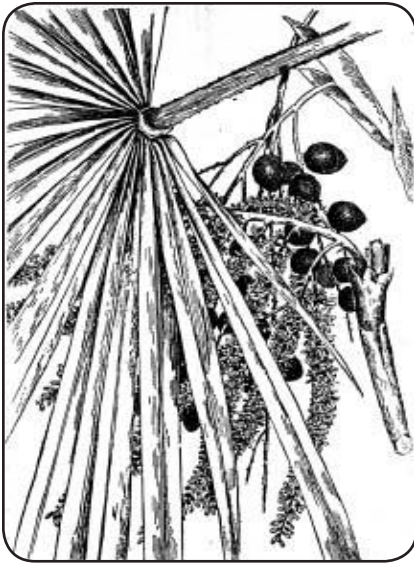


Serenoa Notes

The Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

September, 2011



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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John Beckner—A Remembrance

(1932-2011) —Fran Palmeri (www.franpalmeri.com)

I first met John Beckner in the pages of a book. Archie Carr's *The Everglades* (1973 Time-Life Books) tells of three botanists in the Fakahatchee Strand standing in the swamp eating sandwiches and counting the tens of thousands of bromeliads in their vicinity. John was one of them. In recent years, Mike Owen, the biologist at the Fakahatchee, drove John around looking at bromeliads and orchids, and listening to him talk about the old days.

John was an orchid man. An American Orchid Society judge for more than forty years, former curator of the Orchid Identification Center at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, he became interested in them as a child in St. Petersburg. One of his first jobs was working in an orchid nursery.

Though he worked and traveled in various parts of the world he was most happy riding down back roads in Florida looking for plants. A field trip was an adventure. We'd get to a place that might look a little humdrum but then, spotting something from the car window, he'd say, "Stop! Back up!" I'd get out to photograph a tiny wildflower. "Never seen this before" really galvanized me. Could it possibly be a new species? In John's mind the possibility was always there.

He could identify just about any plant and was expert at reading the landscape. On a road with what appeared like flat vistas suddenly seemed mountainous. At the top of a hill on the Lake Wales Ridge (elevation: 300 feet) we'd find the white sand and sand pines of rosemary scrub and at a dip in the road, a creek. He'd see a flock of sandhill cranes and knew there was marshland nearby for them to nest in. A swath of snapped off pines in Collier County spoke of Hurricane Charley coming through. He was good at figuring out why a certain plant was NOT there. Curiosity was a driving force in his life.

We always took back roads home and the end of the day seemed magical. Rare scrub lupine (*Lupinus aridorum*), the new species John had described, would appear on the side of the road. Once on a dirt road in Highlands County, ancient flatwood plums floated like ghosts in the twilight.

Always the educator (he'd taught at colleges and universities in Florida) along the way he'd talk about J.K. Small's Florida trips in the early 1900's. When we came upon the scrub plum in bloom I learned how it had come round from Texas during the Pliocene.



PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI

John Beckner with *Vitis sp.* August 28, 2010



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Visit our chapter on the Florida

Native Plant society website:

www.fnps.org

Email: srepens@gmail.com

John botanized everywhere, even from the bus window, but when he was not out, he was reading, researching, and writing on a wide area of interests. He was a fixture at Selby Library though his own library had 1000 square feet of notes, papers and books shelved according to subject. But he really didn't need them since much of the information was stored in his photographic memory. His library is now at the University of Florida.

He had a story for every occasion. One morning during last winter's freeze he called to tell me about hunting for orchids near Homestead with Carl Luer on another bitterly cold morning in 1961. With icicles dripping everywhere and smudge pots protecting the citrus sending up clouds of black smoke he said, "It felt like Napoleon retreating from Moscow."

Gardening was another of his loves. He had been a commercial grower of bromeliads and orchids and his plot at the Orange Blossom Community Gardens near his apartment in Sarasota was crammed with plants of all descriptions.

