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The Suncoast Grapevine

Newsletter of the Suncoast Native Plant Society, Inc.



Volume 29 Number 4

APRIL 2012

The Future of the Southwest Florida Water Management District

Presented by Joe Quinn

Wednesday, April 18th @ 7pm

Hillsborough County Extension Service

This month's speaker comes to us from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to discuss the impact of the recent budget cutbacks to "The District" and the anticipated effects on the future acquisition of lands, management of existing lands, and the demise of surplus lands.



SWFWMD was created in 1961 by a special act of the Florida Legislature to be the local sponsor of the "Four River Basins, Florida Project." This was a major flood control project sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers after Hurricane Donna caused massive damage to southwest Florida in 1960.

The District's responsibilities evolved over time from strictly flood control to a more broad-based policy of resource management and service to the public. While their mission has remained essentially the same since passage of the Water Resources Act — to manage and protect water and related natural resources — the areas of responsibility now encompass water supply, flood protection, water quality management and natural systems management. Join us while we explore possible solutions to surviving the budget crisis and anticipate the future role the District will play in preserving native plants and native plant communities in Florida.

—Submitted by Devon Higginbotham



The Florida Native Plant Society was organized in 1980 to promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida. For more information about the Florida Native Plant Society, please visit our web site: www.fnps.org

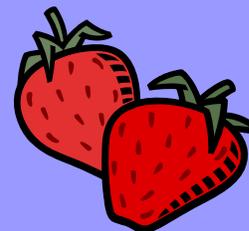
Plant City: History in the Heart of Florida

Location, Location, Location

The Suncoast Chapter serves Hillsborough County, reaching from Tampa Bay north to Lutz, south to Ruskin, and east to Plant City, site of the 32nd annual Florida Native Plant conference. With so many places to choose from, some may wonder, "why Plant City? Is it the name?" If you only know Plant City as a blur south of the Interstate, you are not alone. After whizzing by it countless times, I finally slowed down to see what Plant City had to offer; it was truly a worthwhile decision. Here are some of the reasons why...

It turns out that Plant City is one of the few "walkable" towns in Florida, complete with historic buildings and murals. Though close to the urban sprawl of Tampa, it has retained the small town feel and heritage that flows from its unique history and location.

Plant City sits on I-4 between Lakeland and Tampa, and has about 35,000 area residents. Although it certainly is on the road to well-known tourist attractions, it is equally near diverse natural areas like the Green Swamp, Hillsborough River basin and Tampa Bay, Alafia River, Circle B Bar Preserve and the Lake Wales Ridge. We hope that everyone plans to visit the town's natural surroundings on field trips and side trips while you are in the area. High and dry or wet and wading, there's a preserve or park that's perfect for you in easy driving distance.



The Venue

Our conference will be held on the Plant City campus of the Hillsborough Community College just down the road from our hotels. I must say the John R. Trinkle Center was another fabulous surprise; it is the perfect space for our conference—light, airy, great parking, and an oak-shaded courtyard for the plant vendors and all the high tech gadgetry we need to hold a great conference. I've been to quite a few FNPS conferences, and this is among the best settings we've had. We're **extremely grateful to the University of Florida IFAS, Gulf Coast Research and Education Center-Plant City** for sponsoring our use of this facility.

Shirley Denton, president of the hosting Suncoast Chapter says, "we're enthusiastic about our venue – a really modern facility in an old Florida community. I'm really glad that we can bring to FNPS a strong local heritage, great nature, and wonderful talks."

Plant City, the Old and the New

Like any small town, there are families and businesses who have been part of the community for generations. The town retains much of its early character, with historic commercial and residential districts.

Plant City was originally named *Ichepucksassa* (according to Wikipedia), then became a cotton town named Cord. Eventually farmers switched to strawberries, and when Cord became an agricultural transportation hub, the town thrived, and had another name change. Apparently, naturally occurring phosphate nodules in the soil of surrounding flatwoods allowed vegetables, ornamentals and strawberries to thrive in the Florida sand. Though touted as Winter Strawberry Capital of the World and an agricultural wonderland, the town was not named for *plants*; it was named to commemorate the railroad magnate Henry Plant, whose trains made it all possible.



