



Serenoa Notes

The Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

April, 2007

Yaupon Holly —Paul Wills

The yaupon holly is an elegant little yard shrub that can ignore the owner's most flagrant neglect and still look like a million dollars.

It is a compact, bright-leaved evergreen at home from dry sand ridges to salt water bays and creeks. It thrives in hot climates and shaded spots, provides the makings for a caffeine-laced beverage with a doubtful effect, and puts on a Christmastime show of shiny red berries clustered among the small green leaves of the females.

Furthermore, the native plant, *Ilex vomitoria*, now has been bred into many new forms including dwarfs and weeping types, for sale at many native nurseries for homeowner hedges, specimen plants, bonsai and topiary, as well as cover and food for wildlife. There's even a type bred especially for extremely heavy crops of berries.

Many kinds of birds—some of which are quail, blue jays, mocking birds, bluebirds, catbirds, cedar waxwings and towhees—are said to feed upon it in the winter,

Personally, I can't recall noticing much avian feasting in yaupons—perhaps sometimes a few jays—and in north Florida, where berry crops are much heavier than here, I have seen big crops of the berries turn black and dry up for lack of birds to harvest them.

Perhaps in more northerly states, where yaupon also flourishes, birds

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Monthly meetings at Selby Gardens:

Every third Monday. Doors open at 7:00 p.m, business meeting at 7:30, followed by program. Everyone welcome!

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Ann Seidenkranz points out air plants during the field trip to Sleeping Turtle Preserve.



Africanized Honey Bees –Nancy West

Africanized honey bees (AHB) have become established in Florida and are probably here to stay. AHB were in south and parts of central Florida in 2005 and in Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte and Glades in 2006.

While AHB is not a native plant issue, many of us garden and go on field trips where our chance of contacting AHB may be greater. The difference between the European Honey Bee (EHB) and AHB is mostly behavioral, not by appearance.

Public awareness is important, as the AHB defends its nest far more intensely than the EHB. The AHB will chase an enemy a mile or more and can sense vibrations from power equipment from 100 feet or more. Still, to keep things in perspective, your risks of dying from an AHB are very small unless you are allergic to bee stings. (Not as scary as the sensational movies make them out to be.)

The AHB nests in unexpected areas very different than the European honey bee—such as empty soda pop cans, mailboxes and bird houses etc.

Typically an EHB hive will swarm once every 12 months. However, the AHB may swarm as often as every six weeks and can produce a couple of separate swarms each time. This is important: since the AHB swarms more often, the likelihood of encountering an AHB swarm increases significantly. The swarming season in south Florida is from February to October.

What to do if you get attacked:

1. Run away quickly. Do not stop to help others. Call 911 to get help for others.
2. Pull up your shirt to protect your face and eyes.
3. Run until you reach shelter of a car or house. Do not jump in water, as they will wait until you come up for air.
4. The average healthy non-allergic person can tolerate being stung ten times/pound of body weight. (Therefore a 120 lb. person can survive 1200 stings!)

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IN682> “Keeping Africanized Honey Bees Out of Wildlife Nest Boxes” M.T Sanford

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG113> “African Honey Bees: What you Need to Know” M.T. Sanford & H. G. Hall

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Research/docs.htm?docid=11059&page=1> article on AHB

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Research/docs.htm?docid=11059&page=6> map of AHB spread

<http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/20.pdf>



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

Add your email address to the
FNPS eco-action alert list by send-
ing an email to info@fnps.org

On the Light Side

Did you hear about the race between two silkworms? It ended in a tie.

Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.

Year-Long Native Plant Gardening Guide

By JoJo Lindquist, Nancy West, Anne Honahan, & Tom Heitzman



Feb., Mar. Add more mulch if needed: 3–4" around trees and shrubs, about half that around others; hardly any around wildflowers that you want to reseed. Always keep mulch away from the base of plants.

Prune back shrubs and trees to reduce or contain their size. Please don't shear them like a box or a giant meatball! Never prune more than 25% of the plant at one time. Beautyberry and firebush can be pruned severely to keep them more compact. Wait until after flowers fade to prune those plants that bloom in early spring.

Give a spring feeding of an organic, slow release fertilizer with secondary and trace elements to any plants that might need it—young plants or any mature plants that might look weak.

Native trees and shrubs really don't need any fertilizer after about three years of age. But weather and circumstances vary, so use your own judgment.

Plant spring wildflowers: gaillardia, black-eyed susans, coreopsis, beach sunflowers, and scarlet sage. (Fall flowers need to be planted before the hot summers—goldenrods, asters, and liatris—either now or in April/May).

Supplemental-water newly planted trees and shrubs while we are in our dry season.

