

Serenoa Notes

The Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

March 2016

A Butterfly Journey —Ryan Inskeep

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!

I will always remember the day my journey started, just five years ago. I was strolling through the nursery on a typical hot summer day when a beautiful native milkweed plant caught my eye. At the time I was drawn to the blooms alone (not realizing the many benefits this one plant would soon provide). It was not long before the female Monarch butterfly flew in to lay her eggs on the Milkweed. Suddenly, my entire outlook on gardening changed. If this one plant could bring in so much life, imagine what would happen if more native plants were added. I began by incorporating butterfly larval host plants and adult butterfly nectar plants.

Implementing both host and nectar sources allows the butterflies to complete their entire lifecycle in my small urban garden.

A good starting point was planting the larger shrubs first: Walter's Viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*), Simpson's Stopper (*Myrcianthes fragrans*), Privet Senna (*Senna ligustrina*), and Firebush (*Hamelia patens*). These shrubs provide food for birds, nectar for pollinators and shelter for all

kinds of wildlife. I also added Wild Lime (*Zanthoxylum fagara*), the host plant for our largest butterfly, the Giant Swallowtail, and for several species of Sulphur butterflies. Corkystem Passionflower Vine (*Passiflora suberosa*) underneath shrubs that attract Zebra Longwings and Gulf Fritillaries. Maypop (*Passiflora incarnata*) is also a great host for both of these butterflies and has fragrant, showy flowers.

For ground cover, I planted Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*). Frogfruit is the host plant for the White Peacock, Phaon Crescent as well as the Common Buckeye. Sunshine Mi-

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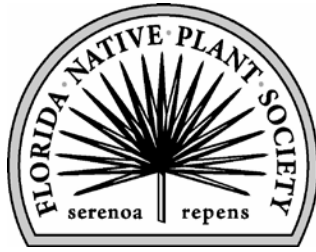
To certify your yard, visit the National Wildlife Federation website at nwf.org and Monarch Watch at monarchwatch.org

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PHOTO BY RYAN INSKEEP



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Visit our chapter on the Florida
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www.fnps.org

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If you change your home address or email address, please contact membership chair Susie Venters, at 941-718-3362.

From your President

As you look outside, that vision you had of a lush, green, landscape begins to fade. Your plants seem to just sit there. They don't seem to be thriving. Some look rather glum and others have disappeared altogether.

Because I have "been there, done that" and because I am hearing a lot our members comment on how poorly their plants seem to be doing, I thought I would try to address some of the concerns.

You hear it all the time... we live in a "tropical paradise." In reality, Central Florida is a sub-tropical region. This means we have very distinct rainy seasons as well as very dry seasons. Our dry season is somewhat longer with the driest months being November and April. Right now, we are in the midst of our dry season. We are also heading out of winter. Both these things can affect how your plants perform. As long as they are established, your native plants will survive on whatever rainwater they get during the winter but it can help if you give them additional irrigation during severe dry spells. Be patient, spring is just around the corner and you should notice your plants start to put out new growth.

Another factor that can affect plant growth is your soil. Most top soils have very little silt, clay or organic matter, especially on newer home sites. This type soil holds very little water and nutrients so you may want to do some soil building. Instead of raking up and discarding your fall leaves, make mulch by mowing over them, then let them decompose naturally. Mulched leaves provide wonderful organic matter that will recycle nutrients back into your soil.

Most important is to choose the right plants for your site. Researching soil, light, and moisture requirements before you buy will lessen the chance of purchasing something that will struggle or just won't work in your landscape. The Florida Native Plant Society has a tool to help you find plants that are best for your county, soil type, light and water requirements. Go to fnps.org, and then click on the heading "native plants" at the top. On the drop down menu click on "native plants for your area." You can look for specific plants on the left side of the page, or look for plants for your particular county and soil, water, and sun conditions on the right side. For the most extensive list of plants, don't click on too many of the options such as pollinators, wildlife, etc.