He not only grew them, he drew them. I got to know John's artistic side when I asked about a particular species and he gave me a copy of a beautifully detailed drawing he had done. In recent years he instructed students at the Academy of Botanical Art.

A conservationist, (he founded the Orchid Conservation Committee Inc. and sat on Sierra's Club conservation committee) he'd seen the loss, having botanized all 67 counties of the state. We'd drive to a site he had documented as rich in a certain species only to find a shopping mall or gated community. Out on the Ridge, bulldozers were always working in the background. "Rosemary fields forever" —oh how we wished it could be so. Now he's gone and Florida has lost a good friend.

There will be a celebration of John Beckner's life on Sunday, October 23, 2011 from 2 to 4 at the Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota. For further information call Fran Palmeri at 941-544-6148.

Announcements

Two of our very own FNPS Serenoa Chapter members were the honored recipients of Palmetto Awards at the 2011 statewide conference. Chapter president Dave Feagles received the Silver Palmetto Award which is given by the FNPS president to the board member(s) who have been the greatest assistance during the previous year. At-large board member Nancy West received the Green Palmetto award which is presented in recognition of service to the Florida Native Plant Society. Congratulations to both of you and thank-you for all you do to make FNPS a success!

The Association of Florida Native Nurseries (AFNN) is now the Florida Association of Native Nurseries (FANN). If you haven't seen it yet, be sure to visit their website for excellent information on native species, growing tips, gardening for wildlife, and choosing the correct plants for your geographic region. <http://www.plantrealflorida.org/>.

Another Great Season of Fun and Learning with the Serenoa Chapter!

Hikers, walkers, gardeners, gawkers—and yes, even couch potatoes—will find something to enjoy in this year’s lineup. Ride/walk trips make the going less strenuous but hikers needn’t worry. Most venues offer or are close by miles of hiking trails. If summer’s crop is any indicator, fall wildflowers will be busting out all over, rising from the ashes at Wingate Preserve and scattered through a glorious mélange of cypress domes, wet prairie, ranchland, pine flatwoods at Babcock Ranch. Don’t miss Babcock’s wild turkeys! At Carlton Reserve where we’ll be treated to a Thanksgiving hayride with stops of our own choosing. In winter we’ll look at mangroves at Spanish Point, tour Wildflower Park reclaimed from a golf course, and visit the Horton ranch where we’ll learn about a conservation easement and to round out the year, tour ecogardens including one high atop Siesta Key.

Help Our Native Florida Plants!

Fight Invasive Species—Join Your Local CISMA

—Rosalind Rowe

Serenoa Chapter members are invited to participate in the newly-formed Suncoast CISMA, which includes Sarasota and Manatee Counties, as well as Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties. CISMA stands for Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area. This long name represents a strategic gathering of folks who understand that invasive species don’t recognize property boundaries and that the only way to address the threat of invasive species in Florida, plant or animal, is to work together across land ownership types, public or private.

Each CISMA group determines the geographical area it wants to “manage” and how to focus its efforts within that area. CISMAs are being formed around the state. Through its various committees, the CISMA will be working on different aspects of education and outreach; organizing workshops and workdays; providing a forum to share research needs/gaps; and researching, prioritizing and publicizing the species of most concern for our area.

The Suncoast CISMA is planning a workshop in September to highlight a species that is currently threatening the borders, and provide time for subcommittees to meet and help further the goals of the CISMA.

For more information, go to www.floridainvasives.org, click your county, and you will get a web page dedicated to the CISMA that covers your county. The site is full of valuable resources and guides. Your participation the new Suncoast CISMA will fill those pages with successes!



PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI

Bottomland Forest at Wingate Creek State Park



PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI

Blueflower butterwort (*Pinguicula caerulea*) at Babcock Ranch



PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI

Bearded grasspink (*Calopogon barbatus*) at Babcock Ranch



PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI

Coastal rosegentian (*Sabatia calycina*) at Babcock Ranch

Tips For Your Fall and Winter Garden

—Tom Heitzman

Local Treasures You Shouldn't Miss This Fall!

