

The Sparkler

The Sparkleberry Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

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November, 2012

President's Message: *Carol Sullivan*

The big news this month is that we will be taking the summers off. The Executive Committee had tossed this idea around several times for various reasons. The major concern was that meeting attendance would drop off if there was a summer break. After hearing from a few other groups that their members return at the end of summer with renewed interest, we decided to bring it to the members for a vote. That vote resulted in the unanimous decision of the members, including 7 proxy votes, to discontinue meeting in June, July and August. Thanks to all of you who voted.

This month we have another matter to vote on - election of officers for next year. The term of each office is one year with a maximum of two consecutive terms. The Nominating Committee will present a slate of officers and additional nominations may be made by the members before the vote. I hope some of you will volunteer to fill one of the officer positions. With the summer break leaving only nine meetings next year, those jobs just got even easier.

After the business part of our meeting, we're going to do something totally different from our regular programs. Betsy, Mae and a few other volunteers will be teaching us how to make baskets from Saw Palmetto fronds. This will be a hands-on workshop and materials will be provided. There just might be a surprise in store for us too from this little band of mischief makers! You won't want to miss this opportunity - come have some fun with us this month!

Carol

Sparkleberry Chapter meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of each month, except June, July and August, at Hatch Park, 403 SE Craven St., Branford. Meetings start at 6:30 PM.

Please join us for our next meeting on November 13, 2012



From Sparkleberry Webmaster Mae Brandt: To our Sparkleberry Internet novices: Some of you have voiced an interest in our Facebook page but are afraid that you will catch a virus or be stalked if you join Facebook. You don't have to worry. You don't need to enter any personal info and you don't have to post a picture of yourself. Go to www.facebook.com. You only need to enter your first & last name, email address, make a password, indicate male/female, and add a birth date. You can hide your birthday on your timeline later. That's all you need to do and you can join and get into Facebook. Once you get into Facebook, at the top of the Facebook page you will see a blue bar with a box in the middle that says "search for people, places and things." You can enter Sparkleberry in the box and you will get to the Sparkleberry's Facebook page. Also, you can search for friends and family by entering their name in that same box. If you have a Facebook problem or a question, please email me at maebrandt@bellsouth.net.

Calendar of Events:

November 3: Four Rivers Audubon “Alli Walk” at Alligator Lake in Lake City. Meet in the parking lot at 8a. Bird walk, plant ID, new friends.

November 13: Monthly Meeting 6:30 pm., Hatch Park, Branford

Sparkleberry Chapter second Annual Meeting and election of new officers. There will also be a hands-on workshop led by Betsy Martin making baskets from the fronds of Saw Palmetto (*Serona Repens*). If you read the latest Palmetto, the basket was featured on the cover. Palmetto fronds provided.

December 11, 2012- Monthly Meeting 6:30 pm., Hatch Park, Branford

Christmas potluck dinner. The Chapter will be providing coffee, punch, soda and a baked ham. Bring a covered dish and come enjoy the evening. **Remember to bring any donated giveaway gifts to our November meeting. They will be very much appreciated.**

Ask a Native Plant Gardener: *Judee Mundy*

Q: My Chickasaw plum has gotten tall and leggy and I want to trim it. When is the best time to do that so that I don't reduce spring blooms?

A: The best time to prune your plum is late winter/very early spring, which would be somewhere in the neighborhood of last week January/first week Feb. Check that there are no frosts yet to come.....A few blooms might have to be sacrificed because like most spring bloomers, buds have already been set.....

.When a person prunes, growth is stimulated and right now plants are going into their dormant period....so to prune now is to tell the plant to grow which is against its nature and can cause damage with colder weather coming.

Feature Article: *Betsy Martin*

A Fall Walk in the Sandhill

It started out like any other day getting ready for a fall walk in the Sandhill. A beautiful morning, slightly cooler for what a friend said would be a truly beautiful flower walk because it had been burned last winter. I just packed my water and 2 bars planning on being home by lunchtime. It was a 3 mile walk at the Fort White Mitigation Area. We started about 8:30-I had done it before, and knew it took about 2.5hrs. Who would have thought it would take all day, and still not be done?