Build a library of good reference books. Ginny Stibolt's book *Maintaining a Florida Native Landscape* is full of great information on how to prepare your soil ecosystem. She includes advice on how much water to use and good alternatives to commercial fertilizers.

To sum things up, be patient. New plants need extra water until they are established. Build up your soil with organic compost to help with nutritional and water holding capacity. Supplemental irrigation may be necessary during extreme dry periods. Finally, do the research before making an investment in your plants.

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Right Plant, Right Place? –Carolann Cahill

Erica mentioned one of the most important considerations when choosing plants is to pick the right plant for the right place. We all know how disappointing it can be to come across the most beautiful plant we ever laid eyes on then after some research find out it simply won't work in our yard :(In most cases, I heed that inner voice that tells me to walk away, just let it go. Sometimes... I buck the system.

One such instance was when we were busily setting up for one of our chapter plant sales. From afar, I spotted the Water Dropwort (*Tiedeman-
nia filiformis*) glistening with dew in the early morning sun. I was then transported back to my childhood in NY State when the Queen Anne's lace was in bloom. I had to have this plant!

Whatever you call it— Water Dropwort, Water Cowbane, water whatever—as the common name would imply, IT LOVES WATER! What was that number one principle? Right plant, right place? Of course, my yard is one big sand pit with no water retaining capabilities what so ever.

Through the day, I would find myself gazing over to the area where my new obsession was kept. Picturing myself loading pots of moisture loving plants into the truck, that inner voice tormented me. "It will never work." "You're wasting your money." So as we all do at one time or other, I ignored the voice and bought the plant(s).

Through the years I have found that we can attempt to manipulate nature. Sometimes it works, sometimes it does not. To give my new additions a fighting chance I decided I would use a 17-inch terracotta saucer for a planter. This attempt at manipulation has proven a success. With no drain holes, the soil is able to hold the moisture that the plant likes. They have survived over two years and are multiplying. I just add water whenever the soil is looking a little dry.

Bloom time is about mid to late summer. This year was exciting because as soon as the first blooms started to appear, so did the eggs. I visited every day and witnessed the eggs develop into cats. One by one, most of the caterpillars disappeared. With only one fat caterpillar left, I was now afraid there would not be enough host plant. It was hard not to run to the nursery to get more. I breathed a sigh of relief the morning I saw the pupae, and after numerous visits, in the end I watched the one lone survivor enclose and then dance its way out of sight.

From your President *continued from page 2*

Speaking of buying plants... our Serenoa Chapter plant sale will be held at Sweetbay nursery on April 9! That is the perfect time to supplement your landscape plan, and we always have experts on hand who are happy to help you make knowledgeable decisions as well as answer any questions you may have.

Erica Timmerman
President, Serenoa Chapter

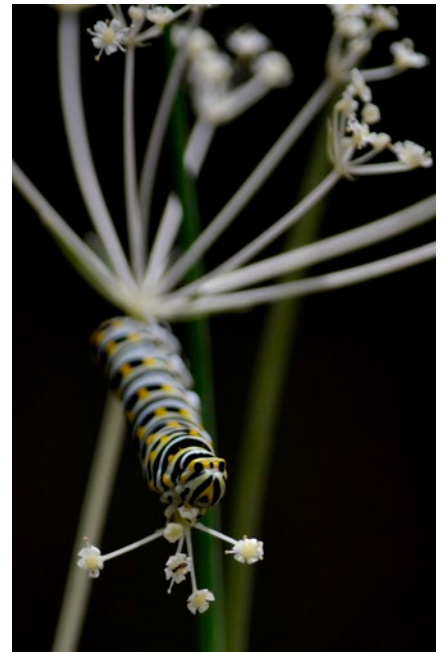


PHOTO BY CAROLANN CAHILL

Not only beautiful, *T. filiformis* serves as a host plant for the Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*) butterfly

Peter Price is passing the Membership committee baton to Susie Venters. Julie Whitney is retiring as our secretary. As well as being a part of our board, Pete and Julie are always there to volunteer at the many events our chapter participates in. Thank you both for everything you do.