Manasota Scrub Preserve, Englewood, FL. —Nancy Edmonson

Although it may be a slightly longer walk from the parking lot to the scrubby flatwoods, it is worth it during the fall. Head to the portion of the preserve on the west side of Bridge Street. Pass through the mesic flatwoods to the higher ground of the scrubby flatwoods. There you will find a colorful assortment of wildflowers including blazing star (*Liatris tenuifolia*, *L. chapmanii*) the jointweeds (*Polygonella gracilis*, *P. polygama*), fragrant eryngo (*Eryngium aromaticum*) and grass-leaved golden aster (*Pityopsis graminifolia*) scattered among grasses as lopsided Indian grass (*Sorghastrum secundum*), the wiregrasses (*Aristida stricta* var. *beyriciana*, *A. spiciformis*, *A. patula*) and the bluestems (*Andropogon* spp.). Fall in Florida displays include more than just red maple.

Curry Creek Preserve, Venice, FL.

—Jeff Weber

A nice assortment of wildflowers and native grasses are in bloom during the autumn season at Curry Creek Preserve in Venice. A ¾-mile loop trail leads visitors from a small parking area at the east entrance of the preserve, off Pinebrook Road, through areas of mesic hammock, pine flatwoods, scrubby flatwoods and a fringe of tidal marsh habitat along Curry Creek. Fall wildflowers and grasses are generally at their peak between late September and mid October. Species in bloom at that time include: Chapman's goldenrod (*Solidago chapmanii*), pinebarrens goldenrod (*Solidago fistulosa*), flat-topped goldenrod (*Euthamia minor*), blazing star (*Liatris tenuifolia*), grass-leaved golden aster (*Pityopsis graminifolia*), partridge pea (*Chamaecrista*

As the days of summer begin to get shorter and a somewhat cooler it will be more enjoyable to begin some fall gardening tasks. Below are a few items for the Florida gardener as fall begins.

1. Keep those weeds under control. Check for weeds weekly before they get ahead of you. Larger weeds are easy to hand pull as are some of the smaller ones. A solution of vinegar or a commercial herbicide can be used to spray the smaller ones and some of the invasive grasses.
2. Prune trees as needed. Remove crossing branches and those branches that are growing into your house or other plants. A good time to do structural pruning as needed also. Light pruning of shrubs as needed. Be careful not to cut plants back too hard since you will not get much growth this time of year. Flowers can be dead-headed by cutting off the spent flower stalks. Some of your perennials should be thinned out or split.
3. Fertilize lightly only those plants that seemed stressed. Most natives, if planted in the right spot, will not need additional fertilizing. Remember to follow your county's fertilizers ordinance. No nitrogen (N) or phosphorus (P) June 1st to September 30th.
4. Mulch plant and flower beds as needed. Mulch will help keep the weeds suppressed and the roots protected from the heat and cold while adding organic matter to the soil. Recycled hardwood, pine straw, leaf litter, Melaluca (Florimulch) and Eucalyptus mulch are all good.
5. Add new plants now to take advantage of any late rains. The top foliage portion of the plant may not grow much this winter but the roots will and your plant will be better established to get through our dry season the following spring. Deep water large trees and shrubs for better establishment.
6. Prepare your tender plants for winter. Although mulching will help protect these plants, you may have to cover some of them. A lightweight fabric works very well and can be found at most landscape supply stores. Make sure you have enough on hand now as it sells out quickly when the first freeze arrives.

Most of all get out and enjoy your garden! Fall brings a new selection of blooming shrubs and flowers. Many of the grasses begin to bloom with amazing textures and colors; no mosquitoes, cooler days—a great time to garden.

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Species Spotlight—Florida bonamia

(*Bonamia grandiflora*) —Elizabeth Gandy

Florida scrub is home to many rare and beautiful plants, but very few can match the stunning beauty of a Florida bonamia bloom. Anyone lucky enough to come upon one will find their feet planted in place, their gaze transfixed, their pulse a little quickened, fingers fumbling for the camera while not wanting to look away. We all know that feeling of coming upon an unexpected rare plant find, blooming in all its glory, especially one so delicate in a place as harsh as scrub.

