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

Message from the President

We certainly had a marvelous time at our last meeting, having been both educated and entertained by our presenters on the subject of landscaping with native plants. Charlie and Jayne took us through the process of starting with a blank palette, taking us around the yard, section by section to show the progress as more plants were added. Similarly, Dave demonstrated how he and Nancy developed their double lot, project by project and it is still a work in progress. The photos that accompanied the talk were testament to the transition that took place in both yards.

More than just a few of our 48 attendees were inspired to return to their yards and plant, plant, plant, me included. I am doing a "plant-over" in a section of my yard that started out as a wildflower garden, and morphed over time into a rather shady mix of trees and shrubs. Some of those disappeared with the arrival of a new neighbor, 12 species no less. Now that the berm has been "thinned out", I decided to selectively prune the rest to let in more light and add back some perennials. If you are dealt lemons, you make lemonade!

Our next meeting will be a special occasion, not only since it falls on February 14th which is St. Valentine's Day, but it is also Denny's 89th birthday, so it will be something like a party! There will be cake, and you are welcome to bring "something extra" to contribute to the festivities. We might possibly be having our next meeting in the "big room", another cause for celebration.

During the third week of January, I discovered on the FNPS website that the Jan 18th "Wednesday's Wildflower" was submitted by John Holyland, one of our members and an excellent photographer. The subject is Sweet Acacia. Check it out on the home page, fnps.org.

February Activities

Feb 3 (Friday): BOD Meeting, Cedar Point Environmental Park, 2:30 PM. Members are always welcome to attend.

Feb 14 (Tuesday): Membership Meeting, 7:00 PM, Speaker Program "A Walk...", presented by Denny Girard and Al Squires. Denny's poem (Walk), which is the first entry in his 2009 book "Branches" will be recited and illustrated with photos. This will be followed by Al's presentation wherein he will review a plant list from a field trip at Jelks Preserve about 10 years back, with photos of many of the native plants seen there. If you joined us for our January field trip at Jelks, it will be interesting to see what has changed. Join us at 6:15 for our open door social time, followed by a brief business meeting prior to the speaker program.

Feb 18 (Saturday): Wildflower Preserve Open House, 8 AM-1:30 PM, 3120 Gasparilla Pines Boulevard, Englewood 34224. Volunteer Opportunity! Starting at 7:30 AM, tent, display board, handouts and plants need to be in place by 8:15. Help with meeting & greeting, selling plants and handing out literature is needed. Take down begins at 1:30 PM. Sign up at our Feb 14th meeting or contact Lois or Bobbi. We will be sharing booth space with CHEC.

Feb 23/24 (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).

Feb 25 (Saturday): Field Trip, 9:00 AM: Caloosahatchee Regional Park 19130 N. River Rd. Alva 33920, Parking Lot 2 (Rt. 78). For more information, contact Al Squires (941-769-3633 or ahsquires@embarqmail.com).

Lemon Bay Conservancy-sponsored Outings: Led by Bill Dunson (276-233-6364 cell or text, or email wdunson@comcast.net). Or visit www.lemonbayconservancy.org.

Feb 7 (Tuesday), 9-11 AM: Backyard Wildlife Gardening, Lemon Bay Park, 570 Bay Park

Blvd, Englewood. An initial power-point presentation followed by a hike outside to talk about

specific plants you might want to plant in your yard to attract wildlife.

Feb 16 (Thursday), 9-11 AM: Tidal Marsh and Riverine Ecology, Myakka Islands Point

Preserve, 1289 Campbell St, North Port/Port Charlotte 33953. This unique nature preserve right

on the Myakka River is remarkable for its diversity of life.

Feb 23 (Thursday), 9-11 AM: Pine Flatwoods Ecology along the Gordon Smith Trail,

Myakka State Forest, 2000 S River Rd, Englewood 34223. In this wild country right in N

Port/Englewood, you will identify plants and animals and discuss the unusual conditions that

support the specialized biota that live here. Dr. Jim Brower, a retired

paleontologist and plant guru from Syracuse University will be assisting on this walk.

Boat Trips sponsored by CHEC: These include hikes on barrier islands led by Dr. Bill Dunson.

Reserve with Captiva Cruises (239-472-5100). Fee \$25. Meet at Cape Haze Marina, 6950 Placida Rd, Englewood.

Feb 10 (Friday), 9 AM-12 Noon: Stump Pass Cruise. Voyage to Stump Pass and land on the southern shore of Knight Island. Hike to gulf-side lagoon and identify animals and plants and discuss the upcoming dredging.

