

The Sparkler

The Sparkleberry Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

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April, 2012

President's Message: *Carol Sullivan*

Hello, Spring!!!

Spring officially arrived on March 20th, even though it seems like it was here lots earlier than that this year. I'm not complaining! Warm weather suits me much better than cold.

Spring not only brings out the new green growth on shrubs and trees and flowers of every color, it also brings us a whole bunch of events. There's the Suwannee County Fair, festivals happening all over the area, including in many of the parks, gardening classes, plant sales and yard sales everywhere, just to name a few. Our Sparkleberry Chapter has a booth set up at the Fair and will also be at the Alligator Lake Festival, so stop and say hello.

Even before the spring arrived, the area garden clubs invited some of us to speak at their regular meetings. Betsy gave a native wildflower presentation in January for the group in Lake City, I did a presentation in February on natives that are green in winter for the Live Oak Garden Club, and Carolyn Saft and I went to the Steinhatchee Garden Club in March for a program on natives for Taylor County. It is inspiring to have the garden clubs take an interest in native plants.

You are all ambassadors for the cause, so keep talking about native plants every chance you get. People only begin to care about native plants when they know about them. Kathy's message below gives you a good idea of what happens to many gardeners. Fortunately, she is determined to win. Thanks, Kathy, for the nice article and for not giving up on Florida!

I hope you will all take advantage of this perfect weather and get out and enjoy!

Carol

Sparkleberry Chapter meetings are held the 2nd 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 on April 10, 2012



Sparkleberry Webmaster Mae Brandt is working on a **new Sparkleberry webpage**. You can reach it at <http://sparkleberry.fnpschapters.org>. Mae says it's a "work in progress, but it should be complete within the next few weeks." Please visit the site and let Mae know what you think!

We also have a **Facebook** page, to be used as a communication spot for members between meetings. Visit www.facebook.com, search for Sparkleberry, and become a friend and/or fan.

Calendar of Events:

3/30-4/7/12: Suwannee County Fair, Live Oak – Sparkleberry Chapter has a booth, so stop by and check it out!

4/07/12: Alligator Lake Festival – Sparkleberry Chapter will have a booth from 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM. Call Carol Sullivan if you'd like to help set up or staff the booth.

4/10/12: Monthly Meeting 6:30 PM, Hatch Park, Branford

“Native Plants, Native People,” presented by Barbara Hines

Barbara's program will give us insight into how both early settlers and Southeastern Native Americans used the plants native to this region for food, medicine and other uses. She will also touch on some of the cultural significance of these plants. Additionally, her presentation will look at the various ways some of these plants continue to be used today.

Barbara is a Registered Professional Archaeologist who specializes in historic archaeology, 19th and early 20th century. Her interests include Southeastern Indian communities after European contact, specifically in the late 1800 up to the present; traditional and early medicine; how Southeastern Native Americans and early settlers to the Southeast used native flora; and how these plants have continued to be used up into present time.

4/11/12: Field Trip, 9:00 AM-11:00 AM - Native Plant Walk at Ichetucknee Springs State Park with Park Ranger Sam Cole (Wed after our meeting).

Sam will take us out to the western sandhill area of the park which was burned two years ago, where he says the perennials are coming out beautifully. We will meet at the North Entrance in the parking lot and do some plant ID there too. There are many beautiful and different plants right in the parking lot. Don't miss it!!! Sam's love and enthusiasm for native plants is infectious!

5/8/12: Monthly Meeting 6:30 PM, Hatch Park, Branford

Kurt Wisner will be our guest speaker for May. His program will be “The Threat of Wildfire is Real! Can You Protect Yourself?” Kurt is the Wildfire Mitigation Specialist and Public Information Officer for the Suwannee Forestry Center of the Florida Forest Service.

5/12/12: Spring Plant Sale 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM, US Highway 27 and Wideman Street, Branford
(More information Under “Spring Plant Sale,” below.)

5/17/12- Florida Native Plant Society, 32nd Annual Conference, Plant City. Registration is now open!