As we started out, the first thing that really caught our eye was all the grasses, with many textures, like the different varieties of Andropogons, with some in flower. The wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*) has a wonderful stiff texture and the Dog Fennel was flowering in large fluffy clumps. Mixed in all over was the delicate palafoxia, and the large stands of purple liatris spikes, and the bright yellow of the Golden asters (*Chrysopsis linearifolia*) in large groupings- what a wonderful mixture of colors and textures.



The Indian grass blowing on the breeze was spectacular. The false Foxglove (*Aganalis maritime*) with



its feathery foliage and bright pale purple snapdragon like flowers in large clumps was glorious. The Summer Farewell (*Dalea pinnata*) in giant drifts at least 100 feet long were just humming as you walked through them with the bees and butterflies all over them. Then came the mint (*Dicerandra* spp), with a smell so intense as you walked through because they were growing in the walkway and got crushed as you went by, in large groupings along the path- the color was phenomenal. And spotted throughout was the yellow Honeycomb head (*Balduina*). It was a bright but cloudy day as a cold front was coming in. The photo opportunities were constant and also the stops to check the books for plant ID.

As we walked into a scrubby area with some small hammock sections came an added surprise. With the cold front coming in came the last push of the fall migrants – warblers headed on the way to their winter homes as well as other beautiful birds arriving here to spend the winter. We saw 15 different species of warblers (Tennessee, Magnolia, Prairie, Blackburnian (below), Yellow, Bay Breasted, Chestnut sided, Black throated Green, to name a few), a record for me in one day. We saw a yellow billed cuckoo, catbird, a flycatcher, Towhee, various woodpeckers, our first ruby crowned kinglet of the season to name some others for a total of 36 different species.

We were so intent on watching everything around us we didn't even realize it was past 3 and we weren't even hungry and maybe only 2/3 of the way through. But we did notice the clouds starting to gather and move towards us. It wasn't until the soft rain started coming down and the lightning started flashing that we realized we needed to bee-line it to the car...we got out the GPS and realized the road was right next to us. We jumped out onto the road and got a ride to our car just less than a mile down and as we jumped in the car, the bottom fell out in a downpour...excellent timing. It was a perfectly lovely day.



To Be Considered: *Betsy Martin*

Weaving palms is actually an ancient art that dates back to B.C. People had to use the natural materials around them to make themselves comfortable and they realized palm fronds could be woven to provide protection against the elements. They also made baskets for holding items. Join us for hands on workshop at our November meeting to learn how to use palmetto fronds to make the simple basket featured in the last edition of the Palmetto and also to learn about weaving the fronds to make placemats or coasters, and backdrops for seasonal decorations. You will be making a basket for yourself at the meeting and will be shown how to make placemats at home. So come prepared to be inspired and make some cool stuff.

Roadside Bloomers

Several species of Lovegrass (*Eragrostis*) are in full bloom, especially Purple Lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*). that is typically only 1' tall with bright purple inflorescence of about 2'.

Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) - wiry, dark green leaves in 2-3' clumps topped by many 3-4' feathery pink to purplish-red blooms - especially pretty when the sun shines through it.

Broomsedge and Bluestems (*Andropogon spp.*) - upright clumps 1-2' tall with flowering stems twice as tall in silvery green to tan.

Blue/purple flowers can still be seen on spikes of Blazing Star (*Liatris spp.*), Azure Blue Salvia (*Salvia azurea*) and Florida Paint Brush (*Carphephorus corymbosus*).

A pink flowered Scrub Balm (*Dicerandra spp.*) was recently seen in patches about 1' high. Eight species occur in Florida - most are endemic, most are either threatened or endangered, all are rare.

False foxglove (*Agalinis purpurea*) - 3' tall wiry plants with pink bell-shaped flowers found in moist, sunny areas. Known to be parasitic.

Point to Ponder:

What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have never been discovered.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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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."