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March 2026 News From Serenoa Chapter

Happy March! This month brings many ways and reasons to explore Florida's natural beauty and just as many ways you can help protect it.

General Meeting: Monday, March 16, 2025

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

Speaker: Brooke Langston on Big Waters' Priorities

Yard Tours: Saturday, March 21, 2026

Serenoa FNPS Annual Yard Tours (for FNPS Members Only)

9:00 AM to 12:00 PM EDT

Free Class followed by Pollinator Planting at the Quads: Saturday, March 14, 2026

Class: 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM EDT at Sarasota Audubon

Free talks on Home Landscape Design with Native Plants by Pamela Callender (Chapter Grant Appraiser) Register by emailing callenderpamela@gmail.com

Quad Parcels Pollinator Planting: 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM EDT (map below)

Save the date! Our Annual fundraiser/plant sale is April 18th.

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.

Renew your membership today! Dues increase April 1st.

More March Learning Opportunities

Scroll down for links and information.

**General Meeting & Program: Monday, March 16, 2026****Brooke Langston on Big Waters' Priorities****Social @ 6:30 PM, Meeting @ 7:00 PM EDT****Marie Selby Botanical Gardens**

Big Waters represents us as the last generation that can save the land. Together, we will ensure that the human and natural worlds of Florida flourish together. By saving land forever, Big Waters protects wild places for kids and grown-ups, for wildlife and waterways. Brooke will speak to current priorities and prospects for the organization.

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: Serenoa FNPS Annual Yard Tours (for FNPS Members Only)****Saturday, March 21, 2026 @ 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM EST**

Join us for a tour of yards that are devoted to native plant landscaping! Three of our members will be generously opening their yards and offering guided tours at 9, 10, and 11am on 3/21. **Register Here** NOT in Meetup!

- See examples of how the plants are placed.
- Ask questions about the process and experience.

Please use this **special link to register** and select which yards you would like to visit at which times to help us avoid overcrowding. Right now we are limiting attendance to 25 people per yard at a time.

All locations are open from 9am to noon, but there will be a guided tour at a specific time. Out of consideration of the privacy of our homeowners we ask you not to share the addresses, which are shown to registrants only.

You will be sent a map and the addresses before the event.

Become a **member**.



[Register for tours](#)





**Quad Parcels Pollinator Planting: Saturday, March 14, 2026
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM EDT**

6300 Palmer Blvd, Sarasota 34240. Entrance on south Apex. Parking is on the SW Quad, a short right after going south at the new roundabout on Palmer/Apex. Signs will be posted.

Our chapter is partnering with the Sarasota Audubon Society for a morning of installing pollinator plants at the **Quad Parcels** as part of its rewilding. Garden placement and planting, designed by Lifelines, will be led by Pam Callender and immediately follows **part 3 of her native plant workshop** series that morning at Sarasota Audubon's Nature Center.

6300 Palmer Blvd, Sarasota 34240. Entrance on south Apex. Parking is on the SW Quad, a short right after going south at the new roundabout on Palmer/Apex. Signs will be posted.

Some forks and shovels will be available but please bring gloves and, if possible, gardening tools. Plants supplied by Parrish's **Sweet Bay Nursery**.



Brooke Langston

Brooke joined Big Waters in August 2024 as Director of Land Protection. She grew up in Fort Myers and developed her deep and abiding love of all things South Florida in the Caloosahatchee and Gulf of Mexico. Brooke earned a bachelor's in environmental studies from the University of California Santa Barbara, and served in the Peace Corps twice – first in St Kitts and 20 years later in Fiji. In between she worked for National Audubon at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary and then in California for 17 years in environmental education and on coastal restoration. As her parents entered their 90s, Brooke decided it was time to make her way back to Florida and was happy to find a position in Sarasota working with a team to protect and improve critical lands and imperiled habitats – the best way to ensure clean waters. She says coming to Big Waters feels like coming home. Brooke

Conservation Update

We mourn the passing of Manatee County Commissioner Carol Ann Felts, who died suddenly in late February. **This FOX 13 story notes** how the eighth-generation Floridian "was the candidate Myakka City, Parrish, and Duette were waiting for" when she was elected in 2024 to push back against unchecked eastward development. And **this 10 Tampa Bay News story** highlights her love of the Myakka River. Mitch Maley **wrote in a tribute** in the Bradenton Times that "Carol had one overarching goal as a public servant: to help more people understand how the machinery of government works and to encourage them to get involved and actively communicate to their representatives what they want. From her time as an activist until her final days, she pestered the administration to do more to communicate major developments and the changes they might bring to a community's character before they occurred. They wanna know who turned those cow patties to condominiums, so it's our job to make sure they know before it's been decided. She lobbied endlessly for giant billboards rather than small yard signs to let people know that their government will be deciding on a development application." May her memory be a blessing to the wild spaces and working landscapes of our region.

