



Plant Native Day Report, Paddle Across Myakka, Earth Day Activity and April Activities plus more

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## Message from the President - Lois Cantwell

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Member Grown Native Plant Sales

### Plant Native Day

To all who participated in our annual outreach program, "Plant Native" Day, a big Thank You!! Whether you helped with setting up the tent; schlepped chairs, tables and various belongings; served refreshments; donated baked goods or beverages; acted as greeters; sold plants and books; worked the parking scene; participated in planning committees; posted fliers, and whatever else that made the whole thing possible, it was a great success. And the weather was perfect, so a big thanks to Ma Nature for that!

As usual, Laurel Schiller of Florida Native Plants Nursery was full of information and enthusiasm about the topic, which was to define a planting zone out away from the foundation of your home, using common sense and fire-wise principles.



Monarch Activity at the Peace River Butterfly Society Booth



Avid listeners to Laurel Schiller Presentation



Rick Christman and Al Squires.

Her presentation was followed by Rick Christman, Forest Area Supervisor with the Florida Forest Service. He spoke and showed a couple of videos about the concept of "Fire-wise Communities" and how they can benefit the area.

**This was a very timely workshop considering that there has been a stark lack of rain in Florida. Our ecosystems are becoming more fragile, and the ever-present threat of wildfires becomes more relevant to the safety of our homes.**

### March 2017 Meeting Highlights

Mary Lundeberg's fabulous photographs and presentation at our last membership meeting served to illustrate how wildlife is connected among members of various species, and why we must make every effort to preserve their habitats. Many species in three major categories were described using beautiful depictions captured through her camera lens. Umbrella species like the Florida Panther, key indicator species such as the Roseate Spoonbill and our treasured keystone species, the Gopher Tortoise, were among many others that were individually described as to habits and habitat. Our group of 50-plus was thoroughly captivated!

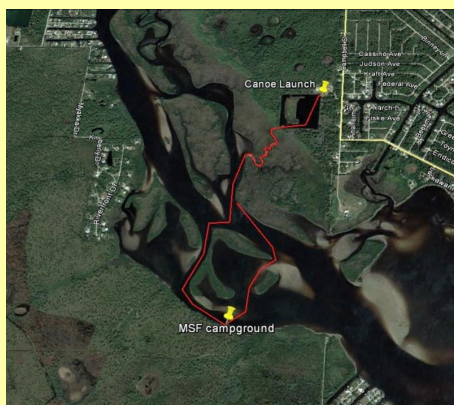
### In Memorium

On a sad note, we recently learned that one of our members, Ed Baker, has passed away. He and his wife Cheryl joined our Chapter in December of 1999. Ed led walks at Lemon Bay Park for many years. He and Cheryl monitored the nesting eagles there for Audubon and were active with the Venice Area Audubon and other organizations in the community. To honor his life and memory, there will be an informal gathering for Ed at Lemon Bay Park on Saturday, April 8th at 2 PM.





## A Paddle Across the Myakka Estuary to an Explosion of Flowers



Allain Hale from the Sierra Club organized an exploratory paddling trip for four of us across the Myakka River from Campbell Rd in North Port to the riverside campground in Myakka State Forest. This was an adventurous loop of about 3.5 miles starting in a large quarry, continuing down a narrow creek with extensive sand bars, and across a broad tidal river with strong NW winds blowing.

On landing at the campground on the western bank of the river, we gladly left our cramped seats in kayaks and walked through pine flatwoods within Myakka State Forest, last burned in November, 2016. Such burning sometimes stimulates the growth of flowers and I have in the past observed thousands of pink spiderworts blooming here after a burn. In this case however we found only one spiderwort, but there were large numbers of blackroot, Florida or Feay's milkweed and rose rush in bloom. Even though the rarely



Myakka R paddlers look for wildflowers in burned area



Blackroot tubers at MS Forest Campground.