Feb 27 (Monday), 9 AM-12 Noon: Thornton Key Cruise. Voyage to remote Thornton Key Preserve and hike the nature trail. Identify plants and animals and discuss their ecological roles.

CHEC (Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center) Walks

This is a longer list of walks and wading trips, so please visit www.checflorida.org for details.

The February list has scheduled nature walks led by CHEC naturalists, many of whom are our own Mangrove Chapter members.

[Feb CHEC Trail Walks](#)

[Wildflower Preserve Open House](#)

Mangrove Chapter Volunteer Hours Summary for 2016 (by Lois Cantwell)

For various reasons, I found myself compiling our chapter's volunteer hours at the end of 2016 (as opposed to turning them in each month), so a lot of hours were spent in the process. The bottom line is that our Chapter accrued a total of 3203 hours doing things like attending meetings, field trips, managing ourselves, educational outreach, habitat restoration, native landscaping and plant sales.



Members spend 14% of our hours leading field trips.



Members devote 15% of our hours maintaining the demonstration garden

Of the total hours, 2026 (63%) were contributed by your Board of Directors, our general membership contributing 1177 (37%). Generally, members spent 52% of their time in meeting attendance and board members spent 51% of their time dedicated to administrative activities. Other activities occupying most of the group's time were in the categories of education/outreach, field trips, habitat restoration and native landscaping, split 65% to 35% between board members and membership. Also note that we currently have 87 memberships representing 113 people in our Chapter, 11 of them are serving on the Board (4 executive officers, 7 committee chairs). That about sums it up.

Poetry Corner:

Walk

I walk along these trails each day
and note the sights along the way.
Each walk becomes another thrill,
through wet marsh and up sandy hill.

Some paths are known of old.

Other trails new secrets hold.

My eyes see many different things
the world of nature brings.

I see spiders and toads along the way.
There are butterflies, and squirrels at play.
I smile at birds and lizards that fly and creep,
and other creatures that croak and peep.

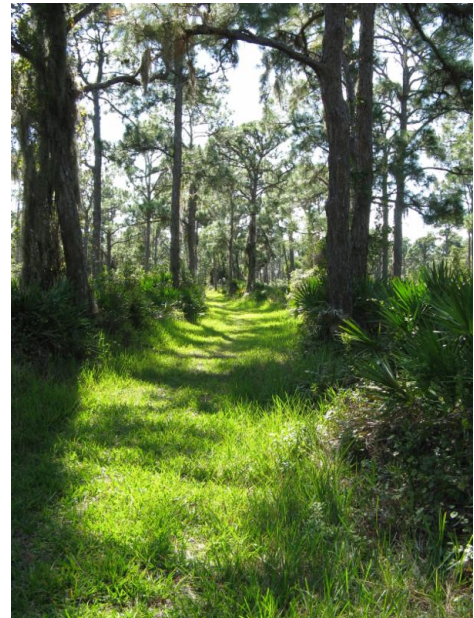
Mainly, though, plants take my eye;
the shrubs and trees against the sky,
and tiny sprouts that bloom and grow
with colors of an earthly rainbow.

Nature changes dress from gray to green
as seasons pass and change the scene.

And each walk I walk unveils
new friends along the trails.

Photos catch a glimpse of time.

But all are etched upon my mind.



Jeep Trail at Cedar Point
Environmental Park

by Denny Girard

Book Review: "The Art of Maintaining a Florida Native Landscape", by Ginny Stibolt

I put this book on my "wish list" for Santa at Christmas time. So, I have been reading various chapters since the holiday season, and finding a lot of practical information therein. There are 11 chapters over 232 pages, plus a glossary, list of resources, and index. Some of the titles of the chapters are self-explanatory, such as 1. Introduction to Natives and Their Ecosystems, or 3. Invasive Exotics, and 5. Selecting, Planting and Caring for Natives. Others, like 7. Minding Your Edges caught my attention, as I have a couple of problem areas that need to be remedied and found a simple solution to that dilemma in that chapter. In chapter 8, the term Managing Freedom Lawns made me wonder what the heck is a freedom lawn. The answer was simply stated as "Freedom lawns":--free from synthetic fertilizers and free from all types of pesticides. Well, that explains everything.

Ginny credits her involvement with the Florida Native Plant Society as the reason she no longer gardens like she used to. She purchases only natives, has created a more self-sustaining landscape, reduced the size of the lawn, replacing it with wildlife habitats, and shares techniques in the book that were learned from personal experience and hard-earned lessons. Check out her blog to find updates, events, speaking engagements, and reviews: www.GreenGardeningMatters.com.



