

Happy New Year!

The Mission of the
**Florida Native Plant
Society is to
Champion Florida's Native
Plants and their Habitats**

Cabbage Palm (*Sabal palmetto*) sunset
silhouette by Shirley Denton



Sabal Palms: No Pruning Required

by Kristin Hoffschmidt

The Mangrove Chapter is launching a campaign to help people understand that over-pruning the native Sabal palm tree (*Sabal palmetto*) is not a safe or healthy practice. Florida's state tree is a beautiful and resilient part of our ecosystem and deserves our protection.

Sabal palms, also known as cabbage palms, evolved over millions of years to thrive in Florida's ecosystem. Their natural growth form is perfectly suited to the plant's needs and provides important ecological services, such as creating food and habitat for native birds and animals. Even after 2024's hurricanes, it was noticeable that many Sabal palms stayed green and healthy. Save money, time, and the environment, and don't over-prune!

What is a "hurricane cut"?

When I first moved to Florida, a landscaper told me that the Sabal palms needed a "hurricane cut" (removal of almost all fronds) for safety during hurricane season. Later, I learned from a professional arborist that is an unhealthy practice that actually harms the tree and makes it less safe during hurricanes.

Over-pruning weakens the tree

When the palm fronts are repeatedly and severely trimmed back, the trunk is

reduced to a thin, bottlenecked shape that can easily break in storms. See the photos below for a comparison between an over-pruned tree and an un-pruned tree.



Uncut Sabal palm



A "hurricane cut" sabal palm

Over-pruning starves the tree

Leaves are the primary location for photosynthesis, in which sunlight is converted to food (sugar) using water and carbon dioxide. The nutrient supply to the palm is reduced when healthy, green fronds are removed, weakening the tree and making it more susceptible to cold weather and disease.

Help us spread the word!

Share information about the dangers of over-pruning with homeowners, businesses owners, HOAs, landscapers, and others. Help others understand that the costs are not only to the health of the tree and potential safety risks – additional costs include payment for the service and the noise pollution and air pollution created by the equipment. Notice and compare how over-pruned trees are faring in your neighborhood as compared to natural trees and encourage others to protect our palms.

Written with information from Sarasota County and UF/IFAS Extension Sabal Palm

Chapter Meeting – Tuesday, January 14 **RELOCATED to Jacaranda Library**

Due to hurricane clean-up work, Lemon Bay Park is closed. We will meet at the **Frances T. Bourne Jacaranda Library**, 4143 Woodmere Park Blvd., Venice. Come early for social time beginning at 12:15pm. Meeting starts at 1:00 p.m.

Meeting Agenda

- Call to order
- Introductions and ice breaker
- Announcements of Chapter business
- Chapter history
- Plant of the Month - *Sabal palmetto* (Cabbage palm)

- Introduction to guest program:

Environmental Conservancy of North Port

presented by Barbara Lockhart

President/Director Barbara Lockhart grew up in Port Charlotte in Charlotte County, having moved there in 1972 at the age of 3, and relocated to North Port in 2002. She is a University of Florida Master Naturalist/Land Steward, a Florida Registered Paralegal and is the founder of the Conservancy. She enjoys outdoor nature photography and has concentrated experience in real estate law, real estate transactional work, and corporate law.

We will adjourn the meeting following the guest program.

For more information email mangrovechapter@fnps.org

POTS!!! We always need 1-gallon plant pots for growing Chapter nursery plants! Save your pots and bring them to the Chapter meeting on January 14! There will also be a sign-up sheet to volunteer for Plant Native Day and other opportunities.

FNPS License Plate Frames Available!



Show your support for native plants and FNPS with the purchase of our license plate frame!

This is a great way to share the Florida Native Plant Society's message and promote our mission.

Purchasing a frame will not only help spread awareness, all proceeds from this fundraiser will be used for printing and developing FNPS educational materials. The frame is stainless steel with debossed (recessed) white lettering and will fit standard 6" x 12" license plates.

We will collect orders at the Chapter meeting on January 14. Or you may use this link to order directly: <https://tinyurl.com/fnpsmerch>

Plant of the Month - Cabbage Palm

The following article was originally published in the *Lemon Bay Conservancy* newsletter in the Spring of 1999. Cabbage palm photos by Shirley Denton. Monk skipper butterfly by Marian Mendez.

