



Serenoa Notes

The Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

December 2013

Florida's Native Poinsettias –Elizabeth Gandy

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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With Christmas just around the corner, we botanically oriented types start thinking of all kinds of vegetation that remind us of winter and the holiday season—things like evergreen boughs, pine cones, holly berries and the ever iconic poinsettias. This time of year these things surround us both in the natural environment and in the stores, real and fake. But some of you, especially those newer to our state may not realize that we have native species of poinsettia growing around all of us. As a matter of fact, we have three native species!

Two of our native species occur throughout the state with the most common being *Poinsettia cyathophora* or paintedleaf. This poinsettia occurs in hammocks and in dunes but is most often seen in disturbed areas. It is easily identifiable by the characteristic pink or red coloration on the upper leaves we are all so familiar with from the commercially produced varieties. It can grow to be a few feet tall and is often somewhat leggy. The alternate, mostly lobed leaves can vary greatly in size, often leaving one wondering if they are looking at different species. The other more common native poinsettia is *P. heterophylla* or fiddler's spurge. It is typically found in disturbed areas as well but tends to have less lobed leaves and lacks the red coloration on the upper leaves. Our third species, *P. pi-*

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Below and right:
Poinsettia cyathophora



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY DENTON



PHOTO BY GLENN FLEMING/USF HERBARIUM SLIDE COLLECTION



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Florida's Native Poinsettias, *continued from page 1*

netorum or pineland spurge, is endemic to the pine rockland habitats of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. It typically has very narrow leaves, usually less than a quarter inch wide but does have red coloration on the upper leaves. This state endangered plant is somewhat demure compared to its native cousins and is a real treat to find.

Our native poinsettias are in the Euphorbiaceae family and typical of most members of that family produce white milky sap when injured. The sap can be highly irritating to soft tissues and toxic if consumed. It is a commonly held misconception that the brightly colored upper leaves of poinsettias are part of their flowers. Despite the showy attractiveness of these leaves, they are just that-leaves! The flowers of this genus are actually somewhat insignificant though botanically interesting. The tiny flowers are aggregated into a modified inflorescence called a cyathium. The cyathium consists of a cup-like involucre made up of bracts. These bracts may have nectaries on the tips and even look somewhat like very tiny petals. Inside the involucre or "cup" are individual male flowers that lack petals and consist of a single stamen. The usually singular female flower also lacks petals. The stalk of the female flower often elongates as it matures, causing the three-lobed ovary to stick out.

This is a good time of year to keep your eyes open for the bold red coloration of native poinsettias on road sides, along hammock edges and other sites that manage to escape the mower. Native poinsettias are often available commercially from our local native plant nurseries so consider them as an alternative for your colorful holiday plant décor. After the holidays you can plant them in your landscape and let them spread at their leisure giving you year round color.



PHOTO BY MARK GARLAND/USF HERBARIUM SLIDE COLLECTION

Poinsettia pinetorum

Helping Native Bees & Wasps by Creating Nest Sites –Nancy West

One of the things I enjoy most about my native plant yard is the abundance of animal life that native plants bring. Right now, I am concentrating on providing food and habitat for native pollinators, especially the solitary bees and wasps. By planting plants for bees and wasps, you also attract other pollinators including beetles, flies, butterflies, and moths. Native bees are the most important of all these pollinators.

Bees and wasps get a bad rap because a few of them are aggressive and can sting. Colony species of bees and wasps defend their nest and will sting. Colony or social bees and wasps can afford to lose workers to defend their nests, but solitary bees and wasps will not defend their nests, so they are unlikely to sting unless they get pinched or trapped against your skin. Of the 4000 species of native bees in North America, 90% are solitary bees.

Solitary bees and wasps need good habitats to lay their eggs. Building bee nest boxes will help the 30% of solitary bees that are tunnel-nesting species. In nature, many of these bees would naturally use old beetle tunnels. Keeping dead wood around your property will help provide habitat for these bees.

The other 70% of bees and wasps are ground nesting and need bare undisturbed ground to make their nest tunnels.