Milkweed Florida Asclepias feayi at MS Forest campground area recently burned

seen native milkweeds were "lush," their leaves are narrow and the potential food for monarch caterpillars is minimal. This explains why local butterfly enthusiasts who grow monarch caterpillars have to use exotic Mexican and giant milkweeds for food. The tubers of blackroot were indeed dark colored, and these roots which are a food storage organ for the plants, have been used for various medicinal purposes.



Coontie lush regrowth after fire MSF campground

Fire stimulated bright green re-growth in coontie and the palmettos were in full bloom. One of several butterfly species we observed was a tiny but beautiful Ceraunus blue. The eye spot on the rear of the hind wing likely serves to divert the attack of predators away from the real head.

The explosion of flowers we observed about three months after a fire in this area was remarkable and it is worth looking in recently burned areas of flatwoods over time to observe this spectacular but ephemeral phenomenon. I have also seen it occur along the Gordon Smith Trail, which can be accessed by driving into the forest from River Rd and walking to the trail head.

Bill Dunson  
Englewood  
<http://lemonbayconservancy.org/news-blog/nature-notes-by-bill-dunson/>



Blue Ceraunus butterfly MSForest near campground

## "Into the Woods - Earth Day Walk"

On Earth Day April 22 at 10 am there will be a 1.5 hour free public walk sponsored by The Friends of Little Salt Spring on the newly planned "virtual nature trail" on the North Port School Board Property just west of the Heron Creek Middle School. This is south of W. Price Blvd (6207) just west of the Myakkahatchee Creek bridge. We



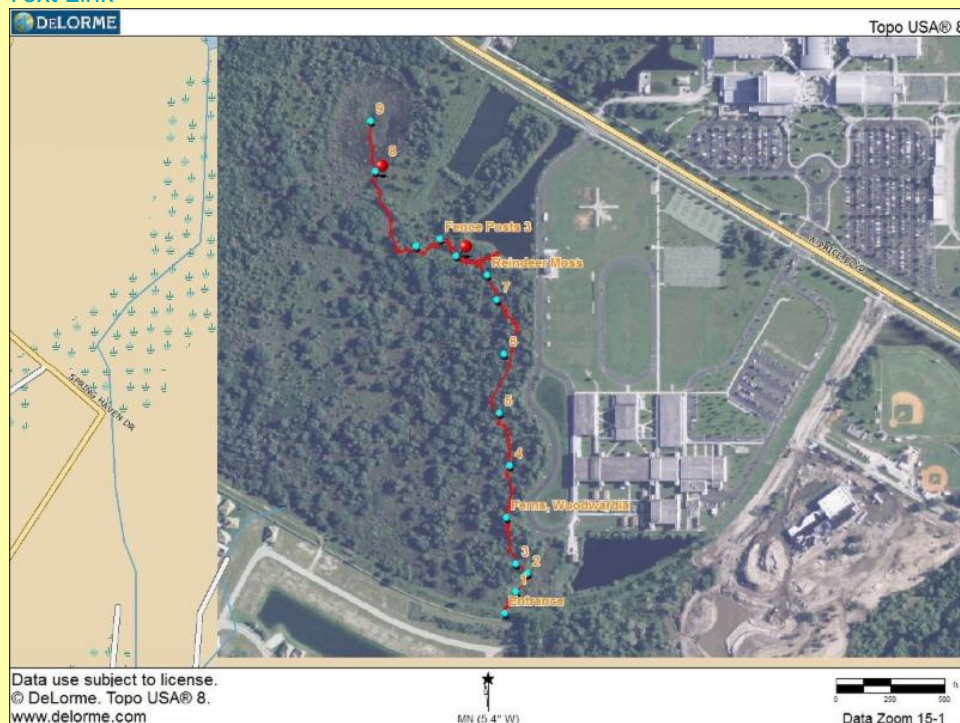
will meet at the western end of the parking lot of the Morgan Center. There will be an initial brief discussion of the concepts involved so that some who may not be able to hike in the woods without a trail can appreciate what is being proposed. Members of the FL Native Plant Society (Mangrove Chapter) designed a trail and made up a list of plants, but no actual trail has been constructed. Dr. Bill Dunson (Emeritus Prof. of Biology, Penn State University) will lead a discussion of the ecological interpretation of changes that have occurred in the forest since 1948. As we walk in the forest towards a large natural wetland just across the boundary with the Univ. of Miami owned Little Salt Spring property, we will look for evidence of differences between the former agricultural land on the left/west and the long term forested area on the right/east. The considerable potential for this area to be used as an educational laboratory for students of all ages will be discussed.

