

The Sparkler

The Sparkleberry Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

Volume 3, Issue 32

March, 2013

President's Message: Mae Brandt

This has been a difficult week for my family. We lost our beloved Yorkie, Lady Abigail. We are mourning in our household and trying to pull our spirits up. This morning, as my husband and I went for a walk on the path in our woods, we could feel the grief ease some when we walked past the Chickasaw Plum, *Prunus angustifolia*, bushes covered with blooms. Then, upon closer examination, they were just loaded with bees! We love bees around here, they are such busy little pollinators. We saw some little butterflies I'm not familiar with and then, floating in for a landing, was a beautiful zebra swallowtail. Also, on our walk, we saw some leftover Carolina Yellow Jessamine, *Gelsemium sempervirens*, blooms. The freeze we had this week really thinned out the blooms. Darn, they smell so sweet!

We had a fun meeting last month planting seeds & packaging seeds! Thank you, Betsy, for the flats and seeds. Everyone that wanted a flat was able to take one home to grow their own native plants. After planting the seeds, we filled seed packets with *Coreopsis leavenworthii* seeds for the Florida Wildflower Foundation. Everyone had such a good time, filling, sealing and socializing, and some wanted to do it again at our March meeting. Well, I received more seeds and, if you would like to help again, stay after the meeting and we can fill more packets. Let's use 1/8 teaspoon this time to fill the packets. Also, check out the Florida Wildflower Foundation Facebook page. We got a big "thank you" for filling the seed packets for them.

Our speaker for March will be Barbara Hines. The title of her program is "Native Plants and Native People". She will discuss the many native plants in the area and the uses that the Native Americans had for these plants on a daily basis. This will include medicinal, edible and other plant uses. We always have members and guests that want to know more about the uses for our natives, so please come to our next meeting and bring a guest.

See you on March 12th & bring a friend,

Mae Brandt



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 March 12, 2013



Calendar of Events: Save The Date!

March 2: Four Rivers Audubon Alli Walk. 8am -11am. Alligator Lake Park, Lake City Florida. Come learn more about our Florida birds and migrants, identify plants, and meet new friends. All levels of experience welcome! Meet at 8am at the Pole Barn. Free.

March 9: Landscaping with Native Plants, 10am – 12 noon. Taylor Senior Citizens Center, Perry
Craig Huegel, PhD, CWB. Donation.

March 12: Monthly Meeting, 6:30 pm., Hatch Park, Branford

Note: 5:45pm. Please come early for Booth meetings (Suwannee Fair, Alligator Lake Festival). Barbara Hines is a Registered Professional Archaeologist who specializes in historic archaeology. The title of the program is "Native Plants and Native People". She will discuss what the Native Americans and early European settlers used these plants for. Specific archaeological sites in Florida that have included plant remains will be discussed, providing direct evidence for the use of plants in prehistoric Florida.

March 30: Native Plant/Bird Walk, 9am. Fort White Mitigation Park. Join Biologist and birding and plant expert Jerry Krummrich and Betsy Martin for a fun, informative walk at this beautiful example of a sandhill community off CR 138 in Gilchrist County. The walk is about 3 miles long, so wear a hat and bring some water. Address NE 2nd Way, off CR 138. For more information, contact Betsy Martin.

April 13: Alligator Lake Spring Festival. 8am Bird Walks, 10a – 3p Vendors and Workshops. Alligator Lake Park, Lake City. Enjoy a fun festival celebrating nature, birds and native plants. Participate in bird walks, and Walking Workshops (registration required) on native and exotic plants, butterflies, and bird habitats. Food and drinks will be available for sale. Come see the Sparkleberry booth! Free.

April 26-27: Spring Native Plant Sale. Morningside Nature Park, Gainesville. Native plant members only, Friday April 26, 4:30p-6:30p. Open to the public Saturday, April 27, 8:30a-12:30p. Many native plant vendors participate, some of which do not routinely sell to the general public. Pay by cash, check, or (new!) credit card.

