

Serenoa Notes

The Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

January 2016

Notes from the East Pasture

—Barbara Dondero

I moved to Florida in 2000, from New England. In the last few years, with gentle pressure from Native Plant Society friends, I am experimenting with flowers that also love living here. Gone are the geraniums and the impatiens.

One tree I had to try, in honor of my favorite Connecticut writer, Harriet Becher Stowe, was the Magnolia. When Mrs. Stowe, also an accomplished painter, was asked why she identifies with this eighty-foot high tree, she said because the branches are strong, yet the flower, delicate. I have planted the commonly used cultivar of the Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) called “Little Gem.” While it is more compact it may reach a height of thirty feet but still sports those deep green glossy leaves. The white flowers burst forth in early spring. I remind myself to say good morning to them, and praise them for their extreme loveliness.

Another recent foray into native flowers is with the Beach Dune Sunflower. Why? Because they remind me of the Coquina Beach walks that I enjoy. The sunflowers blanket the dunes there. In our east pasture, there is enough room for them to spread out. I clip around the edges and gather them up in vases, where they last for a week or so. They make me smile, or giggle, depending on my mood.

In the next issue, we will tour the west pasture.

What native plant gladdens your heart? Is there one that makes you smile or giggle? One that you greet aloud each day?

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!

PHOTO BY BARBARA DONDERO



Our resident sheep helps to munch away the overflowing Beach Dune Sunflowers

In this Issue:

- Florida Native Plant Month 2
- God and Lawn Care 3
- Beautyberry Jelly 4
- Miracle Grow 5
- Upcoming Events 7
- Calendar 8



Officers & Committees

President: **Erica Timmerman**
941-751-7080

Past President: **Tom Heizman**
941-737-3169

Vice-President: **Fran Palmeri**
941-544-6148

Secretary: **Julie Whitney**
941-228-7081

Treasurer: open

Chapter Rep: **David Feagles**
941-371-5045

Education: **Karen Willey**
941-704-4325

Membership: **Peter Price**
941-488-0528

At Large: **Lee Breyer**
Cathy Page
Nancy West

Graphics: **Charlotte Thomas**

Web Site: **Bruce Holst**

Historian: open

Newsletter: **Carolann Cahill**
941-536-6687
slacker1030@comcast.net

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

Email: srepens@gmail.com



**Both Manatee County
and Sarasota County
made proclamations.**

The state and many counties throughout Florida have designated October as Florida Native Plant Month. Thank you to all our members who represented the Serenoa Chapter at the Proclamation Ceremonies.

Serenoa Scuttlebutt

Our Executive Board meets once a month from September to May on the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30. All members are welcome to attend. They are a great way to get involved in your chapter.

Congratulations Erica Timmerman! Erica has achieved her master naturalist certification.

Please note that the deadline for the March newsletter is February 15.

God and Lawn Care (–Author Unknown)

GOD: Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down on that planet? What happened to the dandelions, violets, milkweeds and stuff I started eons ago? I had the perfect no-maintenance plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honeybees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. Nevertheless, all I see are these green rectangles.

ST. FRANCIS: The tribes that settled there, Lord... The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers ‘weeds’ and they go to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass. They call it a ‘lawn’.

GOD: Grass? But, grass is so boring. It is not colorful. It does not attract butterflies, birds and bees; only grubs and sod worms and it is sensitive to temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing the grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably make the grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it—sometimes twice a week.

GOD: They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

ST. FRANCIS: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS: No Sir, just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD: Now, let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And, when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS: Yes Sir.

GOD: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS: You aren’t going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it, so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a

continued on page 4

If you change your home address or email address, please contact membership chair Peter Price, psprice1@gmail.com or call 941-228-2152.



Beautyberry Jelly would make a nice homemade gift for any native plant enthusiast.

Beautyberry Jelly –Carolann Slacker

Search the web for recipes and you will find them to be basically the same. Many sites post the recipe, state they have never made it, and then continue to describe the taste. How can you say something tastes amazing if you have never had it?

Once again, I look out my kitchen window to see the branches of my Beautyberry Bushes (*Callicarpa Americana*) bowing under the weight of perfectly ripened purple berries. Once again, I am reminded that making Beautyberry Jelly has been on my list of things to do for years. The only reason I put it off each season is the thought of gathering a bazillion of those little purple berries seems like a lot of work (especially not knowing what the results would be). All that work then conjures memories of... canning season! When all childhood activities cease to exist. Back to a time when my brother and I were put to work sorting, cleaning and prepping the fruits, berries, and whatever else my mother could can, pickle, preserve, or freeze.