Florida Plants by Linda J. Wilson

Some time ago workers preparing to rebuild route 776 started clearing land beside the road. They were removing some beautiful Oaks, Palmettos and Cabbage Palms. Amazingly enough they saved some of the Cabbage Palms and I noticed they had moved about two dozen palms over to the nearby Tringali

center. The palmetto looked so strange with most of their roots trimmed off and the fronds cut way back. They were planted and are now doing great. A few of them have flower stalks visible. It was so wonderful that these palms were not just shipped to the landfill but were reused to beautify a nearby complex.

Sabal Palmetto. Cabbage Palm. Sabal is unexplained. Palmetto is Latin referring to the palm of the hand. Family Palmae. They are called Cabbage Palms because they produce a delicacy known as swamp cabbage made from the bud of the palm. Unfortunately, removing the bud generally kills the palm. This is our official state tree (even though it's not technically a tree). It is also the state tree of South Carolina and appears on their state flag.



FORM: 50-80 feet in height. Unlike trees that form growth rings in the trunk, growth of the Sabal Palms takes place from the terminal bud where the leaves originate from the center. The stems of the leaves remain attached to the trunk even after the old leaves have broken off. The attached stems, which split at the base as the tree expands, are called boots and provide a protective layer against fire and cold. The trunk is brown and rough with incomplete ring scars on young trees. Older leaf bases persist on some trees, not on others. The trunk is smooth and grey on older trees.

Specimens with branched trunks are rarely seen in Florida. Slow growth. Long lived. The tree is a host to *Ficus* (commonly Strangler Figs), *Clusia* (Pitch Apple), *Brassia* (*Schefflera*), plus many Orchids, *Tillandsia spp.*, and some ferns.

LEAVES: Fronds are dull, medium green on both sides with yellow blotches on older ones. Long, thin fibers are plentiful at the base of the leaf stems. The leaf segment tips are split for about two feet back from the very long thin point. The segments are stiff except near the tips. There is a distinctive semi full leaved crown atop a slender, straight trunk. The crown can be up to 12 feet in diameter.

FLOWERS: Whitish, inconspicuous, and fragrant. The flower stalks are as long as the leaf stalks. They are attractive to bees and therefore an excellent source of nectar for honey. The fruit is a dull-black, 1/3-inch diameter staple in the diet of raccoons and squirrels. They ripen in the fall and are sweeter than most palm fruits. They have a pleasant date flavor but are not generally considered suitable for human consumption. These palms provide excellent hiding and nesting cover for wildlife. Frogs, lizards and insects take advantage of the moisture collected by the leaves and tunnel to the center bud.

REQUIREMENTS: Thrives in a wide variety of soil types. Tolerant of salt spray and brackish water. Sun or shade. Semi-tropical. Hardest of our native palms. Once established, it needs no care at all.

DISTRIBUTION: Native to North Carolina down through Florida and in the Bahamas. Abundant in all of Florida, except the most western parts of the state. Trunks are used as dock pilings. This palm was once so plentiful that logging

roads have been built using only the palms cut from the roadbeds. British cannonballs during the American Revolution bounced harmlessly off the tough palmetto logs used in the walls of Fort Moultrie, guarding Charleston Harbor. The wonderful cabins of Myakka State Park are constructed of them also. Fibers from the leaf stalks are made into brushes and whiskbrooms. The leaves are used as thatch, and for making hats, baskets, and mats.



LANDSCAPE USE: Popular in group plantings, for avenue rows, and as a lawn specimen.

PROPAGATION: Seedage. Translocation is possible with older trees. Younger trees less than 10 feet tall with all their leaf stems still attached to the trunk are not usually transplanted. Interestingly, smaller plants of three feet or less can be moved with about a 70 percent survival rate. Water until new growth is underway. Fill piled around the trunk does not seem to affect the natural growth. Seedlings without clear trunks are hard to transplant. Seeds germinate in about 6 weeks.

PESTS: Palm Leaf Skeletonizer and Palmetto weevil.

If every yard had one of these lovely palms, what a wonderful tribute it would be to the natural Florida we fell in love with!

12/7/24 Postscript: I have probably 50+ Cabbage Palms on my 1-acre property that all appeared on their own since moving here in 1980. My Live Oak and the Cabbages all survived the recent Ian, Helene and Milton hurricanes. Some of them are really leaning but none fell. The pruning that people waste so much money on is extremely detrimental to the palm. They are self-pruning as are the Pine species. The pencil trim that landscapers do weakens the palm a little each time it is pruned. If you must prune, don't remove any fronds at or above the 3 and 9 hands of a clock and better yet, remove brown fronds only. It is also much prettier left alone. Pruned trees just look sad to me. I also use the boots left on them for orchid perches. An excellent book to learn more is *The Palmetto Book: Histories and Mysteries of the Cabbage Palm* by Jono Miller. He is a local natural historian, educator and activist who was former director of the Environmental Studies Program at New College of Florida. Happy gardening!