You can construct a bee box/boxes easily with old wood or non-treated lumber or with bamboo. There is a lot of great information at the websites listed at the end of this article. Generally, small bees require holes that have a diameter between 3/32 to 3/8 inch and 3–5 inches deep. Larger bees need a diameter greater than 1/4 inches with a depth between 5-6 inches. Holes should be at least 3/4 inch apart.

You need to drill with a brad point drill bit to make a smooth hole so bees don't damage wings as they enter and leave the tunnel. The far ends of the tunnels must be closed. Drill holes at a very slight upward angle to prevent rain water from accumulating in tunnels. Adding an overhanging roof will also protect from rain. Attach the wood securely to a post or other object. You can also use bamboo of different diameter. Make many small bundles and place them around the yard. If possible line the tunnels with paper straws, or make straws of rolled up parchment paper or wax paper. The paper can be withdrawn in the spring after the new bees emerge and new paper inserted so the tunnel can be reused.

It is suggested that you replace nest blocks every 2 years to prevent spreading of bee diseases.

Bees lay most of the female eggs in the back of the tube and the male eggs in the front (outside) of the tube, since "...males are more expendable from ecological standpoint."*

Get more info on helping other pollinators from these sources below, including providing the best flowering plants for pollinators, attracting bumble bees, and ground nesting bees/wasp habitats.

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PHOTOS BY NANCY WEST

Leaf damage from leaf cutter bee



Leafcutter bee nest retrieved from a metal tube

**Attracting Native Pollinators*, The Xerces Society Guide, Storey Publishing, www.xerces.org. This is also a great site for butterfly gardening, monarchs, best plant sources for your area.

Florida Native Plant Society Sale –Carolann Cahill

The Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society was having a plant sale, so I spent my Saturday out at Sweet Bay Nursery as a volunteer.

I've been in the plant business for a few years and up until I started Bloomin' Crazy, I didn't know there was such a thing as a "native" plant. We used Florida friendly plants that (I think) are dictated by industry standards, which seem to revolve around availability and whether they hold up in our heat. As a business owner, I now have the freedom to steer away from cookie-cutter landscaping and begin the process of educating myself on natives. Books have been a great help but I learn by being around people who are willing to share their knowledge so I attended my first FNPS meeting this past month. They were going to have their plant sale and I thought it would be an opportunity to get to know the members and spend some time familiarizing myself with the plants.

I do cherish my weekends as my own and was a little hesitant to give up a day but I have to say, I couldn't have had a more pleasant time. The weather is starting to cool down and as I drove out to the nursery there was some fog still settled in the low-lying fields. The sky was already brilliant blue, hinting that it would be a perfect day to spend money on plants!

I'm not what you would call a "social butterfly" and when you add to that the fact that I'm not familiar with native plants, I felt safe signing up to help the customers get their purchases loaded in their cars and to make sure there were wagons available for the big hauls. These tasks wouldn't force me out of my comfort zone and I was still able to be involved. The only thing was, the other members and the customers were so nice, and I somehow drifted over to the greeting area, chatting with the new arrivals, letting them know the lay-of-the-land and directing

PHOTO BY CAROLANN CAHILL



Snowbird shopping for native plants

PHOTO BY CAROLANN CAHILL



Bee on Sunflower

Helping Native Bees, *continued from page 3*

- Directions for Tunnel Nests for Native Bees: <http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/tunnel-nest-management-xerces-society.pdf>
- University of Florida, Citizen Scientist Program on native bees and wasps: <http://entomology.ifas.ufl.edu/ellis/nativebuzz/default.aspx>
- Native Buzz is a citizen science project created by the University of Florida (UF) Honey Bee Research and Extension Lab. Our goal is to learn more about the nesting preferences, diversity and distribution of our native solitary bees and wasps. Here at University of Florida Native Buzz you can keep track of your own native buzz nest site and see the results of other participant's nest sites. Learn more at: <http://entnemdept.ifas.ufl.edu/honeybee/nbns.shtml>
- Great Native Pollinator Plants List from the Florida Association of Native Nurseries <http://www.afnn.org/>
- Plant Real Florida, use search filter for pollinators <http://www.plantrealflorida.org/plants/filter>
- A cool look at some clever bee hotels: <http://www.arkinspace.com/2012/06/welcome-to-bee-hotel.html>

them to other areas of interest. Audubon was set up as well as Around the Bend Nature Tours.

