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May 2026 News From Serenoa Chapter

Happy Mayday!

Thank you to all the people in our community working to protect native plants and all the creatures that rely on them everyday!

Would you like to meet new people, learn new skills and make a difference? Join our board! Write to srepens@gmail.com or come to our meeting!

General Meeting: Monday, May 18, 2026

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

Speaker: A panel discussion hosted by Julie and Jono Miller with Brie Ondercin and Lee Amos

Field Trip: Blackbeard's Ranch with Jim Strickland

Saturday, May 23 @ 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM EDT

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!

More May Learning Opportunities

Scroll down for links and information.



New Serenoa Chapter T-Shirts - Shop Online



General Meeting & Program: Monday, May 18, 2026

General Meeting & Program: A panel discussion hosted by Julie and Jono Miller with Brie Ondercin and Lee Amos

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

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens & Zoom

Natives, Exotics and Invasives: Where Are We Now and What is Next?

This is a panel discussion of the current challenges and opportunities facing our local world of Florida Native Plants hosted by Julie & Jono Miller. The panelists will be Brie Ondercin and Lee Amos:

- Brie Ondercin is the Land Acquisition Coordinator for Sarasota County government. She will be talking about the 2026 Land Referendum on the November 3, 2026 ballot, and the successes of the parkland and environmentally sensitive lands programs to date.
- Lee Amos is the Land Manager and Leader of Environmental Programs at the Elling Eide Center in Indianola.

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: Field Trip to Blackbeard's Ranch with Jim Strickland****Saturday, May 23, 2026 @ 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM EDT**

Blackbeard's Ranch, 15800 Coker Gulley Rd · Myakka City, FL

Blackbeard's Ranch is one of the last large intact cow operations in a rapidly changing region. Mike Galinski and Managing Partner Jim Strickland have a vision for the ranch because of the natural beauty of the dry prairies, maiden-cane marshes, live oak hammocks, cabbage islands and longleaf pine savannas. The diversity of the landscape makes Blackbeard's an ideal cattle ranch. The headwaters of Deer Prairie Slough and adjoining wetlands are now a permanent conservation area, storing and cleaning water for people downstream. The ranch manages the land to ensure high quality habitat for wildlife while running a productive cattle operation. While running a cow-calf operation is the primary focus, they have also diversified into developing lines of other delicious products fresh from the ranch

**Jim Strickland**

James Arthur "Jim" Strickland, Sr., has six decades of ranching experience. Born into a family that has been ranching in Florida since the 1800s, Jim grew up working with his father along the west coast of Florida. When his father died in the 1970's, Jim took over the family cattle operations at the age of 17, primarily leasing land for cattle. He and his family own Strickland Ranch and Lost Girl Prairie Ranch; he is also the managing partner of Big Red Cattle Company and Blackbeard's Ranch.

His passion for agriculture and conservation began at a young age, as increasing development pushed his operations farther and farther inland. He is a founding member and Vice-Chair of the Florida Conservation Group, a science-based organization focused on protecting Florida's ranchlands. In this capacity he serves as a spokesman on ranchland conservation and on the need for conservation funding to protect Florida.

Jim is a past President of the Florida Cattlemen's Association and past Chairman of the Florida Cattlemen's Foundation. He has also served two terms as the Chairman of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association Political Action Committee. He is active in the Farm Bureau on the county, state and federal levels and is a Florida State Committee Member of the USDA Farm Service Agency. He sits on the board of the Florida Agriculture Center and Horse Park. Jim also sits on the National Cattlemen's Beef Association's Environmental Stewardship Awards Selection Committee, which recognizes and awards the ranches demonstrating outstanding stewardship practices and conservation achievements across the nation.

Jim has been widely recognized for his work in agriculture and conservation. He was honored as the 2019 Audubon Florida's Sustainable Rancher of the Year and named as one of Florida Trends 500 Most Influential Business Leaders from 2018-2023. Under his leadership, Blackbeard's Ranch was awarded the 2018 Florida Cattlemen's Association Environmental Stewardship Award, Florida Agricultural Commissioner's 2018 Agricultural-Environmental Leadership Award and was the national winner for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association's 2019 Environmental Stewardship Award. He was inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2025.

Jim lives in southwest Florida with his wife Julie and their two daughters, Ayla and Sabal. His son JJ is a United States Diplomat and Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army; JJ resides in Virginia with his wife Sara and Jim's granddaughter Quinn. Jim looks forward to his daughters and granddaughter taking over the family ranching operations one day.

Conservation Update

[Subscribe to Statewide Action Alerts](#)

Your Florida Native Plant Society Membership

Name: <<Full Name>>

Membership #: <<FNPS Account>>

Email: <<Email Address>>

Membership Type: <<Membership Type>>

Member Since: <<Member Since>>

Expiration Date: <<Membership Expiration>>

[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](#)

May 2026 Opportunities to Learn about Native Plants

Get Outside and don't let your new plant babies cook in the heat!

With the heat rising fast, there are fewer organized events. So instead I encourage you to rise early and check on the native plants you bought at the plant sale. Establishment takes longer during a drought, especially if sunny means far from shade and water. Watering very early allows the water to soak in. Mulching helps retain water and cool the soil. Pay attention to nearby, established plants, as when they begin to suffer, you will want to check your new plants more often. The trick is to get the water to penetrate beyond the first few inches of soil and let the roots grow. Often a slow drip is best. Then you can slowly dial back the water from daily to every few days. **Do check on the watering restrictions in your area and seek out the rules for new plantings.**

The [Sarasota](#) and [Manatee County](#) Audubon Societies host many great events and classes. The UF/IFAS Extensions in [Sarasota](#) and [Manatee County](#) also have many events (search [Eventbrite](#)) to explore and learn about nature.

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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Florida Native Plant Society Serenoa Ch



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Fly Year Round



April 30, 2026 General Meeting - Butterfly Landscaping with JP Charisma

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



A photo from Serenoa Chapter's April plant sale at Sweet Bay Nursery. Photo courtesy Alison Bishop.

Serenoa Chapter Board Members

President: Elliot Prout ... volunteer wanted!

Vice President: Steve White

Treasurer: Caroline Root

Secretary: Sheryl Perkins

Chapter Representative: Trent Berry

Membership: Sandy Wachowski

Grants Program: Pam Callender

Field Trips Leader: Cathy Page

Conservation: Ryan Thompson

Social Media: Rachel DesRosier

Newsletter: Don Blackowiak

Technology: Alison Bishop

Website: Yiwen Chow

Past President: Tom Heitzman

At large: Liz Gandy

Historian: Open

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

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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