April, May Renew, trim, and tidy up perennials, wildflowers, and shrubs if they are looking straggly; add a little "goose" of fertilizer if they need it.

(Grass Slaves—back to weekly mowing of turf grasses—you poor things!)

Good time to start cuttings for plants you'd like to add to your yard or share with other native plant enthusiasts at our monthly meetings. Grow them over the summer, and then dazzle everyone in September!

Start pruning and/or thinning large trees and shrubs in anticipation of hurricane season. Have larger trees pruned by a qualified arborist. Don't over-prune! (Ask at the Extension Service for ENH 1022 or download <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP276> (*Pruning Shade Trees in Landscapes: A Plan for Training Shade Trees*) and/or Cir853 <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG087> (*Pruning Landscape Trees and Shrubs*).

June, July Rainy season has arrived! (*Lawn owners will now begin the never-ending lawn pest battle, as well as adding yet more fertilizer!*) The rest of us will cast an occasional eye over our thriving empire to make sure things are going well, and then head to the beach.

Double check new plants in low-lying areas—now is when "Right Plant, Right Place" will come back to bite you if you've ignored this adage!

Re-check trees for limbs that might snap or trunks that might split

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during a hurricane. Tall shrubs need pruning and shaping to reduce possible damage from high winds. (Don't "meatball"!)

Aug. Sept. Fertilize young plants that need an extra boost. Late August and September is the second big growth spurt in the year, and the ground has been leached by heavy rains.

Collect wildflower seeds this month and next month to sow in other areas in your yard, or to share.

(Lawn slaves will be applying yet another complete slow release application of fertilizer in September.)

Now is a good time to put in new plants—they'll have time to establish before the colder weather. Perhaps consider eliminating some of your lawn by extending or adding beds.

Selectively prune as needed—never more than 25%. Do not prune later, as pruning encourages new growth which will not have time to harden off in the coming cold weather. Don't prune fall fruiting shrubs—the critters want the berries! Remember to take cuttings! (See Apr/May)

Renew mulch as needed (see Feb/Mar).

As the summer rains stop, be sure to water shrubs planted within the last 2–3 years and trees. *(If you haven't rid yourself of your lawn as yet, consider training it to better tolerate drought by only watering when it shows signs of stress, usually ½" to ¾" no more than once a week.)*

Oct. Rainy season is over, so adjust your watering schedule.

Nov. If your yard has been damaged by a storm, clean and repair any damage as soon as possible. Broken, damaged limbs are a danger, as well as invite disease & pests. An excellent guide, "Assessing Damage and Restoring Trees After a Hurricane," is available at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/EP/EP29100.pdf>. Or call your Extension Office and ask for Pub ENH1036.

If shade and ornamental trees need replacing, consider wind resistant native varieties. A comprehensive list is available in the publication cited above, although all listed are not native, so do your research.

Most of these trees, and many more great natives, can be found at our annual plant sale held in October.

Dec. Jan. This is a good time to plant native trees and shrubs as the plants are dormant and the weather is cool, so there is less stress on the new plants. Since it is cooler and the days are shorter, less watering should be required except by newly planted plants.

Prune native grasses to about 2" from the ground (not including dune grasses), as they're looking pretty nasty by now anyway. Nature would normally burn them every 2–5 years.

Organic Mulch conserves water, discourages weeds, moderates temperatures and contributes some nutrients. Pine needles and oak leaves may help acidify the soil. If you're lucky, they're free, they just drop from your trees! If you must purchase mulch, please do not contribute to the destruction of our Cypress Swamps. Please consider using melaleuca mulch. It is more expensive, but is a proven superior product and it is an exotic invasive tree.

REFERENCES:

JoJo Lindquist (past Serenoa Notes newsletters)

Various IFAS publications

Florida Gardening Magazine: thanks to Tom MacCubbin and Gene Joyner

Notes from the Yard –Corey Opsis

Is it any coincidence that the first Simpson Stopper bloom appeared on March 21st? I think not. White starburst flowers that become orange-red berries favored by birds and squirrels and raccoons, this plant never fails to entertain.

Here are some other current bloomers to consider for your yard:

Blue-eyed grass – small bluish-purple blooms amidst low growing grass.

If only the whole yard was covered with this.

Verbena – both Beach and Tampa are delighting us with their light purple clusters.

Spiderwort – this deep violet color is unlike any other. Mixes well with Wild Coffee, Rouge Plant and Scorpion's Tail.

Red Sage the plant that keeps on giving. You never know where it will show up in the yard. Easy to grow.

Blanket Flower – showy fiery red centers with yellow tips. Another one that could pop up unexpectedly. Don't you love free plants?

