

Serenoa Notes

The Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

May 2013

Mark Your Calendars—The FNPS Annual Conference is Fast Approaching!

From FNPS Website, <http://www.fnps.org/conference/2013>

FNPS Ixia Chapter presents the Florida Native Plant Society's 2013 conference. The theme, "Celebrating La Florida; the Land of Flowers," is to commemorate Ponce deLeon's naming of this region when he landed in NE Florida 500 years ago.

The conference will be held May 16th through May 19th at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. Field trips will be held on Thursday May 16th and on Sunday May 19th.

See the website for details on field trips, socials, programs and registration. Space is limited on the field trips, workshops, and the socials, so don't delay!

Monthly meetings at Selby Gardens:

Every third Monday.
811 South Palm Ave. Sarasota.
Doors open at 7:00 p.m,
business meeting at 7:30,
followed by program.
Everyone welcome!

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"P" is for... —Fran Palmeri

Palafoxia integrifolia (Coastalplain palafox) and *Palafoxia feayi* (Feay's palafox), two species of shrubby aster found in Florida's pinelands and scrub. Deciduous multi-stemmed perennials which can become five feet tall, they prefer full sun and sandy soil which many of us have around here. They bloom in summer and fall.

Feay's palafox, endemic to scrubby flatwoods and scrub in Florida, with simple opposite leaves and white or pale lavender flowers, is described as taller and coarser than the coastalplain palafox. Feay's palafox did not escape William Bartram's inquiring eye during his explorations of

Continued on page 4

Near right:
Coastalplain palafox

Far right:
Feay's palafox



PHOTOS BY FRAN PALMERI



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Visit our chapter on the Florida

Native Plant society website:

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Around the Bend Nature Tours Butterfly Garden at Just For Girls, West Bradenton

—Karen Fraley

On January 3, 2013 Karen Fraley of Around the Bend Nature Tours visited with 19 students at the Just for Girls facility on 59th Street West in Bradenton. The educational session started with a look at the Manatee County Soil Survey and a discussion of what used to grow on the site. Native landscape books and brochures were consulted and the girls came up with a dream list of plants to put into the ground.

The plant wish list and a site map were given to Tom Heitzman of Sweetbay Nursery. A grant application was presented to and approved by the Serenoa Chapter Board of Directors to cover the design and cost of the plants (Just for Girls had a matching grant from the Longboat Key Garden Club for Karen's services).

With plans in hand, the garden was scheduled to be planted by the students at the end of Spring Break. On March 15th 19 girls and 4 teachers worked with Karen Fraley and Sherry Svekis of Just for Girls to plant their butterfly garden.

The 19 girls ranging in age from 6 to 11 unloaded 75 plants (23 species) and 30 bags of Florimulch. That was BIG work. But the day had just begun, it was time to dig and plant. The garden is designed in a circular formation at the back of the facility—the previous year it was a “Pizza Garden” with tomatoes, peppers, and other vegetables. Two hours later the girls were quite satisfied with their morning work and couldn't wait to go home to tell their parents about their new habitat for butterflies and birds.

(See photo at bottom of facing page)



PHOTO BY KAREN FRALEY

Hard at work planting

Species Spotlight: *Fiddlewood* (*Citharexylum spinosum*)—*Not Just for Fiddles!* —Elizabeth Gandy

Spring is upon us and thanks to warming weather and some very welcome rains, plants everywhere are greening up. As we look around us at the fresh beauty of this season of botanical renewal it is hard to rest our attention on just one plant. But this one really catches our attention!

Fiddlewood is a somewhat diverse plant with a broad range. The *Citharexylum* genus is rather large and species occur from the southeast US into South America. Our Florida fiddlewood occurs primarily in the southern part of the state in coastal and tropical hammocks, throughout the Caribbean and south to northern South America. It is occasional up the west coast of Florida to Sarasota county and on the east coast to Brevard county.

In the natural environment, fiddlewood is typically a large shrub to small tree. It is multi-stemmed with the slender branches arching gracefully. True to the common name, the wood, with its gray bark and orange to red heartwood has been used in the making of musical instruments as well as cabinetry. The leaves are a shiny, dark green on the top and a light green underneath, 2-4 inches long and have an orange petiole (stem). The small, white tubular flowers are produced in elongated clusters (racemes) all over the plant from spring through fall and really almost year-round. The plants are dioecious (male and female plants are separate) and the prodigious fruit is an attractive orange color, turning black with age.

