

Serenoa Notes

The Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

September 2014

“Green Grow the Rushes O”

– Fran Palmeri

Every summer nature rolls out a green carpet on the Blue Trail at Carlton Reserve in Venice. Spikerush (*Eleocharis spp.*) appears with the rains and lasts through the wet season.

This 24,000-acre park is flooded this time of year. This, after all, is the well field for Sarasota County. Last year, it rained several times a day for weeks and the place was forced to close. No danger of that this year. It’s been unusually dry so there’s not much sheet flow though one part of the Blue Trail is flooded.

Wildflowers and grasses are in abundance: Candyroot (*Polygala nana*) and buttonweed (*Diodia virginiana*) grow low along the trail. In standing water, white tops (*Rhynchospora colorata*) and duck potato (*Sagittaria latifolia*). Several species of St. John’s-wort (*Hypericum*) including *H. cistifolium* are just starting to bloom. Occasional pale meadow beauty (*Rhexia mariana*), *Sabatia* and *Pluchea* the gentians and sweetscents add pink accents. Wood sage (*Teucrium canadense*) is captivating. Rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), a staple of summers, stands tall against the sabal (cabbage) palms. Grasses are coming in. (Oh how we relegate the grasses to anonymity!)

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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!

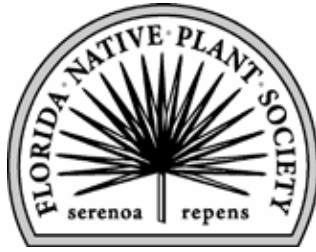
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PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI

Wood sage



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Message from the President –Tom Heitzman

Hope everyone is having a wonderful summer. The days are hot, humid and long but full of lots of wonderful things we only get to see this time of year. Frogs and butterflies are plentiful, giant thunderheads filled with rain and lightning rise above our heads, warm gulf waters for swimming and spectacular sunsets. And our native plants are growing with a flourish. Another fall season is fast approaching and the first meeting of the Serenoa Chapter of the FNPS is just around the corner. Just want to give you a heads up as to what is ahead.

Fran Palmeri has again put together a great list of programs and field trips. Check out our website or see the list in this newsletter. Pick one or more talks or trips that suit your interest and save the date. We will again be meeting at the beautiful Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, every third Monday of the month at 7:30pm. Come early to socialize with old friends or meet new ones and browse the plants we have to raffle off. The meetings are always very informative and we have lots of free info on plants and other topics of interest. Field trips are on Saturdays following the general meeting and we always have something new to see. This is a great way to get out and see native plants in their natural habitats.

We again have a few events that we have been asked to participate in this year and we can always use your help in staffing our display and helping spread the word about native plants. These are always fun events and great way to help out the society. We are always looking for volunteers for these events and others such as helping with the board of directors and other positions that keep our chapter going.

Subtle changes will soon be taking place all around us as we zoom ahead from summer into fall. Our shorter, drier days and the first fall blooming wildflowers will be appearing. Eagles and other migratory birds will soon be flying overhead and visiting your native shrubs and trees for the summers production of fruit and seeds. The first Serenoa Chapter of the FNPS meeting will be on September 15, 2014. Hope to see you there.

Recognitions

- At this year's statewide FNPS conference, Serenoa chapter president Tom Heitzman received the Green Palmetto Award for service to the society. This award was given in recognition for Tom's many years of dedication to the conservation of native plants and natural areas. Congratulations to Tom for this well deserved honor!
- Chapter membership manager Peter Price received recognition from the state level for his efforts to recruit new members to our chapter and keep the old-timers renewing. Great job Peter and keep it up!
- Dave Feagles, who has been our chapter representative for some time now, has recently been elected to a director-at-large position with the FNPS state board. Congratulations Dave and thank-you for your excellent representation of our chapter!

"Green Grow..." continued from page 1

In the background locusts forecast yet another hot day and I hear the buzzing of bees in winged sumac and sabal palms. Black swallowtails drift by adding to my summer idyll.