5/20/12: Activities will include landscaping, conservation, research, field trips, socials, vendors, silent auction, plant sales, and exhibits. Check your mail for this postcard.



Field Trip Highlights:

3/17/12 – Little River Wildlife Management Area, O'Brien

The plan for our field trip to Little River Wildlife Management Area was to drive to the Suwannee River at the end of the 3-mile road and make some stops on our way back to get a closer look at some of the native plants we saw along the way. As with all good plans, "stuff" just happens. Members piled in the truck bed or followed along for less than a half mile when we had to get out and look at a collection of natives, including blooming Sparkleberry, of course, and Deerberry. Another quarter mile down we stopped for the Wild White Indigo growing right beside the road. That led to checking small flowering plants in the area for a few minutes. Needless to say, it was downhill from there! We did make it to the river, spotting fringe trees, hawthorn and blueberries (Shiny, Elliotts, Deerberry, Sparkleberry) in bloom, new red leaves on the small oaks and everything sprouting out their soft green growth. Several areas have been newly burned showing the distinct contrast with areas that have become so thick with too much shrubby growth.

The highlight was our last stop to see the only Lady Lupine (*Lupinus villosus*) spotted on the entire trip. Last year there were lots of Lupine in the dry areas roadside and in the woods. This year they seem to be very scattered. Fred's picture below gives you some idea of how pretty they can be with the long, fuzzy gray leaves and stalks of purple/red flowers.



Photos by Fred Siebold

Spring Plant Sale:

We are going to have a plant sale on May 12th, the day before Mother's day. Our Vice President Trish Haight will serve as Plant Committee Chairperson, and our Past-President Betsy Martin will be coordinating the plants for the sale as she did for our fall sale. Betsy will gather the plants at her house a few days before the sale, so they can be inspected.

Trish wants to thank the following members for signing up to assist the plant committee:

Phyllis Bridges
Kathy Koeppel
Carole Kueppers
Debbie Phillips

Fred Siebold
Valerie Thomas
Judy Townsend

Without these dedicated members volunteering to grow plants, work sales, etc., we would be unable to accomplish these tasks. Again THANK YOU!!!!!! If anyone else would like to assist please let me know. The more help we have the more we can do.

Spring Plant Sale Growers Committee Update: *From Betsy Martin*

Thanks everyone for emailing me and letting me know what plants you are growing. We are getting a great list with lots of diversity. I won't know until we get closer to the sale exactly what I have to donate, so make sure to let me know what you have to add to the list as we get closer to the sale. We want to make sure we have pictures and signs for everything.

It is starting to get a little late to be digging plants up from your yard. It can still be done before they get too large or it gets too hot, but I would do it real soon if you were thinking of transplanting. We want the plants to be recovered from digging long before the sale, so that they have the best chance of survival. We want people to have good experiences with the plants they get from our sale.

Keep in mind that native plants like native soil. If you put a native plant in potting mix with lots of peat and no soil, it might do well for a while but can get easily water-logged. When our customers plant it in their yard in sand, the peat root ball will dry out quickly and might kill the plant. Using your own composted soil is best, but I have found the best alternative mix is a bag of a potting mix I get in Home Depot for about \$6.75 (in a yellow and purple bag labeled 'potting mix') mixed with about 3 bags of their cheapest \$1.29 potting soil (it might be called top soil-red and black bag, all soil) and throw in a few handfuls of perlite. I have a giant pile of soil to use.

Also, for those of you who do not want to grow, there are some things that you can help with. One would be to save boxes that would be good for people to tote the plants back to their car. Bring them to the meeting if you have any, and continue to save more to bring to the next meeting right before the sale. Those plastic bags are nice for a few plants, but boxes are better. And just keep in mind that every single plant counts, the one plant you bring just might be the one someone was looking for to fill that special spot!