The footing is a bit uneven but the walking is not difficult if you can keep your balance on somewhat rough ground. Aside from a few briars there are no significant hazards that we have seen.

Come and enjoy an unusual opportunity to examine the changes that have occurred over the past 68 years in this natural laboratory.

Bill Dunson

[Text Link](#)



## What's Up in My Yard this Spring By Lois Cantwell



Dune Sunflower



Strigillosa Mimosa

March 20th marked the Vernal Equinox, so we are officially into spring! What's blooming in my yard also acts as harbingers of spring. Although my Beach Dune Sunflowers have been sparsely blooming throughout the fall and winter, they are especially plentiful now, comingling with Sunshine Mimosa, lavender Verbenas, red Tropical Sage, and pink spikes of Dotted Horsemint in my wildflower bed.



Verbena

They bask in the sun in this eastern exposure, which is the only sunny spot in the yard that affords proliferation of wildflowers. Trouble is, I have to keep them "contained" by shearing the ones that overflow the border that is shared with my neighbor's grass. Otherwise, I would let them just take off and be wild. To borrow a phrase from a popular bumper sticker, my wildflowers kick his grass!

On the north side of the house my berm does get some sun exposure,





Necklace Pod



Coral Honeysuckle



Starry Rosinweed



Blue Curls

especially when it gets higher in the sky. A small group of Tickseed, Tropical Sage, Blue Mistflower, Painted Leaf, Spiderwort, and Mimosa has formed a community in the sunniest spot. They have found their niche under the Necklace Pod, which has sparse foliage. A sprout of Scorpiontail popped up in the mix, near the outer edge. I am afraid that if it is allowed to gain its full height it will overshadow the rest of the population. If I don't remove it soon, it will make trouble while I am gone for the summer. Those stinkers can reach a height of 3 to 4 feet if left to their own devices. I think it will end up in the next plant sale.

Walking farther along the northern berm, I see Coral Honeysuckle not only in bloom, but climbing progressively up a trellis into a large Sea Grape. Beyond that is a jumbled mix of Starry Rosinweed, Seaside Goldenrod, Tropical Sage, Spiderwort, Wild Plumbago, Bushy Aster, Blue Curls, Mimosa, Painted Leaf and other sprouts of things that simply appear out of nowhere. The Cocoplum that towers over this area contributes loads of sprouts to the mix. They have very long roots that make them difficult to transfer into pots, so many just get weeded. The Sweet Acacia next to it drops tons of pods, but I never see any sprouts. There is likely too much density for them to take root. Perhaps I should plant them in pots to see if they are viable--just one of many little "projects" that one ponders while strolling about the yard. So many things, so little time.

Remember that the month of April will be busy with both Earth Day (22nd) and National Arbor Day (28th) celebrations, so do your part to join in the festivities! Our April meeting is our last one of the season with the option of purchasing plants from Restless



Cocoplum

Natives, so make plans to stock up.  
Buy early and plant lots!