So many of our natives can be consumed while out on the trail but many have culinary uses also. This version varies a bit from most you will find on the web. Yes, it would have been so easy to just reprint the

continued on page 6

God and Lawn Care *continued from page 3*

sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn, they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. It's a natural cycle of life.

ST. FRANCIS: You had better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No! What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS: After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something, which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD: And where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS: They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

GOD: Enough! I don't want to think about this anymore.

St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

ST. CATHERINE: 'Dumb and Dumber', Lord. It's a story about....

GOD: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis.

Miracle Grow –Fran Palmeri

A couple of months ago while eating breakfast on the lanai I noticed a tall yellow flower by the birdbath. The next morning there were four, the one after that, eight. Every morning the count went up—topping out finally at thirty-four!

They were too tall to be tickseed (*Corieopsis leavenworthii*). Then I remembered planting one four-inch pot of narrow-leaved sunflowers (*Helianthus angustifolius*) last fall.

Generally plants thrive in my yard. I am always accusing Carolann Cahill of applying a magic elixir to make things grow. Years ago I suspected Oscar Scherer park rangers of doing the same after a prescribed burn brought an explosion of new growth.

Sunflowers crave water. In July, with the start of the rainy season, they take over drainage ditches at Carleton Reserve and on Route 68i along Oscar Scherer's boundary. When the rains cease they disappear. They grow in large colonies—but last summer I ran into one single seven-foot tall bloom at Carleton.

So why did mine decide to bloom now during a dry spell and not earlier? Why such an increase? I got an answer to the second question off a garden blog. "These can get out of hand so control is needed."

Their taking over my yard would suit me fine. Miracle Grow just happens and often it happens when we keep our mitts off. Look Ma, no hands!

PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI



Helianthus angustifolius

You will need:

- 1 ½ quarts of ripe berries
- 1 envelope Sure-Jell
- 4 ½ cups sugar
- 3 Granny Smith Apples
- 1 lemon

You would need at least four or five bushes available to be able to gather enough berries. Clean the berries of any plant material and unripe berries. Give your berries a bath in several changes of cool water.

You will need three cups of infusion. You may not have enough infusion from the berries alone. This is where most recipes instruct you to add water to your infusion, but by adding the apple infusion you aren't watering the mixture down.

To make infusions: Place the clean berries in a heavy saucepot. Add just enough water to barely cover them. Bring the berries to a boil on medium-high heat for 20-30 minutes. Remove from the heat. Use a wooden spoon to gently mash the berries.

In another saucepot, follow the same process for the apples. After coring the apples, cut them into chunks (leaving the skins), add just enough water to cover and bring to a boil. Mash.

Strain your infusions: Line a colander with a linen dishtowel and place the colander over a large bowl. Pour the infusion into the colander to strain. In a separate bowl do the same for the apples. I did not have linen dishtowels so I used coffee filters. You can use anything that allows the liquid to pass through but filters out all the seeds, skins and other stuff.

Measure three cups of liquid into a large pot. Do not skimp on the size of your pot because the mixture can bubble up easily and overflow. Add the juice from the lemon and the Sure-Jell to the pot. Turn the heat on high and bring it to a full rolling boil. Use a long wooden spoon to stir your mixture. Make sure your mixture is bubbling and a boiling and then add the sugar. Continue boiling, stirring constantly. Most

recipe and tell you how it should taste. However, I wanted to be able to say... I have actually gathered, cleaned, and cooked a bazillion little berries AND tasted the jelly.

As easy as it would have been to put this item on next seasons to do list, I suppressed those awful childhood memories, grabbed my colander and headed out the door.

As I began popping the berries off the branches, I thought I should try them straight off the bush. This might give me an idea of how the finished product would taste. I popped a few in my mouth and instead of a flavor explosion, I tasted... nothing. No flavor with microscopic seeds as texture. This told me the jelly could only taste like sugar. However, with steely reserve, I kept to the task.

recipes tell you to boil for 1 ½ or 2 minutes. Different factors play into cooking time so watching the clock is not a sure fire way to tell if your jelly is ready. It is like baking a cake: the recipe may tell you to bake it for 30 minutes but the best way to make sure the cake is done is to test it with a toothpick. So, instead of watching the clock, watch your spoon. The easiest way to make sure your jelly ready is to lift your spoon horizontally above the pot, tilt the spoon slightly and watch the liquid coming off the spoon. Do this every 15 seconds and gradually you will see the jelly start to change. If you do not cook your jelly enough, you may end up with syrup (which might be good on ice cream).