Betsy

Feature Article: *Carol Sullivan*

"Once Established"

With all the plant sales and gardening activities going on now, it seemed a good time to mention the much used term, "Once Established". Many of our Florida native plants can survive in the wild on only the rains. They survive on natural rainfall because they sprout and grow in their preferred habitat, in the soils, sunlight and drainage conditions to which they are naturally adapted. Because a plant is drought tolerant does not mean you can plunk it in the ground and forget about it. When a potted plant or a transplant from your yard is set into a new spot, it must adapt to the new environment and spread a root system sufficient to support it - to become "established". The time it takes to establish a plant will vary depending on the plant, its environment, its size and the weather conditions. That time can be years in the case of the Longleaf Pines (*Pinus palustris*), or as little as days, weeks or months. The appearance of new growth is generally an indication that it is becoming established.

Planting the right plant in the right place is just as important to the natives as it is to any other plant. Monitor new plantings frequently for signs of stress and monitor all of your plants for stress during drought conditions. All plants need some moisture to survive. Some can extract sufficient moisture from the air or whatever means nature provides and others need a little help from you to thrive.

Carol

I'm a fairly new transplant to this area, having moved here about two years ago from New York. I have always enjoyed getting my hands dirty in the garden and prided myself on my beautiful flower gardens where I lived up north. So when plans were made to move to Florida, I began to "move" my treasured plants, too. For several years before 2010, we would come about twice a year bringing belongings and "my plants" with us. I was happy, but I quickly realized something was amiss with the soil. It wasn't even soil . . . it was sand . . . and . . . there were no earthworms . . . just ants!

What could I do with so little to work with? We quickly set up automated sprinklers, started composting and set up for a good fight against the elements. I planted my NY transplants and hoped for the best. Those "little troopers" did the best they could. Two years later I hardly know what a hosta looks like, and tulips are a thing of the past. No dahlia, no impatiens for me.

Once I moved here permanently, someone told me about the Native Plant Society, and that is where the story really begins. I kept hearing about native habitat, drought tolerance and wildlife attracters. I do so love the birds and the butterflies. Soooo . . . my whole concept of gardening has changed. Maybe it spoke to me because I'm older now. I'm retired and I have the time to see things I didn't see before. Or maybe because it makes so much more sense to me, rather than running to Home Depot to buy flat after flat of brilliantly colored annuals that I will water profusely and never see again by next year this time, I am so ready to learn a new way.

It's about listening to nature more. It's about looking a little closer at what is around you. It's about not fighting nature. I am definitely a novice at this; but when I peek around in the springtime and see my efforts sprouting up again, I feel like the most accomplished gardener. But it really isn't me at all . . . ***it's the right plant for the right place.***

"Nobody sees a flower - really - it is so small it takes time - we haven't time - and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time." - Georgia O'Keeffe

I like this quote because it reminds me that we can miss so much when we overlook the small for the big showy flowers. It slows me down, and that is what gardening and nature are all about.

Kathy

Mystery Plant:

A new activity was unveiled at our April meeting, designed to increase our knowledge of native and non-native plants growing in our area. A "Mystery Plant" for identification will appear in "The Sparkler" each month as a contest to encourage all of us to participate. Here are the rules:

1. Find a plant you would either like to have identified or one you already know and think will stump our participants
2. Take a picture(s) of that plant
3. Submit your photo, along with clues – type, description, location, growth habit, etc. to "The Sparkler" editor, Carolyn Hogue, dchogue@windstream.com for publication selection by the Chapter Board.
4. Two free plant raffle tickets will be awarded for the photo selected to appear in "The Sparkler."
5. When you arrive at the next Chapter meeting (April 10 for this entry), drop a note with your name and best guess into the "Mystery Pant" ID basket at the check-in table
6. Two free raffle tickets will be awarded for the correct identification. In case of multiple correct identifications, a drawing will be held to determine the recipient of the two free raffle tickets.

Our thanks to Kathy Koeppel for this first entry! Get your plant ID books out, and take your best shot! . . . and keep those entries coming. We already have two entries for consideration next month . . . let's keep our Board busy reviewing all those pictures ☺



Grows in a sunny and dry area to about 1-1/2' tall with woody stems, blooms in late spring, kept its yellow flowers several weeks.

Point to Ponder:

“Nature herself makes the wise man rich.”

Cicero

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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."