

# The Sparkler

The Sparkleberry Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

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September 2012

**Programs arranged by: Debbie Phillips**

**For those not in attendance at the August 14 meeting,** here is a summary of the program on medicinal herbs.....

The presenter for the evening was Annie Johnson, a member of the Nature Coast Chapter. She knows and has used many native plants for refreshing teas and healing potions. She has studied “ethnobotany” which is the study of the interaction between people, plants, and culture. Native Americans and settlers used plants for food, fibers, dyes, religious and medicinal purposes. Much of this information has led to development of medicines in the pharmaceutical industry. A word of caution when working with a particular plant is to test your reaction to it by placing a part of the plant on the soft inner area of the elbow, covering it and leaving it overnight.

**For the September 11 meeting: 6:30 pm, Hatch Park, Branford**

The guest speaker will be Brian Cobble, Senior Forester of the Florida Forest Service. The title of his presentation: “A Snapshot of Suwannee County Forest Health – 2012” He will provide information on forest pests that have plagued Suwannee County during 2012. His focus will be on insects and diseases that have affected native trees near Live Oak, O’Brien, Dowling Park and Branford communities. “Hot topics” in the forestry world will be included in his presentation.

***Sparkleberry Chapter meetings are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month at Hatch Park, 403 SE Craven St., Branford. Meetings start at 6:30 PM.***

**Please join us for our next meeting September 11, 2012**

## **Calendar of Events:**

**9/11/12 Book Sale:** Get your list in by the September meeting for the books you would like to order. Check the FNPS.org website for a list of many great publications on native plants and related matters, and the University Press site at UPF.com. Discounts will apply based on the size of our group order and you will know the prices before we finalize the order. You can order books on any subject not just about plants. Christmas is coming - books make great gifts!

Nancy See has volunteered to be the contact person for all book orders, so email her at njsee@yahoo.com or call her at home 386-362-2293 with your order.

**10/9/12 Monthly Meeting: 6:30 pm, Hatch Park, Branford**

Megan Wetherington, Senior Engineer with the Suwannee River Water Management District, will be our speaker. Her topic is an update on water conditions and some of the side effects in our area as a result of the 2 Tropical Storms earlier this year.

## **The Agonies of Grass Mowing**

Unlike most people, I really enjoy mowing my lawn. I have a big one, ten acres, with lots of oaks to circle around. I have a great mower, a zero radius Grasshopper that is just plain fun to drive. I find it extremely satisfying to see the neat rows that mowing results in, and whapping down those big seed heads. I also like the freedom of planning how and where I'm going to mow, just the way I like it.

So where does the agony come from? As I have reported previously, I was native plant ignorant prior to three years ago when I moved to North Florida. I happily mowed down every living thing in my mower's path, and I was very satisfied with the result. Then I began to learn about the natives in the area, and I had a great time exploring my own yard, where I discovered many happy natives thriving all on their own, no planting, and no tending.

Here's the agony. What do I mow down, and what should I try to spare, because I know it will feed birds, butterflies, insects, wildlife, or make a beautiful flower that I will enjoy? Honestly, it was easier to just mow, blissfully making my neat rows. Now, I have flagged certain plants: coral bean, paw paw, milkweed, winged sumac, Walter's viburnum, and gaura. I won't mention that one of the wires from a flag wound up in the sidewall of the mower tire, causing a flat during a careless run. What gets sliced off regardless of its native status? Elephant's foot, lyre leaf sage, verbena, butterfly pea, and of course, the ever present poison ivy and Virginia creeper. I cut them down, but I still feel guilty (except for the poison ivy, which I admit, I hope will DIE). And honestly, the lawn doesn't look as neat because of the grassy clumps involved for mown around plants. I love saving my natives, though, and enjoy wandering around and checking on how my refugees are faring.

One other mowing rule I have. I try to wait as late in the season to start mowing, preferably May if I can talk my husband into it. My favorite season is the spring, when everything wakes up and starts growing again. The yard is full of flowers, even if some call them weeds, and I love to see them all. I have many species, including Venus looking glass, Carolina dandelions, sour dock, toad flax, violets and innocence. I try to spare them as long as possible.

Is there anyone else out there that has secret grass mowing anxiety?



