



President's Message

Native Cultivars in the Northern Garden

by Lois Cantwell

Back in June I visited a local nursery looking for native perennials to add to my developing garden here in the north. I found a fair number, including the Sneezeweed, Liatris, Butterfly Weed, and Stokes Aster that I brought home. The *Asclepias tuberosa* was the native for sure, the others being cultivars, or more precisely "nativars". The Sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*, 'Mariachi Siesta') had dark rust-orange blooms; the *Liatris spicata* 'Kobold' was a much brighter shade of lavender/pink and fluffier than I have seen in the wild; and the *Stokesia* 'Peachie's Pick' was a brilliant dark blue. Also, while leafing through my latest "Birds & Blooms" magazine, I found a photo of Spiderwort 'Sweet Kate' sporting brilliant gold foliage. Really?

In my little northern garden, the hummers like the red cultivar *Monarda didyma* 'Gardenview Scarlet', a powdery mildew resistant variety. Now that I have acquired seeds for the native (*M. fistulosa*), which is lavender/pink, I will plant them next season to see how they compare. I have three varieties of *Rudbeckia* in the garden, providing lots of color, but they get very little action from the local bees. On the other hand, my three species of native *Solidago* are bee-magnets. Hybrids of these are also on the market, bred for more attractive flowers than the "common" wild goldenrods, and are promoted as useful for late-season color in large borders, cottage gardens and wildflower gardens. My natives serve that purpose very well, and I would never stoop to wasting money on substitutes for these.

My Purple Coneflowers are outstanding and serve as platforms for nectaring butterflies (monarchs, Swallowtails and more) that seem to avoid the various other plants, like Shasta Daisies and *Rudbeckia* cultivars that also have large flower heads. There are other varieties of Coneflower on the market that are cultivars offering yellow, orange, pink and red hues. The jury is out on just how much the birds utilize the seed heads of my natives vs. the cultivars, including the *Rudbeckias* in the late fall/early winter after I leave for Florida. I choose to leave them all up (as opposed to deadheading) just in case, although I can guarantee that the finches love the Purple Coneflowers in particular.

As time passes, I will continue to add more and more natives to the garden in hopes that I see a greater number of pollinators stopping by to visit. For the time being the "poor imitations" will continue to add color and maybe offer some nectar to those who need it. Plan B is the use of hummingbird feeders and a finch-seed mixture to get the migrants through the fall.

Visit Our
Website

October is Florida Native Plant Month

Wednesday, October 4, 2017, A proclamation will be issued for "October is Florida Native Plant Month" at the Punta Gorda City Hall 326 West Marion Ave. Please be at the Punta Gorda City Hall by 8:45 am if you are planning to attend. We would like to see a big turnout.

The Proclamation will also be highlighted at the Commission Chambers located in the Charlotte County Admin. Bldg. on Murdock Way, on October 10, 2017 by 8:45 A.M. if you are planning to attend. We hope to have a large turnout.

CHEC Events at Cedar Point

We are going to have two awesome lectures and social (complimentary wine & hors d'oeuvres) fundraising events at Cedar Point for CHEC. Snacks, wine, lecture, music, silent auction....will be FUN! \$8 for CHEC members, \$12 for non-members. What a deal!

The first will be Dr. Craig Huegel on January 23, 2018 speaking on "The Importance of Native Plants". Music will be provided by our very own volunteers, Gottfried Creek. THANK YOU!!!! Carol Breckenridge is working on procuring silent auction donations from local establishments.

The second lecture will be Englewood's very own Esther Horton & Nancy Willie speaking on "The History of Englewood and Surrounding Areas" on February 22, 2018. Carol is working on silent auction items for this one too. But, alas, we have no music lined up. :-(

If you know of a local individual or small acoustic musical "group" that may be interested in donating an hour of their time to providing light, easy listening music for our cause on February 22 from 5 - 6 pm (the Social hour before the lecture from 6 -7 pm), please let me know.

Also, if you know of places that might be interested in donating items for the silent auctions, again, please let me know.

Thank you all & hope to see you soon....have a safe trip southward (if you're not here already).