This morning the old camp song came to mind: *I'll sing you one O, Green grow the rushes O, What is your one O? One is one and all alone, And evermore shall be so.*

I'm not alone. Birds—mostly garden variety this time of year—black racers, lizards, grasshoppers catapulting through the brush, and dragonflies—some of them huge—surfing in the sunlight keep me company. One morning a huge sow blocks my path.

What brings me back to this place day after day is the green carpet. It makes for the softest of footing. I stroll along thinking what a wonderful addition it would make to my house. My floors are Terrazzo—durable but unforgivingly hard.

Turns out it's not a new idea. A hundred years ago, Mary Francis Baker a Connecticut-born botanist who "took on" the grasses in her twenties, wrote, "The gathering of rushes was an important task when the floors of English dwellings were covered with these plants of the marsh and the sovereign could require, as did William the Conqueror upon Aylesbury land, that his subjects furnish 'straw for his bedchamber..and in summer, straw rushes'..." "In the days of Merrie England" she adds" such rush-strewn floors were evidence of barbarism to the courts of southern

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PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI

The dragonfly...our mosquito-eating harbinger of summer.



PHOTOS BY FRAN PALMERI

A soft green carpet of spikerush filling the trail

Please welcome Anne Cox as the new statewide FNPS president. Anne is a long time member and a committed conservation advocate. We look forward to continued positive growth of FNPS with Anne's leadership.

Bad Pruning Practices Ruin Trees—part II –Nancy West

This next section is the second in a series by Nancy West to remind us about the importance of good pruning practices for our native trees and shrubs. The first article was published in the March 2014 Serenoa Notes. Please remember that our landscapes are an investment of time and money and offer wonderful benefits for us and our native wildlife. Help your trees and shrubs to be their best by following these simple recommendations and/or advising your landscape professionals to do the same.

PHOTOS BY NANCY WEST



This is not a pruning issue, but a tree care issue. This gumbo-limbo was planted and forgotten. The tree support straps were never removed. Tree supports and straps should be removed usually within one year.



Uneven Cut. These limbs were cut unevenly and they were cut too far away from the branch collar to form a good callus.



Musky mint (*Hyptis alata*), a wildflower of moist flatwoods

"Green Grow..." continued from page 3

Europe..." Beautifully researched and illustrated, *Baker's Book of Grasses* published in 1912 is still available.

Most days I can hardly bear to leave this beautiful place. The oppressive heat forgotten, I sit in the shade of the hammock listening to red-shouldered hawks, claiming this place as their own. For a little while, it's mine, too.

Postscript Last evening as I was showing her photos of the green carpet, Laurel Schiller's mom "Mima" proceeded to sing "Green Grow the Rushes O". She knew many of the verses. Evelyn Keller was born in Pennsylvania in 1916 when Mary Francis Baker was preparing to move to Florida. The two overlapped on the planet until 1941 when Baker died. The year Baker died I was born. Everywhere in life, there are wonderful connections.

Species Spotlight—*Mimosa strigillosa*

—Elizabeth Gandy

What are those cute pink puffballs?” I love it when I get that question about my front yard. Every spring and summer as the sunshine mimosa that quietly sleeps in the front lawn in the dormant winter months reveals itself in a not-to-be-missed show of pink puffs I inevitably get asked by passers-by. It makes for one of those great moments when a native Florida plant sells itself and gives that perfect opportunity for me to make the case for all the others.

We have had sunshine mimosa in our yard for about eight years. It started with planting 1-gallon pots randomly in the backyard and letting it spread. We added some perennial peanut which is not native but considered a “Florida Friendly” alternative to turf and let the two groundcovers spread at their leisure. After several years the mimosa stems began to spread beyond the mowed areas so my husband began propagating them and planting the transplants out in the front lawn. Now the random “lawn” of sedges, beggarticks, frogfruit, St. Augustine and bahia grass give way to the almost full cover of mimosa that dominates off and on throughout the year. We mow it, edge it, walk on it and constantly marvel at its beauty.