DID YOU KNOW??

The cabbage palm is a larval host plant for the monk skipper butterfly (*Asbolis capucinus*).



To assist those within the Mangrove Chapter FNPS area (South Venice to Punta Gorda to Englewood), our Annual Landscape Grant has been changed a bit to better accommodate those affected by the storms. In most years, we have provided grants to PUBLIC properties, but, this year (2024-2025), we will provide up to \$100 in grant funding for PRIVATE landscapes.

Applications are being accepted through April 30, 2025. Projects need to be completed by September 30, 2025. Complete details and applications can be found at: <https://mangrove.fnpschapters.org/outreach/grants/>

Out and About with Mangrove Chapter

All our events are free to attend and all are welcome.
Please, no dogs, smoking, or vaping.

Wednesday January 1, 2025, 9:00-11:00 AM. RESERVATIONS CLOSED - Dr. Bill Dunson's annual New Year's Day guided walk on Manasota Key Beach was fully booked. We hope everyone enjoyed themselves!

Monday, January 13, 9:00-11:00 AM. Join the Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society and UF/IFAS Sarasota Extension Service for a guided walk by Dr. Mary Davis at the South Venice Lemon Bay Preserve, 6200 Osprey Road, Venice. We will learn more about our amazing and unique Florida ecosystems as we explore the transition from coastal mangroves to upland scrub. Parking is limited so carpooling is advised.

Tuesday, January 14, 1:00 PM. The Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society invites you to join us to learn about "The Environmental Conservancy of North Port and Surrounding Areas," at the Frances T. Bourne Jacaranda Library, 4143 Woodmere Park Blvd., Venice. Founder of the conservancy Barbara Lockhart will relate her journey acquiring 43 parcels across North Port, Englewood, El Jobean, Harbour Heights, Port Charlotte and Deep Creek, for the preservation of neighborhood green/wild spaces, and how she is educating the public about conserving native plant and animal spaces. Come early for social time from 12:15pm.

Thursday, January 16, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM. Join the Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society at Twin Lakes Park, 6700 Clark Rd., Sarasota for a tour of the Educational Outreach Gardens with Horticulture Agent Ashley Ellis and Florida-Friendly Landscaping Educator Forest Hecker. Ashley and Forest have been planting native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers to provide accessible public demonstrations of these underutilized plants. Learn about some of the cool species planted as part of these demonstration gardens, with unusual specimens such as Mangrove Mallow, Wild Star Apple, and Wild Tamarind to name a few. Meet in the lobby of the building and feel free to browse while waiting.

Saturday, January 25, 9:00-11:00 AM. Join the Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society and member Dr. Bill Dunson for a guided walk at Don Pedro Island State Park on the Cape Haze Peninsula in Charlotte County. The park exemplifies the fast-disappearing coastal habitat mixture of salt marshes/mangroves with mesic and hydric pine flatwoods. We will walk a 1.5-mile trail to experience this fascinating mixture of natural landscapes and consider

some of the major ecological concepts evidenced within. Located at 8450 Placida Rd, Cape Haze, FL 33946, there is a \$3 parking fee.

Friday, January 31, 9:00-11:00 AM Join the Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society and member Dr. Mary Davis for a walk at Deer Prairie Creek Preserve South, 10201 South Tamiami Trail, Venice. We will be learning more about common plant families and how to identify them in our SW Florida Pine Flatwoods Ecoregion. Meet at the parking lot at the end of the entrance road.

For more information, contact mangrovechapter@fnps.org



Feathers and Flippers

Thanks to all who came out to the Feathers and Flippers event in downtown Englewood on Sunday, December 8!

Photo: Volunteer Aurora Walsh helped with the beautiful native wildflowers we had for sale.

Monthly Plant Survey - get involved!

Each month, the Mangrove Chapter of FNPS with Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) and Charlotte County conducts plant surveys at **Cedar Point Environmental Park** in Englewood, FL. These surveys record both blooming and seeding plant species along designated trails. These data provide land managers and educational professionals with information for climate-related projects and other important issues. Plus, it is a fun and educational morning learning new plant species and meeting new people with similar interests! Volunteers are always needed for the scheduled survey dates:

January 14 and 15 (Tuesday and Wednesday)

Please contact Barb Seibel at leftyb3@comcast.net
The Chapter welcomes new people (membership in the Chapter is nice but not necessary) to help with these surveys. Tuesday's survey will be completed with plenty of time to make it to the Chapter meeting at Jacaranda Library in Venice.