Last year over 1.5 billion dollars were spent nationally to combat wildfires.

We Were There!!!

Once again, the Serenoa chapter participated in the third annual Fire Fest at T. Mabry Carlton Preserve. The event takes place during our state's Prescribed Fire Awareness Week. Featuring activities, demonstrations, speakers, and exhibitors its goal is to educate the public on the necessity of prescribed burns.

In 2000-2001 there were nearly 12,000 acres burned from wildfire on Carlton Preserve. Since 2002 (when the program began) only 1,040 have burned, proving prescribed fire is effective.

Four hundred burns have taken place on 14 different County managed sites. There have been zero escapes, zero incidents of property damage, zero citations and zero injuries. Taking care of public safety, taking care of our environment, tax dollars well spent.

The Sarasota County Butterfly Club meets at 9:30 A.M. September–May on the 4th Thursday of most months at The Sarasota Garden Club located at 1131 Blvd. of the Arts.

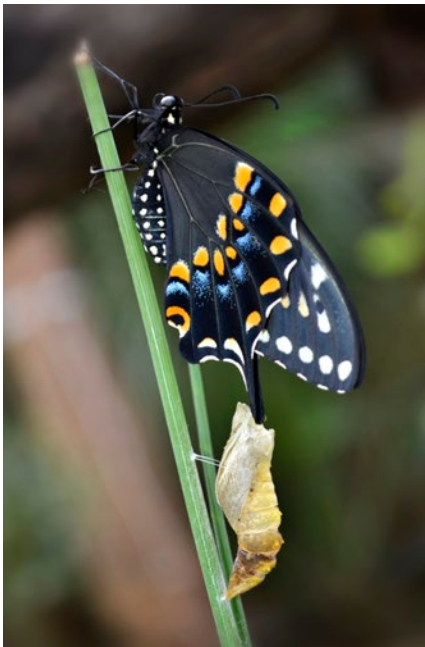
As a NABA Chapter, our purposes are: To study and research the populations of butterflies found in our area; To educate ourselves and our community through shared information, to create butterfly gardens, sanctuaries and habitats, to participate in butterfly counts and to conduct field trips; To have fun.

Programs are \$5.00 for non-members and offer a variety of speakers who provide tips, which will enable all levels of experience to learn about butterflies and butterfly gardening. Many members work with schools and local organizations in the community helping to plant butterfly gardens and education on butterfly conservation.

Visit our website SarasotaButterfly.org and like us on Facebook.

Do you find Butterflies intriguing?

—Yvonne Eubanks



As much as possible, we encourage the use of Florida Native Plants and purchasing them from local nurseries that do not treat plants with pesticides.

A Butterfly Journey *continued from page 1*

mosa (*Mimosa strigillosa*) is another wonderful ground cover that attracts the Little Sulphur butterfly.

Wildflowers are interspersed throughout the garden to provide nectar. Some of these include Indian Blanketflower (*Gaillardia pulchella*), Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*), Spotted Beebalm (*Monarda punctata*), Seaside Goldenrod (*Sempervirens solidago*) and Scorpion Tail (*Heliotropium angiospermum*).

The next reasonable step was to certify my yard as a wildlife habitat and a safe haven for Monarchs and other butterflies. This can be done by providing food (seeds and berries from native plants), water (small pond or even a birdbath works) and shelter while using sustainable garden practices such as no fertilizers or pesticides.

Butterfly gardening was just the beginning of my journey. As I continue to remove existing exotic plants and replace them with natives, I envision my native garden, full of insects, birds and other animals

Fall Color in Florida –Tom Heitzman

I hear many people say there are no seasons in Florida. Florida Native Plants tell a different story. As we get cooler temperatures, many native plants put on a nice display of fall color. Here are a few examples of our changing seasons as seen through the plants.

Acer rubrum, **RED MAPLE** a common landscape tree found throughout the state, ranges in fall color here from yellow to its namesake red. As our early spring approaches, the tree is covered with showy red flowers.