Remove from heat and you will notice foam start to form. Use a spoon to skim the residue. This may take a minute or two.

Pour your jelly into sterilized containers keeping the rims and threads clean, tighten the lids, invert the jars so they sit upside down for one minute, then return to the upright position. Or you can process them in a boiling water bath for 5-10 minutes.

Another option is to pour 1/8 - 1/4 inch melted paraffin wax on the surface of the jelly in each jar making sure the wax seals completely to the edge of the jar.

Let your jelly sit undisturbed for 24 hours in a draft-free location as the jars cool.

With high expectations, the next night I baked a batch of biscuits and we were finally able to sample the long awaited bounty. As expected it tasted just like sugar! But since I love sugar, this pretty purple goo sitting atop our warm biscuits was mingling beautifully with the melting butter. YUM!

Upcoming events

Mark January 30th on your calendars! Firefest, at T. Mabry Carlton, Jr. Memorial Reserve from 10:00–2:00. Bring the family because there is a lot for the kids to do and see. There are speakers, prescribed burn demos, helicopter water drops, games, nature walks and more.

The 16th annual Scrub Jay Festival is February 13th and will be held at Oscar Sherer State Park. The festival is a free family event with guided nature walks, activity booths, lots of kid's games, and prizes! Come at 8am and participate in the Scrub-Jay 5K Fun Run!



PHOTO BY FRANK PALMIERI

**Longleaf Pines at Big Pine Tract.
See page 7.**

Welcome New Members:

Jill Besch
 Mike Burton
 Ann Cruikshank
 Dorinda Davis
 Jim Davis
 George Drummond
 Cheryl Duber
 Michael Elswick
 Julie Farmer
 Sue Hlohinec
 Christine Howze
 Katie McHugh
 Brenda Noellert
 Terry Root

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

Visit our website for more information <http://serenoa.fnpschapters.org/>

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!

Scheduled for the weekend following our monthly meetings, field trips usually usually coincide with that month's presentation. These excursions offer a wonderful way to follow up on a meeting and you get to know your fellow members a little better outside our normal meeting times.

A sign up sheet is available during each meeting and directions will be given as each trip approaches. If you cannot make the meeting but want to go on the field trip, contact Fran Palmeri at (941) 544-6148. Before we begin our walk we gather at the meeting site and wait for everyone who has signed up for the trip to arrive. If you have signed up and find you cannot make it, please contact Fran.

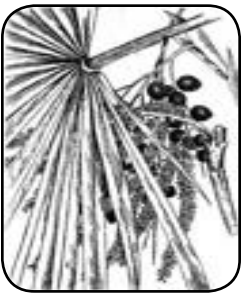
Depending on the length of the walk, we usually picnic afterwards so pack a lunch if you like. Other items you may want to bring: trail snacks, sunscreen, insect repellent, camera, binoculars, and water.

Jan. 18 GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. GETTING KIDS INTO NATIVE PLANTS. Karen Fraley Willey of Around the Bend Nature Tours will talk about her organization's programs, which get kids outdoors to learn about Florida habitats and the pros and cons of native vs. exotic plants. She will get us involved in a learning activity so be prepared to participate!

Jan 23 Field Trip 9 A.M. THE CELERY FIELDS, SARASOTA. A trip to Sarasota's Celery Fields is always a delight. Join Karen Willey on a trek around this 360-acre restored wetland planted with 200,000 aquatic plants and trees. The park has a large diverse population of resident and snowbirds (the feathered kind). Bring binoculars—or you can borrow a pair from Around the Bend Nature Tours!

Feb. 15 GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. FLORIDA'S LAST OLD TREES. Pine savannas consisting of scattered Longleaf and South Florida Slash Pines that were hundreds of years old, once covered Florida. Dr. Jean Huffman, who has studied these old trees, will share what they reveal about our original Florida landscapes and how to protect what remains.

Feb. 20 FIELD TRIP 9 A.M. BIG PINE TRACT AT CHINSEGUT WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL AREA, BROOKSVILLE. You will get to see some of these old growth longleaf pines—some 200 years old—at this 450-acre parcel in Brooksville, amid fields of wildflowers covered with butterflies. One hundred forty three species of birds have been sighted here. It's not yet the ideal wiregrass/wildflower longleaf pine flatwoods. Catfaces on the trunks of some trees are evidence that years ago those trees were turpented. But restoration including prescribed burns is underway. Chinsegut Nature Center Director Gina Philhower will guide the first part of the field trip. Then you can wander at will, taking in the wonders of this very special place.



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

PO Box 564
Sarasota, FL 34230
www.fnps.org