Beach Sunflower

January 2017

What's Blooming in the Garden

West Coast Beach Sunflower (*Helianthus debilis* subsp. *vestitus*)

While many of our native plants are sleeping through the winter months, Beach sunflower is blooming profusely. It's bright yellow daisy-like blossoms are abundant in the fall, winter and spring. It is a fast-growing plant that may spread

up to an 8 by 8 area. It does take pruning well and is easily kept in place. Beach sunflower likes full sun but does tolerate high pine shade
It grows best in very dry sandy soil and is highly salt tolerant, making it a good plant for beach dunes. It does not like getting its feet wet and in the summer rainy season may have some root rot, defoliation, and elongated stems.

Propagation is by above ground stems and by seeds. The stems are easily rooted wherever they touch ground. Under adequate growing conditions, it becomes a shrubby groundcover of about two to four feet tall.

Beach Sunflower is listed as an annual, short lived perennial and a perennial in various literature. After about 2 years the plant will begin to look leggy and woody. This signals that it is time to begin removal of dead and dying stems. The exposed seeds will quickly germinate and fill in the area within a few weeks. A clipping just before the rainy season may stimulate growth and keep the plant looking fresh.

One caution is to look for the subspecies *vestitus* - West Coast Dune Sunflower. It is recommended that East Coast Dune sunflower (*Helianthus debilis* subsp. *debilis*) not be planted on the West Coast to minimize the risk of cross pollination leading to extinction of the West Coast Dune Sunflower.

The Demonstration Garden has two areas of beach sunflower. Two new plants were put in the ground in November near the driveway. An established plant was cut back and pulled out in the butterfly section of the garden. This is the plant in the picture and it is reviving, growing and blooming.

West Coast Beach Sunflower is a butterfly attractant.

You can see it now in a visit to the Cedar Point Environmental Center Demonstration Garden.

Observations in the Garden

A couple of seasons back we discovered the presence of larva of the Genista Broom Moth, *Uresiphita reversalis* on one of our better specimens of Necklace Pod, *Sophora tomentosa*. After being thoroughly denuded of vegetation, the once-lovely shrub returned to its normal self and looked very healthy again. At the time, the discovery was during the month of April. Fast forward to this past December and once again a major infestation occurred. After it ran its course, we cut back the plant, as it was actually getting a bit large for its location. Interesting to note that it is not only sprouting new growth, but many of the new leaves are much larger than the original foliage. How do we explain that? In mid-January, we discovered more "Sophora worms" on another Necklace Pod in a separate area. Rather than treat for them, we just let them do their thing.



Necklace Pod blossom.

Although the moth is native in much of the U.S., it is more common in the

southwest. It is known to exist from Nova Scotia to Florida, west to California, and north to the Midwest, and is also found in Mexico. Adult female moths lay cream-colored to yellow eggs in masses on the foliage of host plants belonging to the pea family, Fabaceae. Newly hatched larvae construct webs and feed together until they mature a bit, then move off and feed separately. Mature larvae are about an inch long, and are green or orange with rows of clustered white hairs surrounded by black rings. They usually move from their larval food plants to adjacent plants or objects where they spin cocoons and pupate.

So, keep an eye out for these pesky little critters in your own yards and gardens. Since the recommendation is that larger, more mature plants should be fine without intervention, this has been our course of "treatment", so you might go with doing just the same, if you can stand looking at the devastation, which is temporary. Small infestations can be pruned out or picked off by hand and crushed. Larger infestations may call for the use of "chemical" treatment. You can always hope that the birds will find them tasty.

Jim Thompson is retiring as our Newsletter Editor. He has held this post for 5 years and we owe him a debt of gratitude for his service. Everyone who sees Jim, please thank him, or send him a card or note to extend your appreciation for his work. (Jimthompson4@comcast.net)

If you have a background (or not) in writing, editing, publishing, and can spare just 3 hours/month, and would like to volunteer to take over this position, please contact Gail Finney @ migafinn@gmail.com

We are currently using the Constant Contact (Basic Toolkit), which is ordered for use by the editor, and we reimburse for the cost on an annual basis.

Gail Finney has temporarily volunteered to help us out as interim editor, and until we find a permanent replacement. Thank you Gail!

I also want to say thank you for the time and effort he gave to orient me. I want to thank Jim for the time he spent working with me to learn to the ins and outs of putting together a newsletter. Many thanks, Jim.

Gail Finney