## Volunteer Opportunities and Upcoming Activities

### April Activities

**Apr 7 (Friday):** BOD Meeting, Cedar Point Environmental Park, 2:30 PM. Members are always welcome to attend.

**April 6-7** Bok Tower Gardens and Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden organize the state-wide Rare Plant Task Force Meeting. For more information click on the link. [Rare Plant Task Force Meeting](#)

**April 8, 2017** Free Mini Seminars and Guidance from Experienced Native Plant Gardeners sponsored by the Pinellas Chapter of the FNPS. For more information click on the link. [Native Plant Pollinator Palooza](#)

**Apr 11 (Tuesday):** Membership Meeting, 7:00 PM,  
On April 11, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. Lemon Bay Park, 570 Bay Park Blvd. Englewood, Florida the Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society will welcome Tom Becker of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Charlotte County.

Tom is currently the Horticulture Assistant for the Florida-Friendly Landscaping Programs at the University of Florida/IFAS Charlotte County Extension and serves as a Florida-Friendly Yards & Neighborhoods Education/Training Specialist. He is the primary coordinator of that program.

While an undergraduate at Penn State, Tom studied Crop Science and Community Education and served afterward as the Agriculture/Horticulture Extension Agent for the Penn State Cooperative Extension of York County. He was the designated Florida Yard and Neighborhoods Builder & Developer State Coordinator at the University of Florida, and the Extension Agent for the Lee County University of Florida Extension.

His subject on the evening of April 11 will be "Curbside Appeal of Native Plants" with discussion of the wildflowers, butterfly plants, shrubs, and trees that will showcase our yards and enhance the environment. The presentation will include discussion of the nine principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ and how to transform our yards into "a beautiful oasis" to be enjoyed by people and wildlife. The evening promises to be an informative one with plenty of time for comments and questions.

To learn more about Florida Yards and Neighborhoods, visit <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

**Apr 22, (Saturday):** A Walk in the Woods: Earth Day Walk, 10:00 AM, Walkabout, sponsored by The Friends of Little Salt Spring, This is a free 1.5 hour walk open to the public on the newly planned "virtual nature trail" on the North Port School Board Property just west of the Heron Creek Middle School. Several Mangrove Chapter members have participated in plant surveys and trail "design" (no actual trail has been constructed) in partnership with FLSS. The property is south of W. Price Blvd (6207), just west of the Myakkahatchee Creek bridge. Meet Bill



Dunson at the western end of the parking lot of the Morgan Center. Discussion will include ecological interpretation of changes occurring in the forest since 1948, related to former agricultural activity as compared with the existing natural areas. The considerable potential for this area to be used as an educational laboratory for students of all ages will also be discussed. For further information and directions contact Bill Dunson ([wdunson@comcast.net](mailto:wdunson@comcast.net) or 276-233-6364 (cell and text).

**Apr 27/28 (Thurs/Fri):** Plant Survey at Cedar Point Environmental Park, 9:00 AM. If you would like to lend a hand, contact either Bobbi Rodgers (941-475-0769) or Al Squires (941-769-3633). We team up and use check-lists to ID what is blooming and/or fruiting each month for an ongoing statistical database (phenology).

**Apr 29 (Saturday):** Field Trip, 9:00 AM: Shamrock Park, 3900 Shamrock Dr.  
The Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society invites the public to join in a nature walk April 29, 2017 at Shamrock Park, 3900 Shamrock Drive in Venice, Florida.

Shamrock Park encompasses some of the last remaining scrub habitat in the coastal area of Sarasota County. The park supports populations of Florida scrub jay and gopher tortoise. It includes a 1.2 mile paved multi-use trail that winds through the central portion of the park. The park trail system connects to the Venetian Waterway Trail, which further connects to the 10.6 mile Legacy Trail. This network of trails offers park visitors the opportunity to walk, bike or roller blade from Shamrock Park to downtown Venice, the historic train station, Caspersen Beach, and north to Sarasota with several parks to visit along the way. Join us on a leisurely exploration of this beautiful area. For more information you may contact Al Squires at 941-769-3633 or email him at [ahsquires@embarqmail.com](mailto:ahsquires@embarqmail.com).  
**DIRECTIONS:** Drive north on Rt 776 to US 41. Take US 41 to Shamrock Dr. Turn left directly onto Shamrock Dr, then right into the park.