Florida bonamia is a member of the Convolvulaceae family and true to its specific epithet, has large, funnel shaped blooms. Are they blue or are they purple? I think a little of both, opening in the morning and wilting as the sun gets high and the heat of the day builds. The plant is a deciduous perennial, growing back after its winter respite from a thin taproot. The prostrate, vining branches, crawling over the ground with alternate, ovate leaves can grow to be several meters long. The flowers begin to appear in the leaf axils in the mid to late summer and large plants can flower for several months. Scrub is the preferred habitat of this trailing beauty, but it might also be found in sandhill. Not a fan of competition, plants will begin to decline in the absence of fire. Following fire, the plants will return with unprecedented vigor and plants not seen before will often appear from underground taproots that were just waiting for suitable conditions to sprout again.

Like many scrub species, Florida bonamia is endemic to our state and is currently listed as endangered by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and as threatened by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. It occurs mainly in scrub on and near the Lake Wales Ridge, with occurrences to the east in Volusia County (historic) and to the west in Manatee County. The Sarasota and Manatee County collections of Florida bonamia made by botanist Abram P. Garber in 1878 are housed at the New York Botanical Garden and are the type specimens for this species. Unfortunately the plant is no longer known to occur in Sarasota County, but is still known to be in Manatee County. This location, the only protected site known from Manatee County is at Wingate Creek State Park. A number of plants occur within easy walking distance of the park boundary. Several more, east of the creek, not seen for many years have been found again following the removal of invading sand pine trees. Be sure to catch the presentation by Florida Park Service biologist Chris Becker at the September 19th meeting and the field trip to Wingate Creek the following Saturday. The park is beautiful and if we are lucky, we will get treated to a show when we come upon some blooming Florida bonamia and you can decide for yourself, is it blue or is it purple?



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH GANDY

Florida bonamia blooms



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH GANDY

Florida bonamia growth habit

Local Treasures, continued

fasciculata), wild coco (*Pteroglossapsis ecristata*), Florida paintbrush (*Carphephorus corymbosus*), boneset (*Eupatorium mohrii*), lopsided Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum secundum*), bottlebrush threeawn (*Aristida spiciformis*) and many other species. In addition to wildflowers, a wide variety of bird species occur within the preserve along with gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*), bobcats (*Felis rufus*), and common species such as raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), opossums (*Didelphis virginiana*) and grey squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*). A leisurely walk through the preserve is a relaxing experience any time of year, but especially beautiful in the fall. Why not come and see for yourself?

For a listing of the various preserves in Sarasota County, with descriptions and directions, go to:

<http://www.scgov.net/NaturalLands/default.asp>.

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Be Aware of and on the Lookout for Threats to Our Native Plants!

Local Treasures, continued

Old Miakka Preserve

—Aubrey Phillips

Acquired by Sarasota County in 2006 through the Environmentally Sensitive Land Protection Program, Old Miakka Preserve, protects 129 acres of diverse natural communities, including scrub, pine flatwoods, and seasonal wetlands. In the Preserve's pine flatwoods three species of pine—longleaf, slash and sand pines—dominate the canopy. Shrubs such as saw palmetto, wax myrtle, gallberry and fetterbush make up the midstory. Patches of pine needles or open sand are interspersed among clumps of wire grass and bluestem grasses, with wildflowers as the ground cover. The beautiful colors of pawpaw, Florida paintbrush, roserush, goldenrod, meadowbeauty, and partridge pea are among those found here.

In several areas the pine flatwoods transition to scrub and scrubby flatwoods communities. Generally, these habitats feature a sparse canopy and understory but they support a tremendous amount of species diversity. Here the careful observer can find tarflower, Florida milkweed, longbristle beaksedge, jointweed, and ground lichens. Also thriving in this community is colorful St. John's wort, forked bluecurls, palafox and gayfeather.