Cedar Point Environmental Park,
2300 Placida Road, Englewood, FL.



We will meet from 9:00 AM to approximately 11:00 AM. Wear comfortable shoes that can get wet, and bring sunscreen and bug spray, as needed. We look forward to meeting each of you.



Smallhead Doll's Daisy
(*Boltonia diffusa*)

December 2024 Plant Survey Report

December is traditionally the month of the year that produces the fewest number of plants. This December was no exception. Almost every plant was dormant. There were a couple of plants that were doing well. One was Smallhead Doll's Daisy (*Boltonia diffusa*; photo at left). It has a small daisy-like white to lavender flower with many flower heads per plant. It is in the Asteraceae family. Another plant doing well was Bloodleaf (*Iresine diffusa*). It has small white flowers with a slight red tinge, hence the name Bloodleaf. This plant is in the Amaranth family.

It was a nice day for a walk in the woods. We can't control Mother Nature. So on days like this, we thank her for the nice weather and the plants she had revealed. If you are interested in participating in this activity, drop an email to Barb Seibel at leftyb3@comcast.net.

Plant Native Day - March 1, 2025 "Right Plant, Right Place"



Muhly grass, frogfruit, tropical sage, porterweed, bee blossom, creeping sage and more will be available for sale.

SAVE THE DATE! Plant Native Day will be held Saturday, March 1 at Lemon Bay Park, Englewood, from 9:00 am until noon. Join us for a guided walk, check out the partner exhibits, and learn more about planting the Right Plant in the Right Place from Laurel Schiller, our guest speaker.

Plants will be available from the Florida Native Plant Nursery & Landscaping, as well as hundreds of member-grown plants.

We hope to see you there!

Want to get involved? We need volunteers to make this event a success. Email us to sign up.

Want to donate homegrown plants? Contact us to learn about how you can grow and donate homegrown plants to the Mangrove Chapter.

Where to Buy Native Plants

Mangrove Chapter Members Save 10% on Your Plants! Buy Native!

Below are a few area nurseries where you can confidently purchase native plants, plus they offer a discount for FNPS members! Too often, big box stores sell plants that they call native, but instead they are hybrids or cultivars, or even worse, the grower might already have treated the plant or the soil with pesticides that are fatal to native insects. Buying from a native nursery helps avoid those worries.

All Native Garden Center, 300 Center Rd, Fort Myers, FL 33907
<https://nolawn.com/>

Florida Native Plants Nursery, 730 Myakka Rd, Sarasota, FL 34240
<https://www.floridanativeplants.com/>

Sweet Bay Nursery, 10824 Erie Rd, Parrish, FL 34219
<https://sweetbaynursery.com/>

[Mangrove Chapter Facebook page](#)

Organizations of Nature Related Friends

Environmental Conservancy of North Port (ECNP) <https://ecnorthport.com/>

Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve <https://lemonbayconservancy.org/>

Florida Wildflower Foundation <https://www.flawildflowers.org/>

Sarasota County events - register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/ufifas-extension-sarasota-county-422952084>

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center <https://www.checflorida.org/calendar>

ECOSWF (Environmental Confederation of SW Florida) <https://www.ecoswf.org/>

Venice Area Audubon Society
(VAAS) <https://veniceareaaudubonsociety.wildapricot.org>

Peace River Audubon Society <https://www.peaceriveraudubonsociety.org/>

Mangrove Chapter meets the second Tuesday of the month, October through May, at 1:00 at the visitor center at Lemon Bay Park and Environmental Center, 570 Bay Park Blvd., Englewood.

Our meetings are open to the public.

NOTE: Our January 2025 meeting will be held at Jacaranda Library in Venice!

Mangrove Board of Directors & Coordinator Positions

President; Newsletter – Ava Lasseter, PhD MangroveAva@gmail.com
Secretary – Kristin Hoffschmidt
Treasurer – Alicia Irvin
Chapter Representative – Laura Soule
Membership – Gail Brynildsen
Education and Outreach; Grants – Bobbi Rodgers
Publicity and Field Trips – Laurie Via
Greeter – Joan McGowan
Conservation and Policy – Linda “Willie” Wilson

Coordinator Positions (Non-board members)

Programs Coordinator – Renee LePere
Social Media Coordinator – Anne Risberg
Data Assistant – Sean McMillan

To reach us, email mangrovechapter@fnps.org



[Visit our website](#)

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