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January 2026 News From Serenoa Chapter

Happy New Year 2026! Together we can help native flora and fauna flourish! Note that our events are earlier than usual this month due to Martin Luther King day.

General Meeting: Monday, January 12, 2025

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM EDT at Marie Selby Gardens

Speaker: Debra Childs Woithe

Field trip: Saturday, January 17, 2026

9:00 AM to 12:00 PM EDT

Triple Oak Preserve with Debra Woithe

FNPS presents the **Peggy Lantz Writing Contest** which celebrates creative voices inspired by Florida's wild flora. Deadline January 30, 2026

Conservation Update & Alerts

Apply for a grant to plant Native Plants

You could receive up to \$1,000 a grant from our chapter to build a Native Plant Garden.

More January Learning Opportunities

Scroll down for links and information.



General Meeting & Program: Monday, January 12, 2025 (note 2nd Monday)

Debra Childs Woithe

Social @ 6:30 PM, Meeting @ 7:00 PM EDT

The issue, and Debra's work, is urging people and groups tasked with setting land aside for environmental protection and long-term public use to move fast. "I'm hearing, 'The time is now' echoed throughout the conservation community," says Woithe. "I think there is a sense of urgency in that you see the governor supporting the funding to make it happen. And because of the pressure, the time is now to get it. That doesn't mean that we're trying to stop growth. We're just trying to get those natural places in place and connected and get the growth filled in around properly."

RSVP in meetup please. Note that Serenoa Chapter does not collect any payments via Meetup and registration for events is free. Non-Members of FNPS are welcome, but we encourage you to become a **member**.

RSVP



Field Trip: Triple Oak Preserve with Debra Childs Woithe
Saturday, January 17, 2026 @ 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM EST

Join Debra Woithe at **Triple Oak Preserve**, 105 acres in Myakka, purchased with Conservation Referendum Bond funds in September 2024. The property was pasture when the prior owners (Vicky and Orin Oberlander) bought it. They planted over 30,000 trees according to a FWC Conservation Plan over time. It is beautiful now, and the County Resource Management team did their first prescribed burn on the property this June. Register in meetup to receive exact location.

RSVP in meetup please. Note that Serenoa Chapter does not collect any payments via Meetup and registration for events is free. Non-Members of FNPS are welcome, but we encourage you to become a **member**.

RSVP



Debra Childs Woithe

Debra Childs Woithe is Environmental Lands Program Manager at Manatee County Government.

Conservation Update

Independent journalist Jason Garcia reported in his Seeking Rents newsletter in November how "**Florida lawmakers took instructions from a landowner's lobbyist. Now Florida taxpayers will pay \$83 million for four acres.**" Detailing **the deal's closing** in December, Tampa Bay Times environmental reporter Max Chesnes quotes former state parks system director Eric Draper saying that "This is a sad day for honest government and arm's-length land acquisition."

cow/calf operation in Sarasota County, is the last remaining ranch bordering Myakka River State Park, acting as the last buffer against development for the state park," Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture wrote on a Facebook post on December 1, announcing its nomination as one of the 2026 Rural and Family Lands Protection Program applicants. Video [here](#). Stay tuned for opportunities to offer public input on this application.

1000 Friends of Florida will be streaming their 2026 Florida Legislative Preview, "with a focus on bills that could significantly affect local planning authority, land conservation, water management, and community resilience," on January 7 at 12pm. Register [here](#). Florida Audubon recently posted [this guide](#) to potentially finding conservation wins through local, state, and federal solutions.

Over the past few newsletters we've shared information about **Senate Bill 180 (SB 180)**. We are encouraging FNPS members to call their state representatives and express disapproval of SB 180 in its current form and urge repeal of the most damaging sections, especially **Sections 18 and 28**. A blanket moratorium on "restrictive" or "burdensome" building regulations will lead to the loss of more wild and native Florida that we FNPS members cherish. Many of our members live in District 73, represented in the state house by Rep. Fiona McFarland, who co-introduced the house companion (HB 1535) to SB 180. Some legislators seem to be **feeling the pressure** and are talking about making "tweaks." In telling them what you don't want from SB 180 please also let Rep. McFarland, or other members of your legislative delegation, which can be found [here](#) (Senate) and [here](#) (House), know that you want them to strongly prioritize conservation policies that protect native flora and fauna in the session that begins January 13.

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Renew Today

Apply for a Grant to Build a Native Plant Garden

You could receive up to \$1,000 a grant from our chapter to build a Native Plant Garden. On our [grants page](#), you will find important information about the new grant cycles, and tips to assist applicants in preparing strong proposals. Do you know of an organization that may be interested in applying for a grant? Please encourage them to apply! Are you intimidated by the application? We're still like to hear about your project.

Application

January 2026 Opportunities to Learn about Native Plants

Online

Read the long running [blog](#) from Treasure Coast Natives!
Wednesday, January 7 @ 2:00 PM Introduction to Plant Identification
(webinar) from Weedon Island. **Registration required.**

Wednesday, March 6 @ 12:10 PM to 12:50 PM **Fireflies of Florida**
(webinar) by UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County

Become a **Florida Master Naturalist** this Winter!

Get Outside

Winter is a great time to garden and plant native plants. November to January is also a great **time** in our area to **start native plants from seed**.

The **Sarasota** and **Manatee County** Audubon Societies host many great events. The UF/IFAS Extensions in **Sarasota** and **Manatee** County have many events to explore and learn about nature.

Wednesday, January 7 @ 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM **Precious Water Resources** by UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County

Saturday, January 10 @ 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM **Moody Branch WEA Guided Walk** with Big Waters Land Trust, Manatee County Natural Resources Department and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Thursday, January 15-17 Learn **Avian Field Methods**. This course is for experienced birders interested in practical field skills used by professional Avian Biologists. Sarasota Audubon

Thursday, January 15 @ 6:00 PM - 7:45 PM Manatee Audubon welcomes **Evelyn MacQueen from the Florida Bluebird Society** at Braden River Branch Library

Tuesday, January 20 @ 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM **Wildflower Watcher Training** with the Florida Wildflower Foundation

Saturday, January 24 @ 9:00 AM Explore Perico Preserve with a Master Gardener. **Register here**.

Sunday, January 25 @ 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM **Plantapolooza** at Sunken Gardens - celebrating the beauty of Florida's native plants and pollinators!

Wednesday, January 28 @ 6:00 PM - 7:45 PM **Orange Hammock Winter Butterfly Count** with Big Waters Land Trust

Learn more about the birds of Manatee County by taking the **Bird ID course**. SAS also has many **classes**.

Plan Ahead as Many Events Sell out

Serenoa Chapter Florida Native Plant Society

The Mission of the **Florida Native Plant Society** is to promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

Go Wild! Go Native!

See our calendar of meetings and programs on the **Serenoa FNPS website**.

This **QR code** can be used to donate directly to Serenoa Chapter FNPS. If you would like to donate via check, please make it payable to **Serenoa FNPS and sent to PO Box 1224; Palmetto, FL 34420**.

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Digging Through The Ditches - Managing Difficult Wetland Habitat

By Sean Patton and Stocking Savvy



[See past presentations on our YouTube Channel](#)



A photo from November's field trip to Wellen Park with Sean Patton, courtesy of Stephen White.

Serenoa Chapter Board Members

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Contact us via email: srepens@gmail.com

Members are welcome at board meetings! Email us If you are interested in attending and we will send you a link.

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Serenoa Chapter FNPS

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Go Wild! Go Native!

<https://serenoa.fnpschapters.org>

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