May 4: Sparkleberry Native Plant Sale, Branford, 10am – 2pm. Come support our Sparkleberry Chapter and get native plants at the best prices in the area.

May 16-19: Florida Native Plant Society 33rd Annual Conference, Jacksonville. See the Palmetto for more details.

And the Winner Is...



Trish Haight won the scholarship to the Florida Native Plant Society Annual Conference in Jacksonville. The Conference is May 16-19.

Feature Article: The Adventures of a South Florida Gardener in North Florida

Carolyn Saft

Moving to North Florida from the east coast of South Florida has created many landscape questions and challenges for me. I asked myself, which plants can handle the freezing temperatures, how about the summer heat and humidity, the poorly drained clay soils and shady conditions? Being tree deprived in South Florida, I was thrilled to purchase a home with property that had many mature trees. I bought the house more because of the setting than the house itself. As I searched on the internet for houses, I just kept coming back to the one I eventually purchased. It was the trees that made the sale! Arching live oaks and towering pines created a wonderfully shaded landscape.

There was a woody feel to the neighborhood and I decided that most of the plants that I would try to add would be native plants. I was tired of seeing the endless sweeping plant beds of impatiens and wanted to do my part to keep North Florida natural looking. The owners before me had planted quite a few azaleas, viburnum and liriop. Rather than yank everything out I decided to add some native plants to them. I pulled out my books and UF EDIS publications and started researching some plants. I looked at light, water and temperature requirements. Right plant, right place was my motto. I thought about mature heights, widths and flowers and fall colors, but I forgot to think about if the plant was deciduous or not. This is still a new concept for me to think about since I grew up surrounded by evergreen plants. Note to self, keep in mind if a plant is deciduous or not. I ended up with one plant bed that looked like a bunch of sticks in the winter time. Luckily I spaced them so other smaller shrubs could be planted so I will be sure to select evergreen plants to fill in my “stick” garden. I have also added some anise to the area which is a great low maintenance screening plant.

The first time I saw an oak-leaf hydrangea I fell in love with it. I was also quite taken with the scarlet hibiscus and Walter’s viburnum. Over time, all were additions to my yard. More additions included a fringe tree, a sugar maple and a dogwood. I also added some other natives that I was not all that familiar with in person, but had read about. The red chokeberry is not one I would plant again since after three years it is still rangy and flowers are short lived. My itea plants have filled in nicely and done well in an area that holds water. Overall, it has been fun talking to people and discovering new possibilities for the yard. Our Sparkleberry people have been a great resource and have given advice that is very useful. I don’t claim to be an expert, but I know more now than when I started. The adventure continues.....

Roadside Bloomers: *Carol Sullivan*

The white flowers of the deciduous Chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia*) and the terminal clusters of cream colored flowers of the evergreen Cherry Laurel or Carolina Laurelcherry (*Prunus caroliniana*) are transitioning into their summer fruits.

The pink/purple flowers of Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) are giving way to their new green leaves while forming numerous seed pods.

Walter's Viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*) has been very visible along the roadsides with clusters of white flowers at the ends of most branches.

Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*) are coming into full bloom with their greenish/yellow flower heads surrounded by four large white bracts that look like petals and create quite a show.

Purple flowers at the tops of each stem of the Pennyroyal (*Piloblephis rigida*) can be seen roadside in dry, sandy areas.

Several of the native blueberries (*Vaccinium myrsinites*, *Vaccinium corymbosum* and *Vaccinium darrowii*) are now in bloom with their bell-shaped flowers that are mostly white or white with some reddish markings.

New leaves and flower buds are appearing on many of our plants now despite the few days of freezing weather we've had recently. Splashes of color from the red tubular flowers of Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) or the blue spikes of Lyreleaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*) should be visible soon.

Points to Ponder

All the flowers of tomorrow are in the seeds of today!

Kathy Davis

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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."