The flowers of this plant are fragrant day and night, attracting moths at night and so many insects during the day that the buzz from the plants is readily audible. The color contrast between the leaves and the petioles and fruit make this a very attractive plant even without any flowers. In the home landscape fiddlewood is quite hardy once established. It tolerates drought, cold, bad soil, hot sun and apparently some salt spray, though I have no experience with this last. In my yard I have found it to be a fast grower, pest free and really a bulletproof landscape plant. When planting fiddlewood, I would recommend giving it plenty of room to grow or be prepared for frequent pruning, don't be afraid of bees and if planting inland, do provide some shelter from cold. Fiddlewood is readily available from our local native landscape nurseries and is well worth your consideration the next time you need a plant at your home!



Fiddlewood

PHOTO BY LIZ GANDY

PHOTOS BY KAREN FRALEY



A garden to be proud of



PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI

Feay's palafox

"P" is for... *continued from page 1*

Florida in the 1770's. Naturalist, artist, nurseryman, but most of all blithe spirit, Bartram roamed the southeastern coastal plain with immense curiosity and passion. He sent his botanical finds over to his patron Dr. John Fothergill, the British plant enthusiast, who financed William's four-year expedition. Feay's palafox ended up in the Joseph Ewan Collection at the British Museum. On a yellowing sheet of parchment there is the specimen Bartram collected in east Florida long ago. English botanist Thomas Nuttall who worked in America during the early 1800's visited Bartram at his garden at Kinsessing. Nuttall published the genus in 1818 and later John Torrey and Asa Gray re-classified it.

The Florida Plant Atlas shows Feay's palafox vouchered (plant specimen collected) in 24 counties of central and south Florida including Sarasota and Manatee counties with an 1877 citation to Asa Gray. Coastalplain palafox is vouchered in 46 counties, also including Sarasota and Manatee.

A hundred years ago Mary Francis Baker botanized in Florida and found Feay's palafox two to ten feet high in "sandy thickets" blooming "all the year". She included it in her book *Florida Wild Flowers, An Introduction to the Florida Flora*.

Palafox is unmistakable in the landscape. It has only disk flowers with anthers and stigmas sticking out of tubular flowers. Often when I photograph palafox, it is being visited by a bee, wasp or is covered with lovebugs. I know fall is coming on when I see it at blooming at Oscar Scherer State Park. In a recent talk to the Pinellas chapter of the FNPS, entomologist Mark Deyrup characterized this plant as "well liked by skipper butterflies and bees". It just so happened that the day before I had put a picture of this beautiful plant on my desktop.

Liz Gandy has coastalplain palafox growing in her garden and has found it to be a beautiful, easy care plant which reseeds prolifically in sandy soil but not in mulch. In fall after it finishes flowering and seeding, she cuts off the old stalks, many of which grow back the next year.

So as you are out reveling in our fall wildflowers, take note of the nearly pink palafox. It is hard to miss as chances are it is almost as tall as you!



PHOTO BY FRAN PALMERI

Coastalplain palafox

Gardening in Small Spaces —Tom Heitzman

Many people think that they need a big yard to enjoy the beauty of native plants.

As our yards get smaller and many people have only a small space or patio to garden in, there are still plenty of opportunities to use Florida native plants. If you have a small yard, start with using some large shrubs or small trees. Many of our commonly thought of shrubs such as Walters viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*), wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), Simpson's stopper (*Myrcianthes fragrans*), white indigoberry (*Randia aculeata*) and yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) make great small trees. All it takes is a little pruning and shaping. These and other large shrubs fill small spaces nicely and provide great cover and food for many of our songbirds.

Fill in the gaps in your yard with small shrubs, grasses and perennials. Privet cassia (*Senna ligustrina*), shrub mint (*Hyptis alata*), calamint (*Calamintha ashei*), coontie (*Zamia pumila*), muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*), tickseed (*Coreopsis* sp.) and horsemint (*Monarda punctata*) would all work well and give you seasonal color. Some of our popular shrubs are available in dwarf cultivars for those interested in beauty but not size. The list is long so pick plants suited to you space considering size, flowering time and color and light requirements in different parts of your yard.