The annual Strawberry Festival in March soon became a Florida tradition which continues to this day, with its county fair attractions and famous country stars. (*Strawberry lovers*: Although strawberry season ends in early April, you can get a strawberry milkshake at Parkesdale Farm Market on Hwy. 92 west of town year round.)

Today, the train no longer stops in Plant City but you can see the original train station in the historic downtown area, along with the shop faces and homes of yesteryear. A walk around town and a drive in the country will show you how old and new can combine to blend the best of both worlds.

Janet Bowers, Suncoast Chapter, nominates the downtown Corner Store restaurant as her favorite place in Plant City. The Corner Store has unique sandwiches, wraps and salads made from organic sources, combined with a very friendly atmosphere. (They will be bringing us our conference lunches, by the way!)

Out of town, Janet tells us, Plant City is now home to Eco-farm where the owners grow organic, sustainable crops and make cane syrup. Other local farmers have expanded into blueberries, and a blueberry winery offers tastings. Plant City clearly continues to transform its agricultural heritage.

Plant City: History in the Heart of Florida *(continued...)*

The Lodging

You can't lose staying in either hotel. The Red Rose Inn, just a few minutes away from the Trinkle Center along the frontage road, is, well, shall we say, eclectic! You can't tell this book from its cover... From I-4, it looks like an ordinary, if really large, motor lodge, but just wait. The owners have put their hearts into making the hotel a resource for their community, with a southern flavor, and their food is legendary in the Tampa Bay area. Feeling adventurous? Book your stay in either the Rhett Butler or Cross Creek suite! See a great 2010 article at <http://www2.tbo.com/news/plant-city/2010/may/06/plant-citys-red-rose-queen-prom-ar-45336/>. For those who prefer something a bit more conventional, the Holiday Inn Express is under 1/3 mile north of the Trinkle Center, and just south of the road that leads to the Red Rose.

On behalf of the Suncoast and Hernando Chapters of FNPS, we look forward to welcoming you to our region in May, and sharing what we are trying to protect here in the Natural Heart of Florida!

Get ready by visiting <http://www.iloveplantcity.com/>

- taken from the FNPS Blog, submitted by Cindy Liberton; edited for space by Shawna Everidge



Silent Auction Items Needed

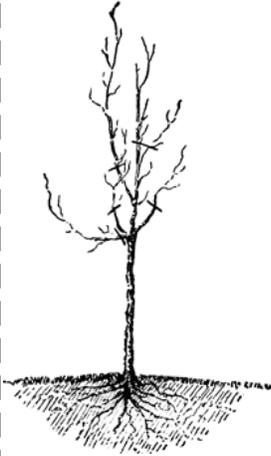
It's getting closer and closer! We're in need of items for the Silent Auction at the State Conference. Do you, or someone you know, create artwork? Own a business that could provide a desirable product or service for this type of event? Do you have anything of value that you feel would be in line with the values of other conference go-ers, that would attract a fair price? Let us know! All donations are tax-deductible. We will set a minimum starting bid to ensure that your item doesn't go for a nonequivalent amount. Please contact the Silent Auction chair, Harriet Wright at hw@tampabay.rr.com, or her assistant, Shawna Everidge at severidge@plantcitygov.com. Please keep us in mind if you go to a great local restaurant or event with vendors—they may want to give for the advertisement value! **And don't forget, we do need items that are affordable for people as well; even a \$10 gift card can bring in \$7 for the FNPS!**

Book Review

Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern US

by Cynthia Barnett

This book is 'the bizarre tale of how one of the wettest places in the nation managed to get rid of' much of its water. Truth is weirder than fiction in the case of this book. Cynthia intersperses facts with an entertaining - almost unbelievable - story about our water. She takes us through the history of water in Florida from Ponce de Leon to William Bartram to Governor Bush. One hundred years ago, Floridians thought that there was too much water here and did a good job of draining and filling to make it more inhabitable. They did such a great job of diverting and rearranging, that now we have shortages and outdoor water use bans during drought.