On the other side of the Manatee-Sarasota county line, and contrary to the spirit of Ms. Felts, Michael Barfield **reports in the Florida Trident** how "Public conservation land disappears from map after meeting with Sarasota County commissioner." Sarasota residents will, however, have the opportunity to show how much conservation land means to them via, **WSLR reported last November**, "a new Future Land Acquisition and Park referendum that will be on the November 2026 general election ballot. If passed, it would continue the land acquisition program for another three years. We could then see the environmental program extended through 2049." This would build on **the successes** of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program and Neighborhood Parklands Acquisition Program(s) over the past quarter century. Back in Manatee County, residents and lawmakers continue to voice opposition to a proposed cruise ship terminal in Terra Ceia. Reporting and editorial in the Anna Maria Islander and Tampa Bay Times, **here** and **here**, respectively. Background on the Terra Ceia Aquatic Preserve, what you can do, possible solutions for rolling back damaging portions of last year's SB 180 and more can be found via Suncoast Waterkeeper, **here**.

The 2026 legislative session continues and is slated to end on March 13 but could be extended. Updates on bills of concern, such as one on so-called **"blue-ribbon projects"** that would accelerate sprawl, can be found from **1000 Friends of Florida** and Jason Garcia's **Seeking Rents** blog and podcast, among others.

In Hardee County, the **Florida Conservation Group celebrates** Clay Smith and family conserving Buckhorn Ranch, noting "The Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP) is placing a rural lands protection easement over Smith's 1,327-acre cow-calf and citrus operation east of Wauchula. The easement was approved by the Governor and Cabinet at its meeting on February 24th. It will add important acreage to the Florida Wildlife Corridor and help link other protected areas recently conserved by Smith's cousins." And a recent feature by Michael Paluska for Tampa Bay 28, **"Sacred land: What will it take to save wild Florida? Money,"** highlights a conservation success story in DeSoto County.

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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

March 2026 Opportunities to Learn about Native Plants

Online

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

Wednesday, March 18 @ 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM **WEBINAR – Weeds with Superpowers** presented by FWF Board Member Sara Burke.

Get Outside

Sarasota Master Gardeners offer **Free Plant Clinics and more.**

Friday, March 6 @ 7:30 AM - 10:30 AM Join **Manatee Audubon** for a guided bird walk at **Crowley Museum & Nature Center**, where expert birder Sharon Wilcox leads participants along a gentle 1.5–2 mile nature trail winding through pine flatwoods, oak hammocks, swamp, and the expansive Tatum Sawgrass Marsh bordering the Myakka River.

Friday, March 6 @ 7:00 PM Moon Over Myakka Fundraising Concert: **The Applebutter Express at Myakka River State Park** - South Pavilion Lawn benefiting Friends of Myakka River.

Saturday, March 7 @ 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM **Spring Plant Sale** by Master Gardener Volunteers of Sarasota County

Saturday, March 7 @ 10:00 AM **Plant Auction at Apollo Beach Garden Club**

Sunday, March 8 @ 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM **Palma Sola Botanical Park's Spring Plant Sale**

Thursday, March 12 @ 9:00 AM Join BWLT for a leisurely **walk through Walton Ranch Preserve** as we learn about native wildlife and land conservation!

Saturday, March 14 @ 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM **Free class** at Sarasota Audubon with Pam Callender.

Saturday, March 14 @ 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM **Quad Pollinator Planting**

Saturday, March 21 @ 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM Rare Fruit Tree Sale + Native Plants too! Learn more at the **Manatee Rare Fruit Council** site.

Saturday, March 28 @ 11:00 AM 2026 **Wild About Nature Festival** - Not-for-profits and community organizations from across the region will join Big Waters Land Trust onsite at Bay Preserve with nature-based activities the whole family will enjoy!

Sunday, March 29 @ 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM Nature Day by the Bay returns to The Landings

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

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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Florida Native Plant Society Serenoa Ch



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



A photo from Serenoa Chapter's booth at February's Fly Wild event at Sarasota Audubon with Elliot Prout and Don Blackowiak. Thanks to all the volunteers! Photo courtesy Steve 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.



The Mission of the Florida Native Plant Society is to to champion Florida's native plants and their habitats.

Go Wild! Go Native!

<https://serenoa.fnpschapters.org>

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