## Volunteer Opportunities & Things To Do

"Early" Earth Day Celebration, April 1st, Saturday, 8 AM to Noon, at Wildflower Preserve. This free event is co-sponsored by Lemon Bay Conservancy, UF/IFAS Extension/Florida Master Gardeners, and Mangrove Chapter, FNPS. We will need people to HELP with the usual: At 7:30 AM, set-up tent, tables, display, literature, plants; stay with the booth to talk with visitors and provide information. Contact 697-2756, [birderlois@hotmail.com](mailto:birderlois@hotmail.com). Activities will include guided nature walks, a hands-on planting demonstration, a native plant give-away, and a rain barrel installation demo. Susy is leading a birding walk (8:00 AM). Lois will be demonstrating proper technique for planting a tree (9:00 AM), following the guidelines in one of Laurel Schiller's handouts. Al Squires will give a presentation on "Identifying Exotic Invasive Plants" (10:00 AM). Lois is also donating an un-used rain barrel for the IFAS installation demonstration (10:30 AM).

Florida Lighthouse Day, April 8th, Saturday, 10 AM to 4 PM, Gasparilla Island State Park. Sponsored by the Barrier Island Parks Society. Al Squires will be leading 2 trail hikes at 11 AM and 2 PM on a new beach trail. If anyone is interested in setting up and manning our booth, the tent, tables, display and literature will be there with Al. Those interested in volunteering to do so, contact Al, [ahsquires@embarqmail.com](mailto:ahsquires@embarqmail.com) or call him at 941-769-3633. Otherwise, we will be booth-less. For more information about the activities at this event or about BIPS, go to [www.barrierislandparkssociety.org](http://www.barrierislandparkssociety.org), call 941-964-0060 or contact Jennifer Summers at [jsummersbips@gmail.com](mailto:jsummersbips@gmail.com).

Community Art & Garage Sale Fundraiser Event, April 1st, Saturday, 8 AM-3 PM, sponsored by North Port Friends of Wildlife and Avian Research & Conservation Institute (ARCI), at the Olde World Restaurant Parking Lot. Includes a sale of art work and glass art by talented local artists, along with donated garage sale items. Live saxophone music by Leslie DaCosta from 11 AM to 2 PM. Funds raised will enable ARCI to place a small transmitter onto a swallow-tailed kite that nests in the Carlton Reserve. This will enable ARCI to understand the kite's 10,000 mile round trip annual migrations, thus aiding scientists to learn what areas need protecting. This tracking effort helps provide insight into conservation initiatives.  
To learn more about the event, or if you wish to donate garage sale items, contact Edie Driest at 941-0876-3720, or visit [www.northportfriendsofwildlife.org](http://www.northportfriendsofwildlife.org) or <http://arcinst.org/>

## Welcome to New Members

Please Welcome our new members:  
Edith Norby, Osprey  
Stephanie & Glenn Thornton, Englewood.



### What's Blooming in the Garden

What's Blooming in the Garden

Elderberry, American elder (*Sambucus nigra* subsp. *canadensis*)

Elderberry is a long-lived perennial that is a medium high shrub reaching 10-15 feet or a tree reaching up to 30 feet. It prefers sunny moist location but is adaptable to drier conditions.

The one in the Demonstration Garden is high and dry. The branches are soft and arching. The white flowers can appear all year around but mostly in midsummer. Elderberry can sucker and become a thicket but is easily trimmed, it can take a heavy pruning. It is easily adaptable to acid to alkaline soils. All parts of the plant are toxic but if cooked the fruit can be eaten by humans. That is why you see elderberry wine, jams or jellies but no fresh fruit. Although birds and wildlife do not have a problem.

Fruits popular with birds. Flowers attract many pollinators.

Mangrove Chapter Florida Native Plant Society

<http://mangrove.fnpschapters.org/>

Mangrove Chapter  
Website

STAY CONNECTED