The facts about water waste in the US are mind boggling - each household uses about 107,000 gallons of water a year with more than half going to lawn and gardens. Another 14% is lost from leaky pipes! We have all read stories of sink holes and disappearing lakes. There is a picture in the book of a dried up lake in Keystone Heights near where my daughter lives. It seemed to be a forewarning, as shortly after I read the book my daughter's well could not reach the water level any more and the well pipe had to be extended 10 feet deeper. While much of the book concerns the mess that we have created, Cynthia points out that we have undone some damage and that correcting other mistakes is possible: dams removed from the Kissimmee River in 2000 resulted in restoring habitats for animals and plants in the area.

Each chapter has an engaging story to go with the facts. I learned a lot about Florida while being eager to read more of the well written pages. I greatly enjoyed this book and would recommend it to everyone. The truth may not be pretty, but all is not lost - and there is hope for the future if we all make better choices about using the resources that we have.

- submitted by Janet Bowers

Upcoming Events & Announcements

- ☆ Photos from the Violet Cury field trip are available online via DropBox. You can view them by following this link: <http://www.dropbox.com/gallery/3354487/1/Volet%20Cury%20Field%20Trip?h=637a2a> Thanks, **Joel Jackson!**
- ☆ Thank you to **Barbara Jackson** for taking care of the refreshments at April's meeting; and thank you to **Fred Mulholland, Harriett Wright** and **Anonymous** for donating plants for the auction!
- ☆ The USF Spring Plant Sale will be on the weekend of April 14th & 15th. SNPS will be selling plants. The Spring plant sale is one of our biggest fundraisers of the year - we will need many volunteers! The flyer with full event details can be viewed here: <http://gardens.usf.edu/data/springfestival.pdf> . If you would like to volunteer for the event, please contact **Janet Bowers** at 813-759-2822.
- ☆ **John Miller's** recent books, Citrus White Gold, and You Can't Pick Up Rain Drops, are now available as Kindle eBooks for \$2.99 each. Follow the links to purchase them.

Citrus White Gold: http://www.amazon.com/Citrus-Alternate-History-Florida-ebook/dp/B007R6OBMS/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1334164384&sr=8-1

Rain Drops: http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Ddigital-text&field-keywords=you+can%27t+pick+up+rainedrops

WINE & CHEESE PARTY

The Mulhollands
15410 Stonecreek Lane
Tampa, FL 33613

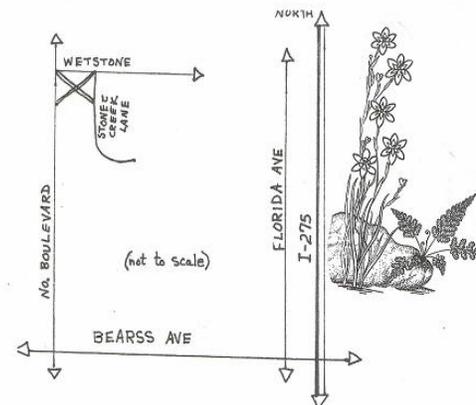
Sunday, April 22, 2012
From 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM

There are more than 150 species of native plants in the yard. An identification list will be provided that shows what and where they are located.

FREE POTTED PLANTS

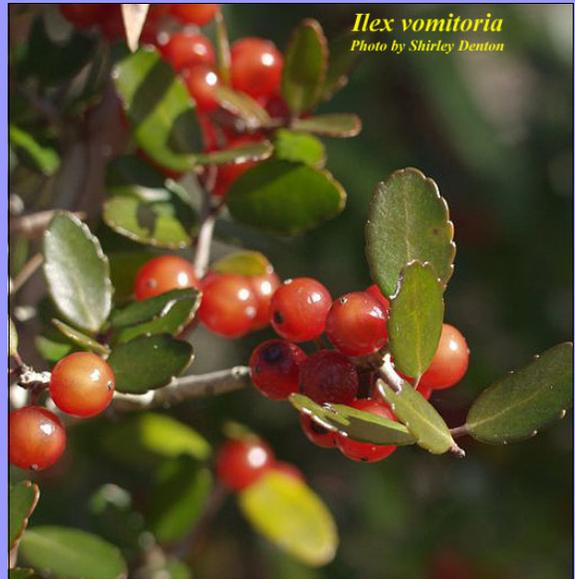
It's a party, mostly outdoors, rain or shine, so dress casually. There is seating outside under a canopy and also under shade trees. If you need more information call: (813) 962-7020