Nearing the seasonal blackwater stream the canopy thickens and beauty berry, shortleaf rosegentian, buttonbush and grassleaf goldenaster can be found tucked into the understory.

While pine trees, laurel oaks and saw palmetto may predominate, a keen eye quickly discovers the plethora of plant life that flourishes here.

Laurel wilt—A Serious Threat to Native Trees and Avocadoes

—Elizabeth Gandy

If anyone has visited northeast Florida or eastern Georgia in the last few years, you have probably noticed the distinctive patches of brown in the canopies of hardwood hammocks, coastal forests, and in urban landscapes. That brown you see is the magnificent red bay trees (*Persea borbonia*), once a significant member of southeastern forests, reduced to standing deadwood by the fungal disease known as laurel wilt. The fungus (*Raffaelea sp.*) is spread by a non-native beetle called the redbay Ambrosia beetle. This 2mm-long beetle carries the spores of the fungus in small pores on its head. After boring into an appropriate host tree, the beetle lays eggs and inoculates the tree with the fungus which will later provide food for the beetle's larvae. As the fungus grows in the vascular system of the tree, life giving xylem and phloem become blocked, causing death.

The disease is called laurel wilt because it affects the preferred host trees of the beetle, members of the Lauraceae family. In Florida this includes, red, swamp (*P. palustris*), and silk bay (*P. borbonia var. humilis*), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), pondspice (*Litsea aestivalis*), pondberry (*Lindera melissifolia*), camphortree (*Cinnamomum camphora*), which we won't miss, and even commercial avocadoes. This serious threat was first observed in Georgia in 2002 and then in northeast Florida in 2005. The insects and the disease have now spread on the east coast to Miami-Dade County, inland to Polk and Highlands Counties, and on the Gulf coast to Citrus County. The classic symptoms of a tree killed by laurel wilt is the presence of the wilted, coppery brown leaves hanging on the trees for some time. If the bark is peeled back, a bluish-black streaking of the vascular tissue can sometimes be seen. Soon after infestation by the beetle, sawdust tubes can sometimes be seen covering the trunks of affected trees.

You can help by being on the lookout for potentially affected trees. Report any potential sightings, especially in areas outside the known affected counties to the Florida Division of Plant Industry. Also, be sure to never transport affected wood from the site it was found. There is an effort to collect and bank the seeds of affected tree species. If you are interested in assisting in the proper collection of seeds from naturally occurring trees, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/foresthealth/laurelwilt/> and be sure to always have the permission of the land owner or manager.

For additional information, please visit the following sites:

www.fs.fed.us/r8/foresthealth/laurelwilt/

www.freshfromflorida.com/pi/enpp/.../laurel_wilt_disease.html

www.fl-dof.com/publications/fh_pdfs/Laurel_Wilt.pdf

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in886>

Upcoming Things To Do This Fall!

National Estuary Day Celebration at Ken Thompson Park

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 – 9 AM TO 2 PM. Sponsored by Sarasota Bay Estuary Program. Hands on fun for the whole family with activities like bay-wise kayak lessons, dip netting in the grassflats, water quality testing, and exotic plant removal. Learn about compost with UF/IFAS Sarasota County, get a native wildflower plant from the Native Plant Society, or even get discounted admission to Mote Marine Aquarium for the day. For more information contact Sarasota Bay Estuary Program at Sara@SarasotaBay.org or 941-955-8085.

Florida Native Plant Sale at Longwood Run Park

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8 – 9 AM TO 2 PM. Presented by the Florida Native Plant Society and the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program. Come by for a great selection of native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses. For more information, call 941-794-8733 or 941-955-8085.

National Public Lands Day—Oscar Scherer State Park

SEPTEMBER 24—9 AM – 2 PM. A National Environmental Education Foundation Program offering an entertaining and educational day learning about Oscar Scherer State Park. Live music, Kids activities, exhibitors, Oscar’s Grille, demonstrations, presentations, tram tours, volunteer opportunities. Free Park Entry! For more information call the park at (941) 483-5956.