Beach Sunflower – blooms year round. Provides color in winter when most others are taking a rest. Hardy, wonderful ground cover.

Rosinweed – don't let the name or the leaves fool you. This is an exceptionally cool plant that grows tall and then produces a fantastic display of yellow flowers.

Lyre-leaf Sage - interesting variegated leaves. Pale purple flowers bloom up along the stalk. Makes an interesting combination with Gaura.

Gaura – the most overlooked plant in our home wildflower gardens. Long spikes of green topped with delicate pink flowers. Will produce lots and lots and lots of little seedlings.

So, Spring is here. Earth Day Plant Sale at Felt's Preserve is just around the corner. Make a bee or butterfly happy. Plant some fabulous native wildflowers!



Red Sage



Blanket Flower



Beach Sunflower

Spring Happenings

The cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*) and coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) are blooming just in time for the northern returning hummingbirds. Occasionally, I get lucky and see one out of my kitchen window on my vine-covered fence.

The robins came and stripped my beautyberries (*Callicarpa americana*) in my front yard. The local mockingbird, catbird, and brown thrasher eat the back yard beautyberry berries, but they ignore the plants in the front yard, that has no protective cover nearby. This year the robins also ate the berries off my white stopper (*Eugenia axillaris*).

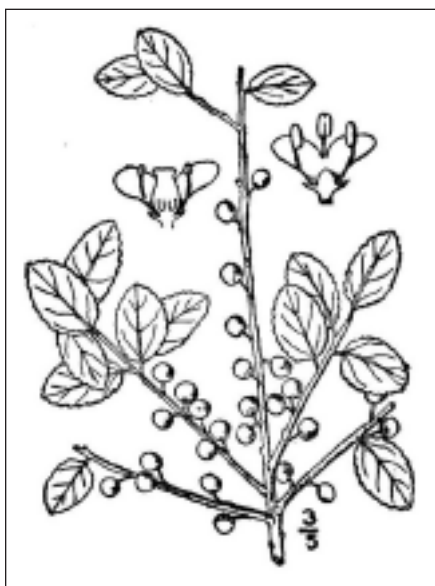
Unfortunately, I am also seeing a

lot of Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) seedlings coming up where the robins passed the seeds.

I also was lucky to see a Malachite butterfly nectaring on my Chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia*). It is only the second time I have seen one in my yard!



USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Photograph © Larry Allain



USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. Illustrated flora of the northern states and Canada. Vol. 2:487

are forced to feed on them more than here, where winter food is likely to be more plentiful.

The yaupon (usually pronounced yo' pon from a Catawaba Indian name)) is one of the few native plants, and the only U.S.holly, known to have caffeine in leaves and stems. Because of this, several Southeastern tribes parched the young leaves and brewed a hot tea that European explorers called the Black Drink. In men-only drinking parties, the Indians consumed huge quantities of the hot liquid and up-chucked freely, leading to the inelegant second name for this classy plant. The internal cleansing ceremony was thought by these Native Americans to prepare them for some important gathering or hunting trip.

Modern observers have pointed out that except for the caffeine which we also get in coffee without sickness, there is nothing in the Black Drink to account for vomiting. Probably imbibing an equally huge quantity of hot water would accomplish the same thing, especially if it was fully expected.

Having tried Black Drink myself, I don't look for much from it as a beverage. My brew was sufficiently black and full of buzz, but bitter as gall. Perhaps I couldn't stand to drink enough or I didn't expect anything much to happen. Nothing much did; I didn't even feel nauseated.

A closely related holly that is native to the South American country of Paraguay and cultivated elsewhere is the source of a rejuvenating tonic. Made from leaves of *Ilex Paraguayensis*, the drink is called *Yerba Maté* and the powdered leaves may be bought south of the border and sometimes in specialty stores in the U.S. The tea is served in many ways and flavors, and its caffeine and alkaloids certainly can cause a buzz.

Elaborate ceremony sometimes goes with *Yerba Maté*, including serving it in fancy gourds and drinking it through a silver tube called a bombilla. Miraculous cures of illnesses, including dementia, are also claimed for it. From my limited experience, I don't see much hope of Black Drink ever matching *Yerba Maté* in popularity. But maybe it needs a comparable ceremony. A few miraculous "cures" of Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease wouldn't hurt its reputation either.

Conference Update

We are gathering ideas for the 2008 conference at the Manatee Convention & Civic Center. Here is a list of things you can contribute as an individual member. We need your ideas! Here are three simple ways you can help. Contact karen@aroundbend.com with:

1. Speaker and session ideas. Have you seen someone that is a really great speaker—entertaining and informative? Let us know.
2. Vendor possibilities. Do you know of a good herbal remedy maker? A fiber artist? Craftsman? Let's make the market a fun place to shop.
3. Silent Auction contributions. Who has a product of value to a native plant person? Art, tools, books, tour certificates—let us know who you know that might have something to share. And don't forget to register for the 2007 Conference in Gainesville April 19-22 at www.fnps.org.