SEE NATIVE PLANTS IN SUBURBIA: ONE WAY TO DO IT WITHOUT A LAWN



Plant Profile

Common name: Yaupon holly
Botanical name: *Ilex vomitoria*
Family: Aquifoliaceae (Holly)
Growth habit: Stiffly-branched shrub or small tree
Mature size (h x w): 25 ft. by 10 ft.
Leaves: Alternate, simple, 1-inch long leaves; oval to elliptical, evergreen, dark green above, pale green beneath
Flower: Tiny white flowers from March to May
Fruit: Red berries in the fall and winter
Trunk: Whitish-gray
Light: Full sun to part shade
Water: Drought tolerant after establishment
Soil: Well-drained soils
Salt tolerant: Yes
Propagation: Seed, stem cuttings
Florida zones: N, C
Landscape uses: Barrier hedge, background shrub, small tree, specimen
Native habitat: Wet to dry areas in woodlands and near coast



Ilex vomitoria
Photo by Shirley Denton

Notes: Female trees require nearby male trees for pollination; may form a thicket; provides excellent cover and nesting sites for birds; Native Americans made a tea from the leaves of this plant; several cultivars are available in the nursery trade: 'Pendula' (a weeping form to 25 ft.), 'Schellings' and 'Nana' are dwarf cultivars growing to about 3 ft.

References:

- Nelson, Gil, 1996, *The Shrubs and Woody Vines of Florida*, Pineapple Press, Inc., Sarasota, FL, 391 p.
- Osorio, Rufino, 2001, *A Gardener's Guide to Florida's Native Plants*: University Press of Florida, Gainesville, FL, 345 p.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, No date, *Southern Wetlands Flora: Field Office Guide to Plant Species*, USDA Soil Conservation Service, South National Technical Center, Fort Worth, Texas, Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center home page, Jamestown, ND, www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/1999/soutflor/soutflor.htm

Information compiled by George Kish; photo by Shirley Denton

Florida Native Plant Society Membership Application

Membership in the Florida Native Plant Society enables you to receive their wonderful quarterly magazine *The Palmetto*. Joining the SNPS also entitles you to membership privileges in the Suncoast Native Plant Society and a subscription to their monthly newsletter *The Suncoast Grapevine*. Contact the membership chair, Shirley Denton, at 986-6485.

New Member Renewal

Name _____

Business name or organization _____

Address _____

City, State and Zip _____

Home phone _____ Email _____

Check pertinent category:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual/Renewal \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Not-for-profit organization \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full time student \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Business or corporate \$125 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library subscription \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family or household \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Donor \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing \$75 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life \$1,000 | |

Make check payable to **FNPS**.

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Newsletter Submissions

Deadline for the next issue:

MAY 1

Please send articles and original artwork for The Suncoast Grapevine to **Shawna Everidge**, by the **deadline** of this month. **Text should be in MS Word; graphics should be in a standard graphic format (.jpg, .bmp, .gif).** Previously published artwork should be accompanied by a letter of permission from the original publisher.

Email...

severidge@plantcitygov.com

DIRECTIONS TO:

Hillsborough County
Extension
5339 County Road 579
Seffner

Take I-4 to Exit 10 (just east of I-75). Go south for two blocks. The office is at the corner of Old Hillsborough Road and County Road 579.

Meeting Location

The Suncoast Native Plant Society, Inc. meets the third Wednesday of the month @ 7pm @ the Hillsborough County Extension Service office in Seffner.

SNPS Web Address

<http://www.SuncoastNPS.org>



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