Oscar Scherer State Park is located on U.S.41, six miles south of Sarasota. Heading south on I-75 take exit 200. Heading north on I-75 take exit 195.

Information from <http://www.floridastateparks.org/oscarscherer/events.cfm?viewevent=7268#7268>. Visit website for more information.

Volunteer!

Tampa Bay Estuary Program—Tampa Bay “Give A Day For The Bay” program

- October 15. Manatee County: Perico Park—invasive plant removal.
- November 5. Pinellas County: Lake Seminole:invasive plant removal.
- December 3. Tampa: Gandy Park: nvasive plant removal. Information :<http://www.tbep.org/help/giveaday.html>.

Sarasota Bay and Estuary Program Bay Guardians volunteer event

- October 15, 9 am–2 pm. TBA. Contact Sara Kane at sara@sarasotabay.org or (941) 955-8081.
- November 5, 9 am–12 pm. FISH Preserve in Cortez. Invasive species removal event. For more information please contact Sara Kane at sara@sarasotabay.org or (941) 955-8081. Information: <http://www.sarasotabay.org/getinvolved.html>.

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*

Join Now! Come to the meetings and field trips—learn about conservation, and native habitat

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, 1/4 mile west of I-75.
SARASOTA: DaRuMa in Sarasota Crossings shopping center (5459 Fruitville Road).

Sept. 19 GENERAL MEETING—BORN OF FIRE. Chris Becker, Environmental Specialist, DEP will talk about how fire is at the heart of many Florida ecosystems, how it rejuvenates plant communities and what happens when it is suppressed as in the days of Smoky the Bear.

24 FIELD TRIP, 9 A.M.—WINGATE PRESERVE, MANATEE COUNTY. Chris Becker will lead us on a tour showing how fire has revitalized habitat at this preserve which has an exceptionally rich flora including the rare scrub morning glory (*Bonamia grandiflora*).

Oct. 8 PLANT SALE, 9 A.M. TO 3 P.M.—LONGWOOD RUN PARK, SARASOTA COUNTY

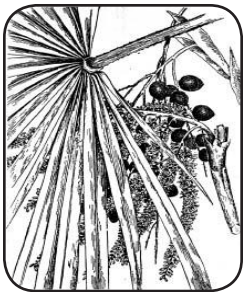
17 GENERAL MEETING—AGRICULTURE + NATURE = DIVERSITY. Bill Wilcox, Professor of Biology at Edison State College and member of the Board of Directors of Babcock Ranch will talk about how historic agricultural practices have interacted with the south Florida landscape to produce the diverse species we find at Babcock Ranch today.

22 FIELD TRIP, 9 A.M.—BABCOCK RANCH, CHARLOTTE COUNTY. A drive/walk tour guided by Bill Wilcox where we'll enjoy a spectacular show of fall wildflowers plus wildlife in prairie, flatwoods, and cypress domes. <http://myfwc.com/viewing/recreation/wmas/cooperative/babcock-ranch-preserve/>

Nov. 21 GENERAL MEETING—STEWARDSHIP ON PUBLIC LANDS. Linda Lovello & Sherm Stratton, Friends of T. Mabry Carlton Jr. Memorial Reserve will explain how they came to “adopt” Carlton, what they do there and the importance of standing for the land.

26 FIELD TRIP, 9 A.M.—CARLTON RESERVE, SARASOTA COUNTY. Linda Lovello & Sherm Stratton will take us on a Wildflower Hayride through Carlton's diverse habitats with stops of our own choosing to view orchids, Florida paintbrush, gayfeather, goldenrod and other fall bloomers. Afterwards, hikers can enjoy some of the 70 miles of trails! <http://www.scgov.net/NaturalLands/CarltonReserve.asp>

Dec. 19 ANNUAL HOLIDAY POTLUCK DINNER, 7 p.m. Bring a dish to share, your own dinner plate and utensils. The Chapter will provide turkey, ice, iced tea and water. If you want to participate in our Yankee Raffle, please bring a nature-oriented present (approximately \$15.)



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

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