Volunteer Opportunities

1. Anytime: Photographic slide scanning. Dorothea Smith has donated some wonderful slides of native plants and landscapes taken by her husband, Gordon. We would like to have many of these slides scanned onto a CD or DVD, so we could use them in our publications or talks. If you have the time and a scanner, we would love to have these slide scanned. Contact Nancy, 748-1463.
2. April 14, Saturday: Earth Day Celebrations and PLANT SALE at Felt's Audubon Preserve, 8 A.M. – 3 P.M. Manatee County. Volunteers to help sell plants and hand out literature at our Serenoa booth.
<http://www.manateeaudubon.org/>
3. April 22, Sunday: Earth Day Celebrations at Oscar Scherer State Park, 9 A.M. (set up) – 3 P.M. Sarasota County, volunteers need to staff our Serenoa Booth, No plant sale this year. Exhibits, photography contest, food, live music.
<http://www.floridastateparks.org/oscarscherer/Events.cfm>
4. Anytime: Articles for the newsletter. If you have an interest in writing an article (poems, plant profiles, gardening or landscaping ideas etc.) for our chapter newsletter, please email Nancy West at ncywest@mac.com

Notes on Serenoa Chapter Field Trips

Please check our website, www.fnps.org for maps, changes, and more information: Look under chapters and then use the drop-down menu to Serenoa. We invite you to bring a bag lunch, trail snacks and water. We usually picnic after our hike, depending on its length. Directions will be given as each of the trip dates approaches. If you cannot attend the prior general meeting, please contact Brooks or Nancy Armstrong at 863-993-3966, 863-558-1588, or pinelilywind@yahoo for directions and carpool information.

Join now! Come to the meetings and field trips! Learn about conservation, restoration of native habitat, and landscaping with native plants.

Florida Native Plant Society Membership benefits: *Serenoa Notes* quarterly newsletter • Member discounts at events • 1 year subscription to *The Palmetto*, a quarterly magazine • *Sabal Minor* bi-monthly newsletter

FNPS Membership Enrollment

Serenoa Chapter Newsletter

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Credit card payments can be faxed to 815-361-9166, or mail this form to: FNPS P.O. Box 278 Melbourne, FL 32902-0000

Chapter Programs and Field Trips see further notes on page 7

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!

Carpool Meeting Points: BRADENTON: Twelve Oaks Plaza, Bank of America building, on SR 70, ¼ mile west of I-75. SARASOTA: Durango's Steakhouse, in the mall on the NE corner of Fruitville Road & Honore Avenue.

- April 14 Earth Day Celebration, Manatee County.** Time: 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. Location: Audubon Felt's Preserve, Palmetto. Come join us for all the festivities. Our spring plant sale will be held here on this day only. There will also be walking tours, speakers, wildlife rehabilitators and environmental displays. All kinds of volunteers needed.
- 16 General Meeting Jeff Castor—Landscaping Florida's Highways and Roadsides.** Jeff Castor, Landscape Architect with FDOT Jeff Castor will describe the state's landscape policy for its highways and roadsides. Come hear how native plants are being utilized in our state highways.
- 19-22 Annual FNPS State Conference, Gainesville.** Hosted this year by the Payne's Prairie Chapter, this is the native plant event of the year. You can attend for one day or for the whole four days. Check out information and an application at www.fnps.org.
- 21 Earth Day Celebration, Sarasota County.** Time: 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. Location: Oscar Scherer State Park. Earth Day with music, environmental displays, wildlife, food and fun. No FNPS plant sale here this year because all our native plant growers will be at the conference. Volunteers needed to manage a booth.
- May 21 General Meeting Elizabeth Jensen—The Plants of Don Pedro Island in their Natural Communities: An Ecological Perspective.** Elizabeth Jensen is with our state park system and she will speak to us regarding her area of responsibility, which is coastal Charlotte Harbor Estuary. Charlotte Harbor Estuary is possibly the largest and most pristine estuary system remaining in Florida.
- 26 9 A.M. Field Trip—Charlotte Harbor Estuary, Don Pedro Island.** *Drive time from carpools:* 1–1.5 hours, to be more specifically determined. *Duration on site:* 2–3 hours. *Difficulty:* moderate to easy. May program speaker Elizabeth Jensen will lead us to see beach dune, coastal grassland, coastal strand, and maritime hammock as we walk the path down the center of the island. We hope to get a group rate cost for the ferry to take us



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