



March – April 2013

Nature Coast Chapter meetings, field trips, and activities are open to FNPS members and the public alike. Monthly meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at Land O' Lakes Community Center, 5401 Land O'Lakes Blvd (US 41) Land O' Lakes, FL 34639 in the back meeting room with entrance off the courtyard on the south side of the building.



March 12th, 2013 program: Ants and Plants

Although we often take them for granted, these fascinating and abundant social insects are major players in most terrestrial environments and impact ecosystem functions.

Josh King, Assistant Professor at the University of Central Florida, Biology Department, will be discussing the general biology and ecology of ants. He'll describe the natural history of several commonly encountered ants at home and in the garden, especially as they pertain to plants and plant communities. Dr. King's area of expertise is the biology and ecology of native and invasive ants in Florida and the southeastern US.



April 9, 2013 program: Ecosystem Gardening

The role native plants and natural habitats play to help increase the success and productivity of edible gardens in the landscape. Join us to learn from **Ginny Stibolt** more good reasons to surround your garden with native plants! Ginny will have her new book *Organic Methods for Vegetable Gardening in Florida*, available for purchase and signing!

Ginny Stibolt, a life-long gardener with a master's degree in Botany, is the author of *Sustainable Gardening for Florida* and coauthor of *Organic Methods for Vegetable Gardening in Florida*, both published by University Press of Florida. She has been a presenter at various garden-related events and festivals in Florida, Master Gardener meetings, Native Plant Society meetings, Sierra Club meetings, garden club gatherings, and more. She writes about plants and gardening for Floridata.com, Florida Native Plant Society, Native Plants & Wildlife Gardens, Lawn Reform Coalition, and on her own blog: <http://www.greengardeningmatters.com/>

March 16, 2013, Field Trip at 10am to "Annie's End of the Road Farm", located at 16560

Sweetwater Rd, Blanton, FL 33523. **Annie Johnson**, Vice President of the Native Plant Society, has invited us to enjoy her beautiful property, learn about her native plants and help her plant some new acquisitions, since her shoulder operation has limited her activities. There are two pair of nesting great blue herons in the treetops over the lake to watch and a variety of seeds from native plants for the taking. It will be a beautiful day to enjoy some physical labor, companionship, scenery and good food. Even if you are not physically able to help out, come to enjoy Annie's farm. Wear gardening clothing, bring gloves, hats and tools and a bag lunch. Annie will provide coffee, tea (no soda) and snacks/sweets.

Directions: I-75 to exit 293, CR-41S exit East toward Dade City/PHCC, onto Blanton Rd. Go 2.5 miles to the first cross road, just past the Citgo convenience store. Turn right (south) onto Spring Valley Road/ Alt CR41. At the church, Spring Valley goes left - DO NOT go left. Go straight past the church to take a sharp right turn, go up the hill. After a sharp left turn, follow the dirt road, Sweetwater Road, 1 1/2 miles, past the side road Sickler. Annie's recessed gate is on the left, before the hump. Turn in, go down to the bend, angle park by the fence on the right, and walk down to the house. If unable to walk down the hill, or you get lost, call Annie at 352-518-0545.

April 13, 2013, Field Trip at 9:30am, Hillsborough River State Park. The park is located at 15402 US 301 North, Thonotosassa, FL, 33592. There is a \$6 fee per car of 2-8 people and \$4 per car for 1 person vehicle. The walk will be led by *Carmel vanHoeck*, a Tampa native, who has always loved exploring the woods. Carmel has been cataloguing plants and supplying voucher specimens to the USF Herbarium since the 1980's, including the Withlacoochee State Forest, Chinsegut, Avon Park Bombing Range and currently for District 4 State Parks. This is Carmel's 8th year at Hillsborough River State Park. We are very fortunate to have her as our guide. We will meet at 9:30am at Parking lot #3, which has a large parking lot and is near the restrooms. Make sure to wear appropriate clothing and shoes, bring water and insect repellent. Also, binoculars, camera and hand lens would be items to carry for examining the various native flora and fauna along the way. There are several trails and Carmel knows them all, so the walk will be very informative, easy and fun. To get a map of the park and more information online, go to: <http://www.floridastateparks.org/hillsboroughriver>

NATURE COAST CHAPTER SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE

When: Saturday, March 30 from 10 AM to 2 PM

Where: Land O'Lakes Community Center (behind), 5401 Land O'Lakes Blvd./US 41, LOL 34639

What: We will have a large variety of quality nursery grown native plants for sale. Also books for sale.

Pasco Master Gardener Information Table

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! Please contact ***Peggy Gretchen*** at 813-991-4812 or herculesmpg@hotmail.com or sign up at the February or March meetings.