Sunshine mimosa is a native Florida groundcover that can be found east to Texas and north to Arkansas and Georgia. It tends to be found in moist, disturbed areas but is highly drought tolerant once established. The Mimosa genus has about 400 species worldwide and is a member of the Fabaceae or pea family. The spreading stems root along the ground allowing just a few plants to spread and cover a desired area. The roots are deep and like many pea plants produce nitrogen fixing nodules. The

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PHOTO BY LIZ GANDY

Sunshine mimosa flower



PHOTO BY LIZ GANDY

Sunshine mimosa growing in a mixed cover lawn

News

Upcoming Events

- September 27, 9am -12pm, Sarasota Bay Guardians planting at Cortez Maritime Museum pond and butterfly garden. Sarasota Bay Guardians will be planting a butterfly garden and some other plants in the shallows of this little pond located at the Florida Maritime Museum in the quaint Cortez fishing village. A great way to get involved in the community and see a little old Florida. Lunch and T-shirt provided but you must pre-register. Visit info@sarasotabay.org or <http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e9n8m0y357278c4c&llr=pgep9tbab> for registration and information.
- October 4, 9am to 3pm, Native plant sale at Sweet Bay Nursery. Don't miss this semi-annual opportunity to get beautiful native plants and talk with local plant experts about the right plants for you. Volunteers needed!!
- November 1, Sarasota Bay Water Festival. Third annual celebration at Ken Thompson Park (near Mote Marine Laboratory). Serenoa Chapter will have a booth at the festival and volunteers will be needed! More information to follow.

- The Serenoa Chapter has a Facebook page! It has interesting articles and also upcoming events. Please join! Once you sign up to join, you will be accepted in a day or two.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/serenoafnps/>
- Friends who remember the late Bob and Trish Egolf will be pleased to know that the estate of the Egolfs has donated close to \$7000 to FNPS. Bob and Trish were active in the Serenoa Chapter. Bob served on Serenoa's board for several years and was president of the Florida Native Plant Society from 2004-2006.
- Don't forget we have a mid-term election coming up November 4 – The Land and Water Legacy, Amendment 1 is on the ballot! Please get out and vote for this important amendment to make sure existing monies get dedicated for protection of our land water resources. For more information visit www.voteyeson1fl.org.

Species Spotlight.. *continued from page 5*

alternate, bipinnate or twice divided leaves give the plant a feathery appearance and fold up immediately when disturbed. This rapid leaf movement, the result of loss of turgor or water pressure in the cells when disturbed, likely makes the plant appear wilted and thus undesirable to herbivores. The flowers are actually globular heads made up of numerous small flowers. The pink stamens, tipped with yellow pollen provide the characteristic puffball appearance. The flowers can occur all year but are most prolific in the spring and summer, appearing on long peduncles in such quantity that you won't want to mow the lawn for months!

There are several other members of the *Mimosa* genus in Florida. Several varieties of *M. quadrivalvis*, a creeping vine very similar in appearance to *M. strigillosa* but heavily armed with hooked prickles can be found throughout most of the state. Several non-native species occur here as well, most notably the invasive *M. pigra* or black mimosa, classified as a Category I invasive by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC). All the species except *M. strigillosa* are armed with prickles. Probably a major reason why that species made it into cultivation!

Sunshine mimosa is readily available in the native nursery trade. It is easily added to lawns with mixed existing groundcover and will tolerate full sun and some mixed shade. Mimosa is not a strong competitor with other plants so if your lawn has dense turf consult one of our excellent native plant growers for advice on the best way to make space for your mimosa. Once established, it will spread well beyond the planted area without regular edging or pruning. The deep roots and tolerance for harsh growing conditions make this a difficult plant to remove once established so make sure to consider carefully before planting to make sure you put the right plant in the right place!

Invasive Species Update–Biological Control of Air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*)

New information on air potato (Dioscorea bulbifera) and a new beetle to control air potato from the University of Florida’s IFAS:

Our new air potato biological control website is now live. Please feel free to circulate the link. The public can learn about air potato biological control and apply to receive air potato leaf beetles.