Liquidambar styraciflua, **SWEET GUM** is another tree that will turn red to purple after some cold weather. The sweet gum is also a larval host plant to the luna moth.

Carya glabra, **PIGNOT HICKORY** is a large tree that turns yellow late in the fall before dropping its leaves. It is one of the last trees to leaf out in the spring, its new leaves looking like small red flowers as they emerge.

Rhus copallinum, **WINGED SUMAC**, a small tree or large shrub turns orange to red before dropping its leaves. Once the leaves have dropped the fruit clusters persist, which can be used to make a mild tea and is a favorite food of many birds.

Parthenocissus quinquefolia, **VIRGINIA CREEPER** a somewhat aggressive, deciduous vine hides all year in many trees in our area. After a few cooler nights, it reveals itself with a show of red leaves dripping out of large trees. Its fruit is a favorite of many birds including woodpeckers and tanagers.

Fall color is not just limited to leaves in Florida. Many plants bloom or are in fruit in our winter.

Ilex cassine, **DAHOON HOLLY**, a medium sized evergreen tree, fills with an abundance of showy red berries, another favorite food of birds.

Vachellia farnesiana, **SWEET ACACIA**, is a small tree with very fragrant yellow flowers most of the winter. It has small thorns like most Acacias but nicely textured leaves.

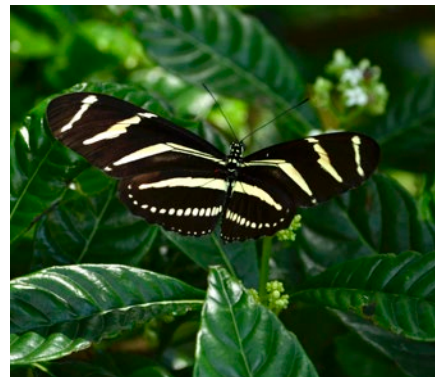
Ilex vomitoria, **YAUPON HOLLY**, another small tree gets bright red berries in the fall and winter. The leaves are dried and seeped to make a coffee like beverage. Only the female hollies get the berries with the exception of the weeping Yaupon Holly, which is a cultivar, and all get berries.

Senna mexicana chapmanii, **BAHAMA CASSIA** and *Senna ligustrina*, **PRIVET CASSIA** are both Fall bloomers and having showy yellow flowers most of the winter—the first having a more shrubby habit while the latter is more upright. An added benefit is they are both larval host plants for Sulfur butterflies.

Psychotria nervosa, **WILD COFFEE** and *Psychotria sulzneri*, **SATINLEAF COFFEE** both have nice displays of bright red berries. Better suited to shady area some coffee plants will work well in sunnier spots. The flowers in the spring attract many pollinators.



Birds love the fruit of Virginia Creeper.



Our state butterfly, the Zebra Longwing, nectaring on the blooms of Wild Coffee.

PHOTO BY CAROLANN CAHILL

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Betsy Roberts: A Remembrance

—Fran Palmeri

More than most people, Betsy Roberts was a doer. A home health care nurse, she had a wide variety of interests and enthusiasms: gardening, native plants, bees, trees, swales, making elderberry wine to name just a few.

She served many organizations—the Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, the Sarasota Tree Advisory Council, Sierra Club at the state and local level, the Democratic Party, Resurrection House, the American Red Cross, and Manasota 88.

A Florida Master Naturalist and a Florida Master Gardener, she was proud to be called a “tree hugger.” When Florida House, the County’s sustainability model was to be moved and the native plant gardens bulldozed, she showed up to argue for its preservation, just one of many instances she spoke out in defense of the land.

Some years ago she went to “Bee College” and shared her knowledge widely, working at Phillippi Market, collecting honey from a hive for an admiring crowd or dressing up in her black and yellow bee costume to teach children about the magic of bees. She loved working with kids—including her own grandchildren.

Betsy was into helping others on a scale we noted with awe. When there was a horrific calamity somewhere in the world, our reaction was to write a check. Betsy’s was to go there. She went to New Orleans to help Katrina victims and Haiti after an earthquake. After she got back from working with the Red Cross in Haiti, I asked her what she had done, assuming it was patching people up. “No” she said, “Mostly I listened to them”.