Welcome Renewed Members:

Sharon Holding, Gregory Cardinal, Thomas Crennan, NPR Library, Judith LeVault, June Long and Jonnie Spittler.



Message from Julie Wert, President, Nature Coast Chapter:

March 22-24 Nature Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival

This is a first-time, brand-new, inaugural event – expanding upon the old Chinsegut Birding and Wildlife Festival to include Citrus, Hernando and Pasco Counties.

At Chinsegut there will be many interesting events throughout Saturday, March 23. Rita Grant and Rick from Hickory Hill Nursery will be selling plants. They need help with logistical kinds of things, like early-morning set up and late afternoon break-down, and just nuts-and-bolts care of the place throughout the day. If you want to help, Anne Marie Hammond, Brooksville Ridge Volunteer Coordinator (Phone: 352-754-6722) is coordinating the volunteers for the Saturday of Chinsegut.

There will also be several events in Pasco County. One of Florida's leading experts on butterflies Dr. Jaret Daniels, will lead an exciting tour to Conner Preserve, at the Serenova Tract of Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. At least 20 species of butterfly are possible on this field trip.

Don Robinson of Pasco Environmental Lands will lead birding tours at Jumping Gully, a newly acquired property, and at Upper Cotee Preserve. There will be a beginners, family friendly birding hike at led by expert birder Jason Guerard at Crews Lake Wilderness Park, one of the County's birding hotspots.

For more Information and to sign up for one of the many field trips in the three counties over 3 days go to:

<http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/events/detail/2033/>

<http://naturecoastfestival.wordpress.com/>

http://www.facebook.com/NatureCoastBirdingandWildlifeFestival?group_id=0

http://www.wildlifefoundationofflorida.com/NCBW_Festival

Check out the newly revised '***Native Plant Owners Manuals***' that are currently available on the FNPS State website at Resources/Downloadable Documents: <http://fnps.org/resources/pubs>. **Mark Hutchinson**, Hernando Chapter member, created these as a member of the FNPS Education Committee to be used by FNPS chapters and members. These Plant Presentations are quite thorough, covering most aspects of the plants, from name, origin, life cycle, pollination, propagation, to ethnobiology.

These Plant Presentations are in *.pdf format, and can now be used in two different ways. The presentations can be viewed as a simple start to finish slide show, or can be used in open discussion using the 'Navigation' page of the presentation. This page provides internal links to different parts of the presentation, making a free wheeling discussion of the plant easy and convenient. Most of the species addressed in these manuals are indigenous to Central Florida where our chapter is located, so let's make use of them!

Dedication of Gorgon's Garden

As many of you know, ***Gorgon O'Connor*** was a longtime member of the Nature Coast Chapter of the Native Plant Society who passed away last year as the result of a brain tumor at the age of 62. Native plants were her passion and she felt strongly that they were an essential part of a healthy environment.

She was also a devoted employee of the Florida State Parks, having worked at Honeymoon Island State Park and then as a ranger at Werner Boyce Salt Springs State Park from 2000 to shortly before her death. So, it was a "no brainer" for our chapter to plant a native plant memorial garden last fall in her honor at the entrance to Werner Boyce. There will be a short dedication ceremony for Gorgon's garden for anyone who wants to remember her on Tuesday, March 19th at 10:00 AM. This is at the main entrance to the Park on U.S. Highway 19 just north of the Walmart at Ridge Rd. If you have any questions about this, contact janicehowie@aol.com

Water and Land Legacy Amendment - Get on Board!

If you haven't heard about this amendment, please read this. This amendment will help to save the environment in Florida by guaranteeing funds for conservation land purchases and water restoration projects that will maintain and improve the water quality of rivers, streams, beaches and shores as well as the Everglades. In addition, money will be provided for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitats, forests, recreational areas, working farms and ranches, and historic and geologic sites.

Up until the past two years, Florida prudently spent about \$300 million per year in the Florida Forever Program to purchase environmental sensitive lands, and another \$100 million for Everglades' restoration. In Florida where the population was rapidly expanding and sprawl was occurring almost everywhere, this helped to preserve some of natural Florida for us and for future generations and guarantee healthy drinking water sources. The money for this program came from the document tax, a tax on the sale and purchase of real estate.

However, in 2011 the new administration in Tallahassee did not fund Florida Forever at all and the document tax funds went into the general revenue. In 2012, only 2.5% of the tax money was used for Florida Forever. The Water and Land Legacy Amendment would ensure that 33% of the document tax money will be spent on the above projects, and keep the governor and legislature out of the process all together. THIS IS NOT A NEW TAX, and would secure about \$500 million per year for conservation purposes.

