



President's Message

Our last educational meeting of the season included a speaker program that lived up to its promise as an "interactive" presentation. You had to be there. If you weren't, picture 56 adults counting off numbers 1 thru 4, breaking into separate groups, chaotically dragging our chairs into circles, and given a giant sheet of paper on which to write down our impressions. We were participating in a critique of 4 different native planted yards as to their "curb appeal". We had to record our group's (1) first impressions, (2) what makes the yard unique, (3) what landscape plants make it visually appealing and (4) what other features make the most difference. Well, we criticized the heck out of the 4 photos. Little did we know that all of them were recipients of either a FNPS Landscape award or Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Certification. Tom Becker, our presenter, used this exercise to illustrate how different people react in different ways to a variety of landscapes. In my humble opinion, it also points out the challenge that we have in bringing native landscaping concepts to the general public and getting people on board. You know, that old thing about natives being weedy and messy. The yards we saw in the 4 photos were far from that.

[Visit Our Website](#)

Nomination for Office

The Nominating Committee chair, Bobbi Rodgers, presented the slate of candidates during the business portion of our last meeting. We will be voting on the proposed executive officers for the 2017-2018 Season at our next meeting on May 9th. The list includes:

President, Lois Cantwell;

Vice President, Alan Squires;

Secretary, Marianne Owen;

Treasurer, Linda Wilson.

Anyone else can be nominated from the floor before the final vote is taken.

Board of Directors Meetings

Just for the record, we encourage member participation in leadership activities. Our BOD meetings are always open to everyone.

The Board usually meets the first Friday of the month at 2:30 pm at Cedar Point.

We continually ask for volunteers to help out at meetings, events, field trips, plant surveys, work days, etc. We appreciate your support, as well as new ideas or suggestions for improvement. There are a lot of talented individuals in our chapter who can lend their skills in many ways. Let us recognize you and allow yourself to be "cultivated", to borrow a gardening term. Bring it on.

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center Summer-Camp

If you know of a child or grand-child who might enjoy a week-long adventure of learning and excitement, CHEC is offering a summer camp experience at both the Punta Gorda and Englewood locations. These activities include outdoor excursions, science experiments, crafts, games, theme-specific field trips and more. Children will discover the amazing world of nature through immersive activities, all while making new friends.

Topics for 6-12 year-olds presented at Punta Gorda location include: Environmental Science Safari, Marine Science Excursion and Wild Creature Quest. For age group of 8-13, topics presented at Englewood Location (Cedar Point Environmental Park) include: La Florida: The Natives, Be a CHEC Ranger, and Learn to Fish.

For complete details or to register, visit CHEC's website at <http://www.checflorida.org>. Perhaps you would even like to volunteer to help out? See contacts below.

Contacts: Punta Gorda Location, Becky Facer, 941-575-5438 or becky@checflorida.org or Englewood Location, Bobbi Rodgers, 941-475-0769 or bobbi@checflorida.org.



TJane Wallace, Susy d'Hont, Margaret Dunson and Pat Peterson

Here are the technicolor ladies of the FL Native Plant Society at the Little Salt Spring sinkhole in North Port after a two hour Earth Day nature walk, and they still look fresh!
Photo by Bill Dunson

What's Up in My Neighbor's Yard by Lois Cantwell

It will be 5 years ago in August that our friends (Craig & Cindee) moved in across the street, coming from the Dallas, TX area. One of the first things that they were interested in was plants that are native to this area, and had already started to do their homework on the subject. It was only natural that I guided them down the path of native plants and up the road to Laurel Schiller's nursery. The rest is history. They now have a beautiful array of trees, shrubs, wildflowers, grasses and vines throughout their adjacent lot. Not 100% native, as there is a slight comingling of a few non-natives, however well-chosen.

The plant list would be too long to narrate, but there are a couple photos I can share of what it looks like to date. Imagine a totally bare lot, gradually planted over the last 4 years or so. The previous owner had "eco-cleared" it of Brazilian Pepper, leaving a clump of about 8 Sabal Palms in the front corner nearest the lot the house sits on. Using that as an anchor, a series of plantings progressed from front to back and side to side, stretching to the back edge which overlooks a canal. About two-thirds of the way to the back, they installed a few Sunshine Mimosa pand just let them do their thing. This open area was bordered by Sweet Acacia, Coco Plum, Bald Cypress, Beach Creeper, Dune Sunflower, Hercules Club, and Tropical Sage. Today, there is a living carpet of Mimosa



spreading throughout. At the front end of the lot there is also a patchy existence of Mimosa,



Mimosa.

however it is a bit drier and with poorer soil, so not as plush. In that area are other specimens of trees and shrubs, some of which were donated from my collection. The Coral Honeysuckle that was doing poorly in a partially shaded section of my yard is now thriving on a sturdy arbor in the midst of Wild Lime, Oaks and Slash Pines in their early stages, Beautyberry, and Necklace Pod, to name a few. Yes, there are many more.



So,
are
you

ready for a yard tour? With all the changes I have made to my yard, plus the progress of my neighbor's yard, I think that this coming fall would be a good time to schedule a tour.