Many of our native perennials lend themselves nicely to planting in containers. Try tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*), black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), twinflower (*Dyschoriste humistrata*), blanket flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*) or milkweed (*Asclepias* sp.). Look for more diminutive plants and ones that might attract butterflies and other pollinators. Wild coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*) makes an excellent small shrub in containers for shadier areas. Again there are many Florida native plants available with more coming into production all the time. There are many beautiful, decorative pots available depending on your space and type of plant. Keep in mind that containerized plants will require watering either by hand or with an automatic system. Many drip systems with timers can be installed easily and for a relatively low cost. Remember also to mulch your pots just as you would for plants in the ground.

Small spaces make great places for using Florida native plants.



PHOTO BY LIZ GANDY

Tropical sage in red

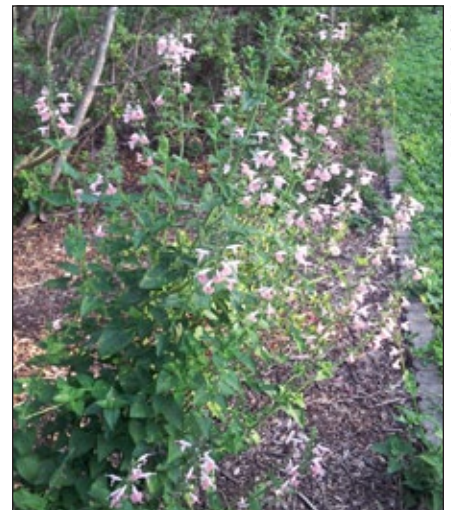


PHOTO BY LIZ GANDY

Tropical sage in pink



PHOTO BY LIZ GANDY

Dwarf Walter's viburnum with muhly grass on either side

White-footed Ant, Another Non-native Pest Insect

—Nancy West

PHOTO: R.H. SCHEFFRAHN, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA @ [HTTP://ENTNEM-DEPT.UFL.EDU/CREATURES/URBAN/ANTS/WHITE-FOOTED_ANT.HTM](http://entnem-dept.ufl.edu/creatures/urban/ants/white-footed_ant.htm)



White-footed ant

PHOTO CREDIT: DAN L. PERLMAN @ [HTTP://WWW.ECOLIBARY.ORG/PAGE/DPI39_1](http://www.ecolibary.org/page/dpi39_1)



Ant Tending Aphid

The White-footed ant, **Technomyrmex difficilis*, was first discovered to have arrived in Florida (Homestead) in 1986 and has rapidly spread to many counties in Florida and now Georgia and Louisiana. It is in my yard and in my house, which is why I have become more familiar with it. This small black ant with white feet (actually 'tarsus' which is hard to see without a lens) does not bite and does not cause structural damage.

According to some researchers there may be 8000 to 3 million ants in one colony. Last fall I was sure I was battling more than a million in my house and yard. I would get up in the morning to see trails of ants in my kitchen, some of them traveling in and out of my electrical outlets. In my house, these ants were foraging for anything sweet but will also eat forms of protein. Consequently, my kitchen has never been kept so clean!

In my yard, the ants were feeding on plant nectar and honeydew produced by sap-sucking insects. Many sap-sucking insects like aphids, mealybugs and scale insects secrete honeydew, which in turn is eaten by the ants. The ants, in return, protect the aphids and mealybugs from being preyed upon by other insects. Some species of ants move these sap-sucking insects to other plants or to other parts of the same plant. Therefore the aphid, mealybug, scale insect population, with the ant's protection, can now get so large that they can damage a plant. Sap-sucking insects can transmit plant diseases, distort the new growth of leaves and also, the excess honeydew they excrete, drops onto the leaves below them leading to the growth of a fungus known as sooty-mold.

In a normal ecologically stable environment, you would not have foreign invasive insects attacking your native plants without some kind of natural controls. Even the aphid, scale and mealybugs attacking your plants may not be native. In a UF article, it stated that "During the decades since 1971 exotic insects have been arriving and becoming established on Florida's shores at a rate of about 10 species per year."¹

With that said, what worked for me to control this ant was outdoor liquid ant bait that contains borax (Sodium tetraborate decahydrate). I put several containers around the outside of my house. I bought this commercial product, which comes in a plastic container that keeps the bait protected from rain etc. It took a couple of weeks for the population to be reduced to a point that I was not having problems in the house. Borax is a relatively safe compound. When the ants eat the borax, the crystalline structure of the borax pierces the exoskeleton of the insect. I will probably have to continue to use this bait, as my neighborhood is infested with this ant. Controlling the ant around my house reduces the population also in my yard. Hopefully, predators and parasites of the sap-sucking insects will have a better chance of controlling these pests. If you still need to control your sap-sucking pests, check out some natural spray options. See website below. Please refrain from using Imidacloprid type pesticides in your yard, as more and more evidence points to this pesticide as contributing to honeybee and native bee declines.

¹ <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in503> Invasive Insects in Florida

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in551> White-footed Ants, description and management

* The common name 'White-footed ant' actually applies to *Technomyrmex albipes*. <http://www.fcla.edu/FlaEnt/fe91p428.pdf>
<http://organicgardening.about.com/od/pestcontrol/a/spraysforaphids.htm>

The FNPS Serenoa Chapter summer picnic will be coming up! It is planned for July 27th at Tom's house at Sweetbay Nursery, 10824 Erie Rd, Parrish, 34219. Plan to bring a dish to share and your own utensils. It will be a great time with opportunities to tour the nursery and the property. Lots of great plants and birding so bring those binoculars! Stay tuned for more details!

See page 8 for all upcoming events—both ours and those sponsored by like-minded organizations!

Serenoa Chapter Newsletter

Credit card payments can be faxed to (815) 361-9166; or mail this form to: FNPS, PO Box 278, Melbourne, FL 32902-0278

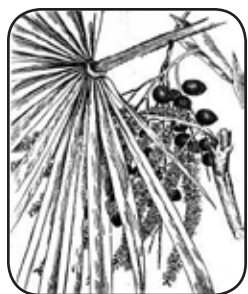
Join Now! Come to the meetings and field trips—learn about conservation, and native habitat

Events Calendar

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Monthly general meetings at Selby Gardens: Every third Monday, Sept. through May at 7:00 p.m.; speaker begins at 7:30. Selby Botanical Gardens Activity Center, 811 South Palm Avenue, Sarasota. Everyone welcome!

- May 4** SATURDAY, 9 A.M.—NOON—BAY GUARDIANS VOLUNTEER NATIVE PLANTING. Perico Bay Preserve, 11700 Manatee Avenue West, Bradenton, FL 34209. Team up with Manatee County Natural Resources Department and Around the Bend Nature Tours for a native planting and a sneak peek at one of Manatee county's newest Preserves. Registration is required! Contact Sara Kane at sara@sarasotabay.org, 941-955-8085 or Karen@around-bend.com, 941-794-8773.
- May 5** SUNDAY, 11 A.M.—4 P.M.—FOURTH ANNUAL SUSTAINABLE SHINDIG. Downtown Bradenton Riverwalk at Pavilion and Family Fun Zone. Enjoy a beautiful view with local bands and local food and learn about how to support a more sustainable lifestyle. FNPS Serenoa will have a booth. Volunteers needed!
- May 11** FIELD TRIP 9 A.M.—SPRING FLING IN ST. PETE. Pinellas County, A ranger-led tour of Boyd Hill Nature Preserve will be followed by a visit to Richard Beaupre's beautiful garden, followed by lunch in the garden.
- May 13** GENERAL MEETING 7 P.M.—Conserving "Paradise." Dr. Mary Jelks will talk about her many years as a conservationist in Sarasota and what the future for the state looks like.
- May 16-19** THE 33RD ANNUAL FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY CONFERENCE—University of North Florida in Jacksonville, Ixia Chapter, host. <http://www.fnps.org/conference/2013> Field trips will be held on Thursday May 16th and on Sunday May 19th. The heart of the conference is on Friday and Saturday with keynote speakers, educational sessions, book signings, and networking with fellow native plant enthusiasts. Native plant nurseries will also offer their beautiful natives for sale on Friday and Saturday.
- June 1** FIELD TRIP 9 A.M.—JELKS PRESERVE. Dr. Mary Jelks will take us on a "weed walk" at the 614-acre preserve, which was made possible in part by a generous donation from the Jelks Family Foundation.



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