one of the most biologically diverse states in the nation, with more than 80 different plant communities, thirteen of these unique in the world. We have over 2,400 native species of plants, many found only in Florida.

Members of the Native Plant Society promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of native plants and native plant communities. Please join this extraordinary group of people working to protect and learn about Florida's native flora—the membership form is on page 7.

Local Sellers of Native Plants

Sweetbay Nursery, Open the first Sat. of the month from 8 A.M. to noon. 10824 Erie Rd, Parrish, FL

Florida Native Plants Inc., Open Mon.–Sun. 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.
730 Myakka Rd, Sarasota, 34240
www.floridanativeplants.com

Accent Trees and Nursery, Open Mon.–Fri. 8 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., Sat. and Sun. 10 A.M. to 3 P.M.
6205 16th Ave. East, Palmetto, FL 34221
<http://www.accenttreesandnursery.com>

Pine Lily Nursery, Call ahead to make sure someone will be available. 813-993-3966, please leave message.
7301 Redge Rainey Rd Ona, 33865

Also, check out Association of Florida Native Nurseries for specific plants and nurseries in other counties: <http://www.afnn.org/gardening-public>

the nutrients that palms need. As a result, nutrient deficiencies can develop, which often take years to correct.

Ideally, only dead (completely brown) fronds should be removed when pruning a palm says University of Florida palm expert Dr. Tim Broschat. Under no circumstances should palms be severely pruned! Severe pruning is characterized by the removal of any fronds above the horizontal (i.e., between the 9 o'clock and 3 o'clock positions).

Also, in the case of the sabal palm (our state tree) care should be taken not to prematurely remove flower and fruit stalks, as the flowers and fruit of this native palm are a valuable source of food for wildlife.

Books

[Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens](#) by Douglas W. Tallamy

“Chances are, you have never thought of your garden—indeed, of all of the space on your property—as a wildlife preserve that represents the last chance we have for sustaining plants and animals that were once common throughout the U.S. But that is exactly the role our suburban landscapes are now playing and will play even more in the near future.” <http://bringingnaturehome.net/native-gardening>

Websites

GARDENING IN SMALL PLACES. If you live in an apartment, condo or other places with little or no place to plant, this site is for you. “Celebrate Urban Birds”, Cornell's Lab of Ornithology website.

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration>

DEAD WOOD (we are not talking about that 'guy' in the office) provides habitat for many types of critter. An essential element in a garden for wildlife; <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW277>

SCRUB JAYS: Visit the scrub-jay sharepoint website:
<http://share2.myfwc.com/scrubjay/default.aspx>

INVASIVE PLANTS: photos and what homeowners can do about to control them. Orange County Extension Service newsletter
http://cfyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/newsletters/Spring%2009_FYN.pdf

RESTORING TREES AFTER A HURRICANE: A ten-page full-color fact sheet by Edward F. Gilman and Tracy Partin, is part of the Urban Forest Hurricane Recovery Program series. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP291>

TREE PHOTOS FOR IDENTIFICATION: Florida 4H Forest Ecology Website. A site with wonderful photos of trees, their flowers and fruits.
<http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/4h/>

SOIL pH and the Home Landscape or Garden.
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/SS480>

Special Events

October 27, 2009, 6:30 P.M., **THE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL-CONSERVATION SUMMIT**, at the Palma Sola Botanical Gardens. The authors of Paving Paradise: Florida's Vanishing Wetlands and the Failure of No Net Loss, Craig Pittman and Matthew Waite, will provide a presentation followed by a round table discussion.

Learn how to compost, design your yard, plant for wildlife, make a rain barrel, simplified landscape irrigation, and much more at the Manatee County Extension Service. Most classes are free. Call 941-722-4524 or check out the calendar at <http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu/calendar.shtml>

Sarasota County Extension has classes on creating your Florida Yard, Florida-friendly landscaping, native pollinators, green homes, alternatives to turf and much more. Most classes are free. Call 941-861-5000, ext 19900 or <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/>

LAST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH, 8 to noon, Felt's Audubon Preserve Volunteer Workdays. Restore habitat, manage invasive plants, maintain bird feeders, ensure footpaths are accessible, perform maintenance on outbuildings, etc. 941-729-2222 <http://www.manateeaudubon.org/felts.html>

Welcome New Members!

Alan Frank, Sarasota
Lisa Marie Phillips, Bradenton
Beach

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

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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

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).

- September 1 Executive Board Meeting** 6:30 P.M., Bradenton River Elementary School, 6215 River Club Blvd, Bradenton, 34202. All Welcome!
- 21 General Meeting—Backyard Wildlife Habitat** Speaker George Kish is a hydrologist with the U. S. Geological Survey in Tampa and past president of the Suncoast chapter of FNPS. He will give a talk about attracting wildlife to your backyard landscape with Florida's natural ecosystems.
- 26 9 a.m. Field Trip—Rye Preserve Wilderness Park** Russell Owens will lead a walk in the Rye Wilderness Park in East Manatee County. This 145-acre park goes through oak hammocks, pine forests and Florida scrub ecosystems. <http://www.mymanatee.org/>
- October 2, 3, 4 Plant Sale** at Tropiflora, 3530 Tallevast Rd., Bradenton, ½ mile east of SR301. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED. Email Nancy ncywest@mac.com or call 941-748-1463
- 6 Executive Board Meeting** 6:30 P.M., Bradenton River Elementary School, 6215 River Club Blvd, Bradenton, 34202. All Welcome!
- 19 General Meeting—Carlton Reserve** Speaker Rick Storsberg, Park Naturalist, will present a short slide show highlighting some of the ecosystems in the 24,565-acre reserve in Sarasota with an emphasis on the systems that provide for the wonderful variety of wildflowers.
- 24 9 a.m. Field Trip—Carlton Reserve** Rick Storsberg will lead a walk/truck ride into the backcountry of the Carlton Reserve. Participants will have access to several wetland areas, hammocks and pine flat wood habitats. <http://www.scgov.net/NaturalLands/CarltonReserve.asp>
- 27 7 p.m. Bradenton Environmental Summit —Palma Sola Botanical Park** Craig Pittman, investigative environmental reporter for the St. Petersburg Times, will share how years of non-enforcement of environmental laws has resulted in massive loss of wetlands. Reserve at 792-8314.
- November 3 Executive Board Meeting** 6:30 P.M., Bradenton River Elementary School, 6215 River Club Blvd, Bradenton, 34202. All Welcome!
- 16 General Meeting—Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve** Speaker Richard Sullivan will discuss Hillsborough County's coastal ecosystem restoration project at the Preserve. The County purchased this 651-acre tract in 1991 and are working to restore its estuarine/freshwater wetlands and coastal uplands.
- 21 9 a.m. Field Trip—Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve—Canoe Trip** Richard Sullivan will lead a hayride type exploration through the uplands portion of the preserve and follow with a canoe trip through the wetlands and into the Tampa Bay mangrove fringe. <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/sites/cockroach/info.htm>



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

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www.fnps.org