Stay tuned for an invitation. Our newer members may take inspiration from comparing our 5- and 10-year yards in progress. Oh yes, they just keep on evolving.

From a Giant Tree to a Patch of Wildflowers

We inherited a considerable assortment of palm trees from the previous owner when we bought our house in Rotonda back in 2007. This was also my first Florida yard, so it was interesting to see so many varieties. Over the past 10 years, however, they matured to the point of being a bit overwhelming. It was especially the case with the Canary Island Date Palm that resided in the front corner of our lot, adjacent to the driveway. There was a progression of fronds reaching up and over power lines and roots venturing under the pavement with the passage of time.

Over the years, we also kept getting offers from a palm preservation company for this particular specimen, starting with about \$400 in 2008 and progressing to a little over \$1500 last season. At that point I said "sold" and we made arrangements to have it excavated, and taken away to find a new home elsewhere. Someone probably paid a hefty price for it. The removal process was quite fascinating and various neighbors on our street stopped to watch with intrigue. We even discovered a 4 foot rat snake living up in the crown.

After we watched the palm make its way down our street on the flatbed truck, I turned to the empty circle of raw dirt and declared that it would be a good place to plant a variety of wildflowers. Now a year later, I have quite an assortment residing in that spot. There is Black-eyed Susan, Calamint, Scrub Mint, Cut-leaf Coneflower, Blue Sage, Liatris, Pencil Flower, St. John's Wort, Pineland Heliotrope, Tropical Milkweed,



Wildflower garden in place of the palm. Butterfly Weed, Twinflower, Yellowtop, Leavenworth's Tickseed, Pentas, Pennyroyal, and Lignum Vitae (courtesy of Phil Herron) in the center. Many of the plants came from our membership meeting deliveries from Restless Natives Nursery. They are all doing well. My only concern is leaving for 5 months with no one to dead head them to keep them blooming. So it will be interesting to see what I end up with in the fall.



Scrub mint, Black Eyed Susan, Calamint.



Blue Sage



Cut leaf Coneflower with Tropical Milkweed, note monarchs in the background

Unexpected Beauties of Nature

by Lois Cantwell

While developing an area in our Chapter-sponsored

Demonstration Garden, we noticed some unusual ghostly bits of vegetation lying about in the duff under where the Wax Myrtles had grown, along with the Smilax and Grape Vine that mingled among them. These delicate weightless natural wonders turned out to be skeletonized leaves from the Smilax. How divine! Having kept their original shape, they had the appearance of being made of nylon netting, retaining bits of flotsam from their origins. The photos show arrangements of some of these leaves, which can be used in various artsy-craftsy ways. You never know what you may find on the forest floor, so be extra observant while out in Ma Nature's kingdom.



This and That

Al's van has "Gone Native"



[Text Link](#)



Discussing the depression marsh at the MSF



Checking out the mud flats during a recent

What's Blooming in the Garden

What's Blooming in the Garden

Bastard Indigo (*Amorpha fruticosa*)

The blue/purple cone like blooms with yellow stamens are in bloom now. The bloom time for the bastard indigo is from April, May and June according to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. This 6-10-foot multi-stemmed shrub can become leggy with most of the leaves in the top 1/3 of the shrub. The lower branches can be pruned to give it a more tree like look. It can be used as a screen, hedge or a background plant. It is a long-lived perennial that likes moist soil but also does well drier sandy soil. The bastard indigo like part shade although some authors state it does well in full sun. It is moderately salt tolerant. Propagation is from seeds and cuttings. It grows fast and can become aggressive in the right conditions.

Craig N Huegel says it is "Florida's "butterfly bush" as it has many of the same qualities a Buddleia, and performs much better here.....at least in the southern half of the state."

Why do you want it in your garden?

The bastard Indigo is a larval host plant for the California & southern dogfaces, Silver-spotted Skipper (*Epargyreus clarus*), Gray hairstreak, Hoary edge skipper. It is bee friendly.

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



May Meetings & Activities

May 5 (Friday): BOD Meeting, has been moved to Apr 28th, 11 AM, Cedar Point Environmental Park. Members are always welcome to attend.

May 9 (Tuesday): Annual Membership Meeting & Election of Officers, 6:00 PM; Covered Dish Supper, Silent Auction. Bring your own place setting and a dish to share. Enter your selected items, of an environmental or nature theme, into the silent auction, which is always a fun and entertaining event. It is our "internal fundraiser" for our treasury.

May 17-21, Florida Native Plant Society Annual State Conference, Westgate River Ranch Resort and Rodeo. Visit the FNPS website for information and program details, www.fnps.org.

May 25/26 (Thurs/Fri): Plant Survey, 9 AM, at Cedar Point Environmental Park. 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).

May 27 (Saturday): Field Trip, 9 AM, Don Pedro State Park, Landside, 8450 Placida Rd., Cape Haze, 33946. For more information, contact Al Squires (941-769-3633 or ahsquires1@comcast.net). Directions are on our website (mangrove.fnpschapters.org).

STAY CONNECTED:

