

# The Sparkler

The Sparkleberry Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

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December, 2012

**President's Message:** *Carol Sullivan*

The business portion of our November meeting went very quickly as everyone was anxious to get started making baskets from the fronds of our native Saw Palmetto. As it turned out, Betsy, Mae and Kory showed us all how to make a variety of crafts with those fronds, and even some of our members and guests taught us some additional tricks using the fronds. It was a creative and fun evening for all.

The election held at that meeting resulted in the following officers for 2013 that will become effective on January 1st:

President - Mae Brandt  
Vice President - Carolyn Saft  
Secretary - Judee Mundy  
Treasurer, Debbie Phillips

It's been a very busy year for the Sparkleberry Chapter. There have been interesting monthly programs throughout the year enlightening us about using more native plants in our landscapes, recognizing the birds seen our yards, the many native plants that have been used in the past and are being used today for medicinal and other purposes, the environmental effects of this summer's tropical storms, protecting our homes from fire, invading insects in our forests, and some intensive wildlife conservation efforts in our local forests. Our Chapter has also been represented at various events, such as the Suwannee County Fair, the Alligator Lake Festival and Wild Florida at Stephen Foster State Park. All of this has been made possible through your efforts and support by your membership, by your attendance at our monthly meetings and by so many of you who have volunteered your time and expertise for various projects. To wind up our year there will be a Christmas potluck dinner on December 11th with door prizes for all. We look forward to having all of you there to join us in celebrating the success of our Chapter, and especially to share some of this Christmas Season with such a wonderful group!

*Carol*

**Sparkleberry Chapter meetings** are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 December 11, 2012**



**Calendar of Events:**

**December 5:** 2012 Urban Forestry Workshop. Free, 3:30p – 6:30p. Matheson Museum, Gainesville.

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

Sparkleberry Chapter second Christmas Potluck Dinner. Come enjoy an evening of food, fun and friends, and maybe a surprise or two! Baked ham and drinks provided, bring a dish to share.

**December Christmas Bird Counts:** Dates below. You don't have to be a birder, you just have to like to be outdoors and have fun. If you are interested, please see Valerie Thomas or Betsy Martin. Four Rivers Audubon could really use some help this year.

**Dec. 18 – Ichetucknee/Oleno**

**Dec. 20 - Hamilton County**

**Dec. 27 - Columbia County (including Alligator Lake)**

**January 8, 2013 - Monthly Meeting 6:30 pm., Hatch Park, Branford** Our speaker will be Beau Willsey with the Suwannee River Water Management District with a presentation about Invasive Exotic Plants.

**Ask a Native Plant Gardener:**

Q: What should I do with my love grass or muhly grass once it has bloomed? Should I cut it back, or just leave it?

A: Cut grass to within 12 inches of the ground during the late winter months and before any new growth occurs. Clean the clump of any debris that has accumulated. A rake will help to gently comb any dried up, dead foliage out of the ornamental grass clump.

**To Be Considered: Valerie Thomas**

Just for fun, I am going to periodically give you some of the scientific roots of plant names and their definitions. I like to know the names of things, and while I can sometimes remember the common names, I nearly always forget the “proper” names. My theory is if we know what the root words MEAN, maybe we can help them stick in our heads. We'll give it a try.

Acer =acrid	Ex. <i>Acer rubrum</i>	Common name, Red maple
Aestivalis = summer flowering	Ex. <i>Crateagus aestivalis</i>	Common name, Eastern mayhaw
Albus = white	Ex. <i>Baptisia alba</i>	Common name, Wild white indigo
Angustifolius = narrow leaves	Ex. <i>Prunus angustifolia</i>	Common name, Chickasaw plum
Asclepias = Greek god of healing, because of the many folk medicine uses of milkweed		
	Ex. <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Common name, Butterfly weed
Azureus = sky blue	Ex. <i>Salvia azurea</i>	Common name, blue sage

As I walk through my woods, there is a vine that catches my eye for its color. It has the bright Fall colors that remind me of the beautiful leaves on the trees in my home state of Indiana.

### **Parthenocissus quinquefolia** woodbine, Virginia creeper



#### **Plant Specifics**

Form: vine

Life Span: perennial

Size: Height: to 40 ft

Fruit Color:  blue

Phenology: deciduous

Noted for: Fall color

Recommended Uses: Allow to climb on trellis or tree. Can be used as a ground cover

Wildlife: Fruits are eaten by a variety of birds and small mammals. The vine is used for shelter.

Native Habitats: Dry-moist sites. Hammocks, riverine forests, coastal sites, flatwoods, thickets, disturbed woods.

One of the most attractive deciduous vines, Virginia creeper provides deep green cover to most any object, rapidly climbing by means of tendrils and adhesive disks. The palmate divided leaflets turn a beautiful scarlet color in fall and the bluish-black berries, usually hidden by foliage, are quite attractive to birds. The seeds germinate readily in the landscape and the plant often becomes weedy.

Virginia creeper can be trained to grow against a wall and provides great visual appeal during winter when the leaves have fallen. Stems do not branch readily so a large number of plants need to be installed to create a dense effect. While ideal for use on buildings or trellises, Virginia creeper should probably not be grown on wood siding. Its tendrils will work themselves between the boards and are difficult to remove. Also the dense foliage will dry out slowly after a rain, causing a variety of moisture problems for wood siding. It can be established as a ground cover but the deciduous habit makes it undesirable in the winter.

Growing in full sun to fairly deep shade, Virginia creeper does best on fairly rich soil high in organic matter but will tolerate hot, dry locations.

<http://www.fnps.org/plants/plant/parthenocissus-quinquefolia>

**Roadside Bloomers**

The roadsides are filled with the colors of autumn, with some trees standing out of the normal wall of green. Especially pretty are the red maples (*Acer rubrum*), the dogwood, (*Cornus florida*), the hickories, (*Carya spp.*), and the turkey oaks (*Quercus laevis*). Fall in North Florida is more subtle than the brilliance of more northern states, but it still very beautiful.

Autumn leaves are not “bloomers”, but each year at Thanksgiving, a bloom appears as an early harbinger of spring to come. In the floodplain along the Santa Fe River, the atamasco lily (*Zephyranthes atamasco*) will carpet the hammock floor in hundreds of delicate white blossoms. But there are always one or two “early birds” that flower now. After loading up on a delicious Thanksgiving meal, it’s fun to take a walk along the river to see how many lilies can be found.



**Point to Ponder:**

The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second best time is now.

**Anonymous**

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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."*