The Pawpaw chapter will host the 2016 state conference May 19-22 at the Daytona Beach Resort and Conference Center. For more details, visit the FNPS website at fnps.org



PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI

Betsy Roberts
October 6, 1940–November 20, 2015

Upcoming events and Field Trips

Our March 19th field trip to T. Mabry Carlton Reserve will begin at 10:00 instead of 9:00. Join Jean Evoy and Laurel Rhodes as they lead us in search for butterflies and other pollinators. We will also be comparing growth after prescribed fire.

Due to poor weather, our January field trip (led by Karen Willey) to the Celery Fields was cancelled. We have scheduled a make up trip for April 2nd at 8:30 A.M.

April 9th is our Spring Plant Sale held at Sweetbay Nursery in Parrish. Last years spring sale was HUGE. We need our members to pitch in and help us man the sale. Do not worry, you don't have to be a plant expert and you do not have to commit to a whole day! As well as volunteers, we are always in need of extra wagons for our customers. Let us know if you have one we could use for the day. Proceeds from our sale helps to fund our grant program so make sure you spread the word.

Communities benefit when their projects feature native plants. This year our chapter has promoted the mission of the FNPS by awarding grants to the following recipients.

- Community Haven: \$500 - Butterfly Garden
- Florida Maritime Museum: \$500
- Selby Botanical Gardens: \$500 - Mangrove Walk
- Sarasota County: \$540 - Aquatic Plants
- Crowley Nature Center: \$400
- Palma Sola Botanical Gardens: \$500 - Butterfly and Pollinator Garden
- Living River OBRHS: \$500 - Braden River Restoration

Welcome New Member:

Cindy Watts



Don't miss our Spring Plant Festival April 9th!

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 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.

Mar. 19 FIELD TRIP 10 A.M.—T. MABRY CARLTON RESERVE, SARASOTA. With Jean Evoy and Laurel Rhodes we'll look for monarchs and other butterflies (and pollinators) in two recently burned tracts of this magnificent park. We'll get to compare plant growth one, two and three years after prescribed fire.

Mar. 21 GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. —UNCOVERING THE MYSTERIES OF MILKWEED. Chris Parisi (aka "Mr. Milkweed") of Restless Natives Nursery will talk about native milkweed in southwestern Florida. Chris grows his own plants—all Florida natives—and is involved with conservation projects sponsored by the Xerces Society. He will bring plants to the meeting to illustrate his talk and for sale.

Apr. 2 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. 18 GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. —RESTORATION AT OSCAR SCHERER STATE PARK. Park Manager Tony Clements will tell us about on-going habitat restoration at this "jewel" of a park on our coast.

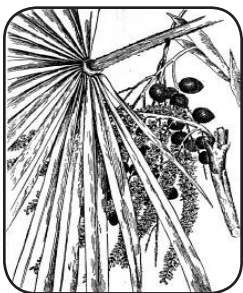
Apr. 23 EARTH DAY CELEBRATION 10 A.M. OSCAR SCHERER STATE PARK, SARASOTA COUNTY. Exhibits, plant sale, music, food, and guided walks in the park to some restored areas Park Manager Tony Clements talked about at the general meeting!

May 14 ANNUAL GARDEN TOUR 9 A.M. —SARASOTA AND MANATEE COUNTIES. We'll visit several gardens that feature native plants—each unique in its own way—to get design and planting ideas for our own efforts.

May 18 GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M. — PLANTING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE. Libby Carnahan, a Florida Sea Grant Agent, UF/IFAS Pinellas County Extension Service, will tell us how sea level rise will change scenarios for coastal plants.

May 23 FIELD TRIP 9 A.M.—A VISIT TO THE FOSTER/WEST YARDS plus a Stop at the Manatee County Courthouse

May 19–22 FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE, DAYTONA BEACH RESORT.



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of the Florida Native
Plant Society**

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