2017 - 2018 Native Plant Walks

The Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society invites the public to join in the following nature walks during the 2017-2018 season:

October 28, 2017 Venice Myakka River Park, (ADA Access)
7501 E. Laurel Rd, Venice

November 25, 2017 Old Miakka Preserve
251 Myakka Rd, Sarasota

January 27, 2018 Manasota Scrub, West side
Bridge St, Englewood

February 24, 2018 Yucca Pens WMA
Zemel Rd, Punta Gorda

March 31, 2018 Amberjack Environmental Park
End of Gasparilla Pines Blvd, Cape Haze

April 28, 2018 Myakka State Forest, North end
E River Rd (off S River Rd), North Port

May 26, 2018 Venice Lemon Bay Preserve
6200 Osprey Rd, Venice





Evolution of a Rain Garden

by Jane Wallace

When the County redid the sidewalks leading to the building in 2014 they added a drain under the porch connected to a drainpipe that ran under the sidewalk into the garden in front of the building. Kit Henderson first envisioned this area as a garden and Gloria Hansen had maintained it as a Woodland Garden. Gloria relinquished the area to us. This was exciting; the Chapter Demonstration Garden had always lacked one thing, an area to plant wet-loving plants. We began the creation of a rain garden. We sent a proposal to the County, explaining that this rain garden would educate visitors about the benefits of using a Rain Garden as a means of capturing storm water for various uses: supplementing landscape irrigation, reducing runoff, and reducing levels of pesticides and fertilizers entering the Lemon Bay Watershed.

We were doubly lucky, Thomas Becker, who had just joined the Charlotte County Extension Service, had a wealth of expertise in developing rain gardens. He volunteered to become our advisor. We spent the summer of 2014 digging and planting the rain garden. When it was finished the garden had over 30 species of plants not including seasonal ones. Plant Native Day 2015 Rain Gardens: What? Why? Where? How? explained and showed off our efforts.

2016 was a year of benign neglect for the garden. David Delgado worked diligently to remove Chamberbitter, an invasive non-native plant that loves wet areas. We let the plants sort themselves out deciding who would grow and who wouldn't. By this year the garden really needed tending. The banks had eroded filling in the bottom. Deciding the approximately 6 hours a month the Garden Committee devotes to the whole demonstration garden wouldn't be enough, in May, I recruited my husband Dale (who had done most of the initial work in 2014) and we spent a week digging out the bed and re-sloping it. A count showed that 18 of the original plants remained. Some seasonal plants like Moch Bishop's Weed, *Ptilimnium capillaceum* had come up earlier but were gone in May. We replanted, repositioned, supplemented some plants with the same species, removed some of the right plant, wrong place ones, added some new ones and gave some of the original ones that didn't grow a second chance.

The back bank is almost original plants. Rice Button Aster, *Symphyotrichum dumosum*; Bloodleaf, *Iresine diffusa*; Semaphore Eupatorium, *Eupatorium mikanioides*; String-Lily, *Crinum americanum*; and Climbing Aster, *Symphyotrichum carolinianum* remain. We took out the Seaside Goldenrod, *Solidago sempervirens*, right-plant, wrong-place. Pinebarren Goldenrod, *Solidago fistulosa* had introduced itself so it became a new plant. Swamp Fern, *Blechnum serrulatum* was moved to the back and Narrowleaf Yellowtops, *Flaveria linearis* was given a second chance.

On the bottom of the rain garden by the pipe inflow is Florida Loosestrife, *Lythrum flagellare*, a small, multi-branched, vining groundcover with a little purple flower. It is listed as Endangered in the state, even though it can be quite common in this area. The vision is to have it spread over the bottom. Scarlet Hibiscus, *Hibiscus coccineus*; Narrowleaf Sunflower *Helianthus angustifolius*; Saltmarsh Fleabane, *Pluchea odorata*; Saltmarsh Mallow, *Kosteletzkya pentacarpos*; and Blue Flag Iris, *Iris virginica*. Only *Pluchea* and the Iris are survivors of the initial garden. We are trying the Hibiscus and Sunflower again. The Saltmarsh Mallow replaces the Christmas Berry that never did well. Al calls this the Polish plant because of its scientific name. It is a robust bush and its pink flower adds

another color to the garden. Iris virginica is not native to this area and will be replaced with Prairie Iris, Iris savannarum when we find a source.

The banks are being stabilized with stone, sticks, and the vining groundcovers: Frogfruit, Phyla nodiflora; Blue Waterhyssop, Bacopa caroliniana; White Waterhyssop, Bacopa monnieri and Baldwin's Eryngo, Eryngium baldwinii. Frogfruit and the Waterhyssop both are larval foods for the White Peacock butterfly. Eryngo is probably the best ground cover you can use in a wet part of your yard or garden. A vining plant with a little ball of blue as a flower, it just showed up in my yard one day. At present we also have bricks, but they will be replaced as the plants fill in.

On the bank by the path we have 6 of the 12 milkweeds native to this area growing in the garden: White Swamp Milkweed, Asclepias perennis; Pink Swamp Milkweed, Asclepias incarnata; Fewflower Milkweed, Asclepias lanceolata; Butterfly Milkweed, Asclepias tuberosa; Whorled Milkweed, Asclepias verticillata and Savannah Milkweed, Asclepias pedicellata. The first three like wet conditions. The others were planted there to keep the milkweed together. All were purchased except A. pedicellata which was transplanted from the trail area of Cedar Point. Oakleaf Fleabane, Erigeron quercifolius; Sunshine Mimosa, Mimosa strigillosa; and River Sage, Salvia misella all prospered from the initial plants. We gave the Carolina Wild Petunia, Ruellia caroliniensis and Large White Violet, Viola primulifoliaa second chance and added Blackeyed Susan, Rudbeckia hirta; Tampa Vervain, Glandularia tampensis, listed as Endangered in the state; Tropical Sage, Salvia coccinea from the Cedar Point trails and Whitemouth Dayflower, Commelina erecta. This Dayflower really doesn't belong in a rain garden, it is a scrub plant but it is interesting and a good specimen plant for the garden.

It will be interesting to see what this period of prolonged water retention does to the plants. A few months ago Al Squires was complaining that the water garden didn't hold water; last time I looked it was almost out of its banks.

Ed Note: Al received his wish this week. The Rain Garden has water - here -there - and everywhere.



Mangrove Chapter September 30 Field Trip

The Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society invites the public to join in their annual summer walk along the water at Hathaway Park, 35461 Washington Loop Road in Punta Gorda. The walk is on Saturday, September 30 and begins at 9 am. This is the last walk of the summer season, shady and somewhat cool and, once again, we will be in search of the Pond Apple.

DIRECTIONS: Rt 41 East over the Peace River to Punta Gorda. Turn left onto Rt. 17. Where Rt. 17 forks to the left, stay straight onto Washington Loop Rd (Rt. 764). Hathaway Park is on the left. Directions are also available on the Mangrove Chapter website: mangrove.fnpschapter.org

For more information you may contact Al Squires at 941-769-3633 or email him at ahsquires1@comcast.net

Demonstration Garden help

The Mangrove Chapter GardenKeepers are sending out a call for volunteers. If you are interested in learning more about native plants and would like to garden with an interesting and fun group of people, join us at the Cedar Point Demonstration Garden on Monday mornings from 9-11.)

Be a Member

October marks our 3rd annual Florida Native Plant Month. We encourage Floridians and our early winter visitors to learn more about the importance of Florida's native plants and communities by becoming a member of the Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society.

Monthly Meetings

The Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society has the pleasure of welcoming the following speakers to their 2017-2018 season of monthly meetings:

October 10, 2017 - Girls Scouts, Sue Killion, Barbara Rao
"Improving Our Neighborhood, Protecting Our Planet"

November 14, 2017 - Alyssa Vinson, Environmental Specialist, Sarasota County
"Mangroves: Their Importance, Identification and Protection"

January 9, 2018 - Nigel Blakly, Biologist
"Milkweeds, Monarchs and Milkweed Bugs"

February 13, 2018 - Kate Borduas, Naturalist/Environmental Activist
"The Role of Cooperation in Evolution"

March 13, 2018 - Elizabeth Wong, P.E., Stormwater Manager, North Port
"North Port's Fertilizer Ordinance and Plants for Pollutant Reduction"

April 10, 2018 - Greg Vine, Owner/President of SunAcre Corp.
Chairman of the Urban Forest Committee in Venice
"Venice Beautification Project"

Mangrove Chapter meetings are held at Lemon Bay Park, 570 Bay Park Blvd. in Englewood, Florida with speakers beginning at 7:00 p.m. Evenings promise to be informative and inspiring with plenty of time for comments, questions and lots of good discussion with snacks included. We hope you can join us for some, if not all presentations.

2017 CHNEP Conservation Lands Workshop: "Thinking BIG with Landscape-level Conservation"

Mark your calendars for an upcoming event not to be missed! The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) invites you to the 2017 Conservation Lands Workshop on Friday September 22nd from 9 am - 4 pm at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center in Punta Gorda, FL

This public event is an opportunity for anyone interested in or working on environmental lands conservation to network and learn about the latest issues and efforts related to conserving and managing environmentally sensitive lands in Florida. Experts from around the state will be presenting on important initiatives to protect critical areas that support our water supply and native wildlife. Additionally, interactive sessions are incorporated to gather your input on what you believe is needed to conserve and restore habitat and water resources into the future in the face of sea level rise.

For more information regarding this workshop, go to the CHNEP webpage



with the agenda and the registration page online. Please register by September 15th. Thanks to our sponsors, the registration is only \$25 and includes lunch and refreshments. (*Note: need-based scholarships are available, please contact CHNEP office). Secure your space today!

Additionally, stay and invite your friends and family to a free public showing of "The Forgotten Coast" film that evening from 6-7:30 pm at the same location. Florida Wildlife Corridors Executive Director Lindsay Cross will give introductory remarks and be available to answer your questions about the amazing expedition and project that is the subject of the movie.

www.CHNEP.org

Nature in the Blue Ridge as Summer Comes to a Close



During the past few weeks in August I have been centered in the Blue Ridge mountains near Boone, NC but have sallied out to Galax, VA, and briefly down to the Piedmont in Gastonia, NC. The nights have been getting cooler (down to 55 F once) but the days are still sunny and

warm. Most plants have bloomed and are setting seeds and fruit. Some birds have migrated and most are hardly to be heard anymore. There is a frenzy of insect activity on the remaining flowers.

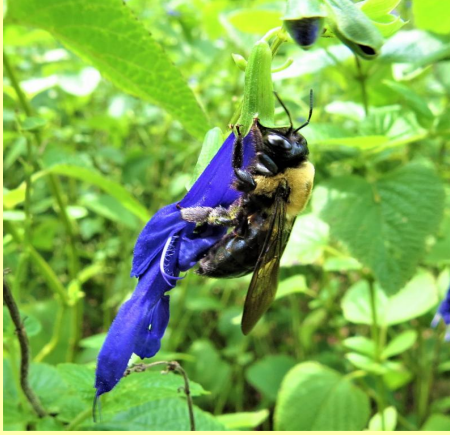
If you walk by a pond you will notice a lot of activity among the dragonflies. The autumn meadowhawk is a species that emerges late in the season whereas the blue dasher (male shown here) occurs throughout the summer. Although primitive, dragonflies have

complex behaviors and you can observe males fighting for territory and females, and guarding females while they lay eggs. In both of these species the males are much brighter in coloration than the females (sexual dimorphism), which indicates that the females choose which males to mate with. More striking colors may cue the female as to which males are more virile/viable.

One of the striking flowers of late summer which many dislike is the thistle, a giant weed with thorns. However it is highly favored as a butterfly plant and you will notice here a great spangled fritillary drinking nectar from a pink thistle. I used to devote some effort to cutting their seed heads off but eventually found that they are typically found only in disturbed soil and will gradually diminish with succession if you protect the soil from physical disturbance.



Bumblebees are quite active in late summer and early fall since they can maintain a body temperature higher than the environment by muscular contractions. They show what appears to be intelligence in forging for nectar when they bite the base of flowers such as these black and blue salvia to obtain the sweet fluid, which



they cannot reach with their tongue down the narrow flower corolla tube. Although they are a large and well protected bee they can be preyed upon by the remarkable robber fly. This predaceous fly had captured a much larger bumblebee and was in the process of eating it when I noticed the battle underway on a garden path.



This bullfrog female (note the ear drum is smaller than the eye) was sunning in a

protected spot along a small creek. The male has a much larger ear drum which presumably assists in detecting the famous jug-o-rum calls that are exchanged between males and are involved in territorial disputes.

As the weather becomes cooler, turtles are seen basking more often along logs and rocks. This thermoregulation is useful in increasing metabolism of these reptiles that lack an internal metabolic means of heat generation. The warmth and drying also likely improve the health of their skin. These red-eared turtles in a pond in Gastonia are actually the result of babies that were kept as pets and released and thrived in local ponds. They are an invasive species in many places throughout the world.



One of the common aquatic mammals that you may not often see is this muskrat which I noticed as it swam under a bridge. They are interesting as a specialized semi-aquatic mammal which feeds on herbaceous plants instead of the tree bark and shoots eaten by beavers. They have a flattened but narrow tail and webbed feet. The yellow flowers on the right are green headed cone flowers which are composites near their peak of flowering in late summer.

Enjoy the last hot days of summer since they will soon enough disappear. Already I have noticed that red leaves of black gum are falling, notifying us of the coming frosts.

Bill Dunson
Boone, NC, and Englewood, FL
<http://lemonbayconservancy.org/news-blog/nature-notes-by-bill-dunson/>

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