The accompanying photo is what we lovingly refer to as “a snow-bird”. He and his wife had just returned and as usual, when you’re away for the summer, the landscape needs attention. He said he didn’t want the lawn-guy to do it because “they always use the same old stuff”. As we loaded the containers of beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), coontie (*Zamia pumila*), blazing star (*Liatris spicata*), and sunflowers (*Helianthus* spp.) into his car, I imagined how their property would definitely stand out from his neighbors this year.

The morning hours were busy and about noonish, there was the usual lull, so I made my way out to take some pictures.

If you have the notion that natives are boring, just forget it! So much life going on if you look. You really didn’t have to look far because so many of the plants were blooming and they were alive with butterflies...

Things were winding down and it was time to decide which plants I would take home. Yes, I could have put the blinders on and used some restraint but I’m weak and there just isn’t any fun in that. I could easily spend a ton of money on plants but I limited myself to three: privet cassia (*Senna ligustrina*), frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*) and corky stem passion vine (*Passiflora suberosa*). The cassia is gorgeous, full of yellow blooms. Not to be over-looked, my other two selections may not put on the show the cassia does, but they are great butterfly host plants and if you get right in there and look at the blooms, they too are beautiful.

For me, this is what gardening has become. Gone are the days of planting just for appearance. Yes, appearance matters, but planting with a purpose is important too. Using native plants will bring back a bit of what exotics have replaced and if you’re gonna plant, why not use plants that give our wildlife a little boost?

If you are interested in discovering the benefits and the beauty of native plants, find out where the native nursery is in your area and take a trip out there. They are usually small, local growers who are knowledgeable about the plants in that area. I have found the staff is much more willing to take time and help you out with any question you may have. Break the habit of the big box stores and support the local economy... go native!

Visit Carolann’s blog at <http://bloomtender.wordpress.com/2013/10/14/florida-native-plant-society-sale/>.

Editor’s Note: The Serenoa Chapter would like to thank Carolann for such a heartfelt write-up based on her experience at the native plant sale and her personal passion for native plants. Her willingness to jump in and volunteer at the sale was a huge help. We welcome her and all members, new and old to join us at meetings, events and outings to meet great people, enjoy our natural world and both learn and bring their knowledge to share with others.



PHOTO BY CAROLANN CAHILL

Sulfur butterfly on tropical sage

Thank you Volunteers!

A big thanks to all the great volunteers who made our plant sale a success and who have tabled at various events throughout the year!

All your time and efforts helped to promote the mission of FNPS, which is the preservation, conservation, and restoration of native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

You make Serenoa Chapter one of the most vital of all of Florida’s chapters!

“The Joy of Scrub” according to Mark Deyrup –Fran Palmeri

PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI



Serenosans in the scrub at Archbold Biological Research Station

PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI



Serenosans loving the flowers at Archbold Biological Station

Our FNPS Serenoa Chapter donated \$300 to the Florida Land and Water Legacy Campaign to put a measure on the ballot to dedicate funds from document stamp taxes for the purchase of conservation lands. The period for gathering signatures to petition for the ballot measure is ending so we hope everybody got to sign up and show their support.

Archbold Biological Research Station in Venus was founded in 1941 by aviator/explorer Richard Archbold on 1000 acres of land donated by John Roebling, grandson of the designer of the Brooklyn Bridge. From the beginning botanical and entomological research was carried on there and today Dr. Mark Deyrup continues in that tradition. He focuses on pollination ecology, which is to say he documents pollinators—bees, beetles, ants, butterflies, moths, etc. in the scrub at Archbold. Over the years he and others at the station have racked up impressive numbers.

Mark grew up in New York where insect deprivation may have propelled him into the world of bugs. Although he has the proper credentials to be an entomologist (including a PhD from University of Washington) he says anyone can do this job. “There is not a single thing I do that somebody else could not do. There is no need for degrees. Just observe”.

He’s done a lot of looking—thirty years worth just at Archbold, now an 8840-acre tract on the Lake Wales Ridge much of which is scrub, one of the most endangered ecosystems in the U.S. Nineteen federally listed species are found here.

In his October 21st talk to the Serenoa Chapter he focused on what he calls the “most amazing plant in Florida” saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*). A generalist dependent on fire, it blooms all the time and serves as a kind of “gas station” visited by a wide range of creatures—311 species and counting. Most saw palmetto visitors go elsewhere, creating a huge number (2029) of interlocking relationships which “foster ecological diversity” at Archbold. But according to Mark, insect diversity in other places in Florida is even greater than that found at Archbold.

The following Saturday when we walked the scrub at Archbold one of the first things Mark told us was that though the natural world may seem peaceful to humans, it is “intense, very active and exuberant with thousands of organisms interacting with each other”.

The following are just a few of the impressions I got traipsing through the scrub with Mark.

He pointed out “buzz pollination” of bumblebees nectaring on partridge pea vine. The bumblebee buzzes and the plant gives up its pollen.

The sand—in some places 100 feet deep—is very stable with every grain in contact with every other grain. It’s honeycombed with burrows and populated by mammals, reptiles and insects, some of which swim through the sand. Some plants—like saw palmetto—are thousands of years old. The sand was “reworked” 120,000 years ago.

There are many species of beetles such as the oil beetle, the June beetle, the patent leather beetle and the scarab beetle which spends its life underground. And lot of ants including the fungus gardening ants, the cone ants, and harvester ants which close their nests at night.

Forty-nine species of bees visit sneezeweed (*Balduinia*). *Selaginella arenicola* has its own species of moth; eighty species of galls have been identified at Archbold.

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Announcements

- Annual elections for our local Serenoa Chapter board officers were held at the November 18 meeting. All existing officers were unanimously re-elected. Congratulations to our hard working board members! Thank you for all the work you do on behalf of our members and FNPS. We are always searching for new board members so please consider volunteering some time any where you can help.
- The Manatee County Commission is meeting again about the Long Bar Pointe development along north Sarasota Bay on January 23rd, 9 am, at the convention center in Palmetto. Please come and show your opposition to the scope and impact of this development. Our voices were heard loud and clear at the first meeting but we cannot let up!

"The Joy of Scrub" continued from page 6

These numbers illustrate the enormous complexity of the scrub ecosystem. Years of observation have taught Mark Deyrup that though this is an extremely resilient system, it is impossible to recreate. We can replant but we cannot replace the connections, which have evolved over thousands of years. We cannot put back the system the way it was. What is above, on and below ground is all connected and there is much we still don't know. So the bottom line is conserve, conserve, conserve.

After the walk Serenoans picnicked on the porch and later, some of us hiked and looked for birds in the scrub. What a life we lead—all laid out for us.



PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI

A beetle found on the Archbold Biological Research Station

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

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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!

- Dec. 16** ANNUAL HOLIDAY POTLUCK DINNER 6 P.M.—ST. ANDREW UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, SARASOTA. 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.)
- Jan. 20** GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. —LICHEN: NATURE’S ARTWORK. Often we see lichen on trees and on the ground but know little about these beautiful fungi/algae, which grow in a symbiotic relationship. Dr. Craig Huegel will give us the basics on how to identify them and where to look for them.
- Jan. 25** FIELD TRIP 9 A.M.—BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE, PINELLAS COUNTY. Craig Huegel, the former manager of Brooker Preserve, which has swamp, marsh, and forested areas, will lead us to some of the best places to see a variety of lichen on this natural “island” in the middle of urbanization.
- Feb. 17** GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. —THE DUAL ROLES OF DUETTE PRESERVE. Land manager Johnny McLeod will talk about the 21,000-acre preserve which encompasses the headwaters of the Manatee River. It’s host to many native plants in a variety of habitats and also serves as a principal source of water for Sarasota and Manatee Counties.
- Feb. 22** FIELD TRIP 9 A.M.—DUETTE PRESERVE, MANATEE COUNTY. We’ll look for spring bloomers on a wagon tour through flatwoods, swamp, depression marsh, prairie and scrub on this preserve which also has historic sites. Led by Karen Fraley, Russell Owens and Johnny McLeod SPACE IS LIMITED. Reserve early with Fran Palmeri 941-544-6148.
- 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.

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Plant Society
of the Florida Native
The Serenoa Chapter