<http://bcrc1.ifas.ufl.edu/airpotatobiologicalcontrol.shtml>

For anyone not familiar, air potato is a Category I invasive exotic plant in Florida. It is a fast growing vine that is capable of densely smothering vegetation and spreading easily from aerial tubers or bulbils that form on the stem and then fall when the plants die back in the winter. This plant can be difficult to eradicate and the release of the biological control beetle is a powerful tool in the ongoing efforts to control this dangerous weed. Please visit the website above for general information about biological controls, the control of air potato and even how to get beetles.

As far as local efforts go, according to biologist and FNPS member Damon Moore, “We (Manatee County) just released 2000 beetles at Emerson point, Bennett Park, and Rye preserve.” It will be interesting to follow their progress.

For additional information visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AG112> or <http://aquat1.ifas.ufl.edu/diobul.pdf>.



Air potato

SOLUTIONSFOROURLIFE.UFL.EDU



Damage to air potato leaves from air potato beetle

EDIS.IFAS.UFL.EDU/IN957



Adult air potato biocontrol beetle

EDIS.IFAS.UFL.EDU/IN957

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!

- Sept. 15** GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. —A SEA CHANGE. Dr. Tonya Clayton, author of *How to Read a Florida Gulf Coast Beach*, and currently a contributor to an upcoming book by USF researchers on climate change and sea level rise, will talk about challenges and give us ideas for beach stewardship.
- Sept. 20** FIELD TRIP 9 A.M.—NORTH LIDO BEACH, SARASOTA COUNTY. We'll look at both the Gulf and Bay sides of this Sarasota County park with Dr. Tonya Clayton and Karen Fraley of "Around the Bend Nature Tours."
- Oct. 4** 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!
- Oct. 20** GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. —RESTORING PERICO PRESERVE. Damon Moore, Environmental Program Manager for Manatee County, will talk about the county project to remove all non-native plants and restore a rich diversity of native species to wetland and upland habitats at the preserve.
- Oct. 25** FIELD TRIP 9 A.M.—PERICO PRESERVE, MANATEE COUNTY. With Damon Moore we'll tour areas of this 176-acre preserve which have been restored to natural habitat from farmland. Expect lots of native wildflowers in bloom in the wetlands and uplands, and shorebirds in mangroves on the water.
- Nov. 17** GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. —THE NIGHT LIFE OF PLANTS. Ever wonder what plants do at night? Are they sleeping while Arachne weaves her filmy webs? Dr. Craig Huegel author of *Native Plant Landscaping for Florida Wildlife* will shine some light on this little known topic.
- Nov. 22** FIELD TRIP 6 P.M.—RED BUG SLOUGH PRESERVE, SARASOTA COUNTY. Land Manager Jeff Weber will take us on an evening exploration of this in-town park to find out what plants and animals do in the dark hours.
- Nov. 29** THANKSGIVING WEEKEND FIELD TRIP, DESOTO COUNTY. A visit to the 5500+ acre Myakka/Peace Connector lands which run along the DeSoto/ Sarasota county lines.
- Dec. 16** ANNUAL HOLIDAY POTLUCK DINNER AND GIFT EXCHANGE 6 P.M. St Andrew United Church of Christ, Sarasota
- Jan. 19** GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. —CONSERVING FLORIDA'S TREES. Dr. Michael Andreu of the School of Forestry and Conservation at the University of Florida will talk about tree succession in Florida habitats including hammocks and the importance of trees in the urban/wildland interface.
- Jan. 24** FIELD TRIP 9 A.M.—ROHLWING PARCEL, SLEEPING TURTLES PRESERVE, SARASOTA COUNTY. With Nancy Edmondson, Environmental Specialist Sarasota County, we'll walk through an oak and sabal palm hammock. Expect to see resident and "snow" birds and wildflowers in the swamp along the river and in the pine flatwoods.

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of the Florida Native
Plant Society
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