**Bonus Article by Phyllis Bridges:**

## Natives and Me

I won a Painted Leaf, Wild Poinsettia (*Poinsettia cyathophora*) and planted it in my yard. It grew for awhile and then disappeared over winter. I looked for it in the spring but found nothing where it had been. Then, to my surprise, I spotted what looked like the plant growing 12 ft from the original sight – and, it is doing well!



Also won a Salt & Pepper plant (*Melanthera nivea*) and planted it in the native garden. It grew and bloomed the first year. This year it grew and grew and grew! Must be over 5 ft tall and covering up my native azaleas. Might pay to check on dimensions next time.



**Roadside Bloomers: Carol Sullivan**

This is the in-between time for many of our flowering wildflowers so there's not much different in the roadside bloomers from last month. On Carol Sullivan's sandhill there are blooms of:

Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*),

Tropical Sage (*Salvia coccinea*),

Pitted Stripeseed (*Piriqueta cistoides*),

Blanket Flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*),

Green Eyes (*Berlandiera subacaulis*),

Starry Rosinweed (*Silphium asteriscus*),

Firebush (*Hamelia patens*)

Spanish Daisy (*Helenium amarum*)

There are only a few of each plant mentioned, but she's hoping they will reseed and show off better next year.

## Dates Of Interest from Betsy Martin:

### Ranger Led Events at Ichetucknee Springs State Park:

Now that the tubing season is over, Ichetucknee Springs State Park has some wonderful Ranger led programs. Check out their web site for more information on events during the Fall and Winter: <http://www.floridastateparks.org/ichetuckneesprings/events.cfm>

September 29<sup>th</sup> there is a sunrise canoe trip with canoes provided by the park, you cannot bring your own canoes. You get to the park about ½ hour before sunrise and start down the river. Betsy has been on that trip and has seen deer at the river's edge, many birds and plants along the way. Sam is there to identify and explain things seen along the way.

Mark your calendar for October 20<sup>th</sup> for the wildflower walk with Sam who will identify many of our fall blooming plants and trees.

And, if you get a chance on December 22 for the Ichetucknee Time Machine Tour, take it! Sam will take you back into restricted areas of the park and tell you the history of the area. You will find yourself standing in an area where there was a Spanish Mission along the river. Approximately 300 Indians are buried there from the diseases that the Spanish brought with them. It is a great history tour.

### Other dates from Betsy are:

October 13 Kanapaha Fall Plant Sale and Orchid Show

October 13 Butterfly Fest at the Florida Museum of Natural History

October 27 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Lubee Bat Festival

## Useful Links:

SPARKLEBERRY Web Site --- <http://sparkleberry.fnpschapters.org/> Web Master: Mae Brandt  
SPARKLEBERRY FACEBOOK --- [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for SPARKLEBERRY CHAPTER.

September 28-30 Lake County's Inaugural Wings & Wildflower Festival  
[www.lakecountyfl.gov/gowild](http://www.lakecountyfl.gov/gowild) and [www.flawildflowers.org](http://www.flawildflowers.org)

Sabal Minor newsletter is always available for download at:  
[www.fnps.org/resources/sabalminor](http://www.fnps.org/resources/sabalminor)

FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ---- [www.fnps.org](http://www.fnps.org)

The Florida Native Plant Society got its start in the summer of 1980 when some environmentalists were concerned about the loss of native plants and the invasion of non-native species in natural areas. By 1990 the Society had 20 chapters and supported the publication of many books through grants during that decade. In the 2000 decade there were training programs at the state and local levels to support their mission. Our current decade of 2010 shows much growth and there are 37 chapters including beginners and experts – both very important to the future of the FNPS. Take time to explore their web site and share the information with others. I find that web site to be very, very interesting.....  
.....by Judi Harn, SPARKLEBERRY Newsletter Editor.

**Mystery Plant: Judi Harn**

Does anyone recognize the plant in the pictures below. These little “flowers” have very, very soft centers and “woody” petals. They have almost no root system. Their life is very short – from picture #1 to picture # 4 in a matter of hours. Our yard is mostly sand – the soil is very poor for grass. Centipede does grow in parts of the yard.

These little brown plants seem to be a variation of some that were growing in the same area a few weeks ago. As the others started, they seemed like delicate, white flower petals about the size of a nickel. During the day they developed much like the one pictured below and ended up looking much like picture #4 except they were curled up much tighter – about the size of a marble and almost white.



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*"The purpose of the Florida Native Plant Society is the preservation, conservation and restoration of native plants and native plant communities of Florida."*