In order to get this on the ballot in 2014, 500,000 signatures on petitions must be obtained by November of this year. This amendment is supported by the Florida Native Plant Society, our chapter, and most of the major environmental groups in the state. Those include the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, the Wildlife Federation, and the Nature Conservancy. Won't you get on board as well, and obtain some signatures for this extremely worthwhile cause? You can either commit to getting signatures in public in such places as farmers' markets or festivals, or get a small packet of petitions and collect from your friends and family. WE ALL NEED TO DO OUR PART. I will have packets of forms at the chapter meeting in February and March, or if you can't make the meeting and want to help, email me at janicehowie@aol.com. This is our chance to do something to help to save the environment of our marvelous state. Let's not blow it!

Jan Howie, Chairman

***Plant Identification Terminology, An Illustrated Glossary*, Second Edition**

By James G Harris and Melinda Woolf Harris

Copyright 2001 206 Pages

In January, the Chapter had a program that had us all peering through magnifying lens, trying to see what characteristics distinguished a leaf or stem. We heard words like tomentose, woolly, hirsute and hispid being used. If we look up those words in a glossary of a book for identifying native plants, we can get a verbal description that often leads to more confusion.

What if you could look up the word hirsute and see a drawing of hirsute hairs? There is such a book and it works! It's set up like a dictionary, with a drawing to illustrate the term. We can see a drawing showing that hirsute hairs are small, coarse and stiff, making the term easier to remember and use!

There are 2 parts, the first being the illustrated glossary. The second is *Terminology by Category*. For instance, under leaves is Leaf Shapes with drawings of the many shapes. If you don't know what a flabellate shape is, there's a drawing to help you. This book is a must if you're struggling with taxonomic language. It can be ordered from many online sources for less than \$20. If there's enough interest, our Chapter can make it part of our book supply!

Chapter contact information

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Program Coordinator: OPEN, please consider giving the Chapter a modest donation of your time and talent to fill this position!

Chapter website: pasconativeplants.org

BEACH SUNFLOWER

by Peggy A. Gretchen
FNPS Member and Pasco Master Gardener

Botanical Name: *Helianthus debilis*

Common Name: Beach Sunflower, Dune Sunflower, Cucumberleaf Sunflower

Family: Asteraceae or Compositae (Daisy or Sunflower)

Type of Plant: Native sprawling herbaceous wildflower or groundcover; annual or short-lived perennial; spreads by self-sown seed or thin, underground stems. Cold-tender. Height: 1 – 2 ft. Width: 3 – 4 ft.

How to Identify:

Leaves: Alternate, broad base, long-stalked, hairy and rough. Margins entire or toothed.

Flowers: Showy, bright yellow ray florets with reddish-purplish brown disk florets form numerous, single, daisy-like heads (about 2 in.) on long stalks. Flowering Time: All year in South Florida. Spring to fall in Central Florida. Summer in North Florida.

Fruit: Small achene with an oily seed.

Habitat: Beach dunes, coastal strand, coastal grasslands, and disturbed sites.

Distribution: Common nearly throughout Florida. There are three subspecies:

- 1.) *H. debilis* subsp. *debilis* – East Coast of Florida peninsula;
- 2.) *H. debilis* subsp. *cucumerifolius* – North Florida to central peninsula;
- 3.) *H. debilis* subsp. *vestitus* – Western central peninsula. Endemic.

It is recommended to use the subspecies native to your locale. Hardiness Zones: 8 – 10.

Landscape Use / Wildlife Benefit: Excellent showy native sunflower for use in mixed wildflower beds (try with blanket flower, trailing blue porterweed, railroad vine, beach verbena, beach morning glory, goldenrod, cassia, and firebush), borders, sunny butterfly gardens, coastal gardens, and roadside plantings. Very useful as an attractive, fast growing groundcover requiring little maintenance. The flowers attract many butterflies for nectar. The seeds attract many birds and small mammals.

Cultivation:

Soil: Well-drained, sandy.

Light: Full sun best.

Water: Dry to moist. Will survive on natural rainfall once established. Extremely drought-tolerant! Do not overwater.

Miscellaneous: Highly salt-tolerant. Fast growing. Very low maintenance – periodic removal of spent plants. May be damaged or killed by freezing weather; however, it may well persist in the landscape by self-sown seedlings, which will appear each spring.

Propagation: By seeds or cuttings.

Availability: See your FANN (Florida Association of Native Nurseries) Directory or www.plantrealflorida.org!

References:

Haehle, Robert G. and Joan Brookwell, Native Florida Plants, Houston, Texas, Gulf Publishing Company, 1999.

Huegel, Craig N., Native Wildflowers and Other Groundcovers for Florida Landscapes, Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida, 2012.

Nelson, Gil, Florida's Best Native Landscape Plants, Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida, 2003.

Osorio, Rufino, A Gardener's Guide to Florida's Native Plants, Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida, 2001.

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



FNPS Website: www.fnps.org

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