SEPTEMBER CHAPTER MEETING
At the Hillsborough County Extension Office
Snags, Woodpiles & Wildlife
Presented by Virginia Overstreet
Wednesday, September 20, 7 PM

Do you like woodpeckers, owls, kestrels, nuthatches and bluebirds? If your answer is yes, don’t cut down that SNAG! SNAGS, often referred to as “The Wildlife Tree,” are dead tree trunks that are still standing. They provide shelter, perches, food and nesting sites for over 40 species of birds in Florida, as well as dozens of mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Along with snags, fallen logs and brush piles are beneficial to wildlife. Not only do they provide places to hide from predators, but the decaying wood is rich in food sources, such as fungi, ants, and grubs. The photo above is from Sweet Bay Native Nursery where they have landscaped a bed with lots of native plants and a snag.

Wildlife also uses dead wood as landmarks for navigation, basking platforms, perching and nesting. Learn which birds, and other animals, benefit from dead wood, and how to safely provide snags and woodpiles in your landscape to attract, shelter and feed them.

This talk has been given by Donna Bollenbach in the past but since she has moved out of our area, Virginia Overstreet has graciously agreed to speak. Virginia is the SNPS vice president and she has been a Florida Master Gardener Volunteer since 2001. She has been a Certified Arborist since 2009. She enjoys gardening to attract birds, pollinators and beneficial insects.

Light refreshments are served and a native plant auction follows the presentation.

- submitted by Donna Bollenbach & Janet Bowers
Come Celebrate Native Plant Month With SNPS at our Fall Native Plant Sale at USF

SNPS has been doing Native Plants at the USF sale for many years and we continue to provide quality plants to the public at the Spring and Fall sales. We depend on these for funds to support our projects and to find new members. Please help us with our biggest fundraiser.

We need people to help set up on Friday, Oct 13 and even more people for October 14 and 15.

If you are willing to help out, please let Gar Reed know at gar0426@yahoo.com or signup at a meeting. We can’t do it without your help!

**SALE HOURS**

Saturday October 14 - 10 AM to 4 PM

Sunday, October 15 - 10 AM to 3 PM

There will be gardening talks and a great selection of native plants for Your Yard. USF Botanical Garden, 12210 USF Pine Dr. - on the southwest corner of the USF Tampa campus, at Pine and Alumni drives, off of Bruce B. Downs Boulevard, just north of East Fowler Avenue.

**UPCOMING SPEAKERS-**

Oct 18 – Dr. Alan Franck – Medicinal Plants – The history of humans and plants, and then some of the medicinal aspects of native and non-native plants in Florida.

Nov 15 – Nanette Holland

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**Thanks for helping with the August meeting -**

Bunny Worth for bringing snacks
JoAnn Hoffman, Marcia Curl, Janet Bowers, Bunny Worth for bringing plants for the auction

A special thank you to Virginia Overstreet for being our auctioneer
Florida Forever Money to Actually Buy Land

A while ago I subscribed to a state email list and started getting a deluge of emails. After I tweaked it to get more local information, it slowed to a trickle (mostly about what septic tanks were getting removed with help from the money that was supposed to buy land.)

Finally, a couple of good emails came recently, dated August 16 (and I am hoping that they are actually meaningful since I know that some news is just a PR smokescreen)-

**Okeechobee County**

Today, Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Cabinet members approved the purchase of 1,992 acres within the Triple Diamond Florida Forever Project in Okeechobee County for $4.2 million. This acquisition will help protect wildlife habitat and water-quality, while providing opportunities for recreation.

The property is located within the Triple Diamond Florida Forever project, ranked number 8 in the Florida Forever Critical Natural Lands project category. With today’s acquisition, more than 50 percent of this project has been acquired by the state of Florida and, once completed, will contribute to a large, contiguous protection area of more than 200,000 acres.

The property will be managed by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ Florida Forest Service as a working ranchland, with an emphasis on protecting and maintaining native species.

“The Conservancy applauds this acquisition, which will protect nearly 2,000 acres of high-quality habitat with a renowned suite of rare vertebrate life, globally imperiled natural communities and significant hydrological values,” said Lindsay Stevens, Land Program Manager for the Nature Conservancy.

"The fee-simple acquisition of this quarter of the Triple Diamond Florida Forever project area will help conserve a hub of more than 200,000 acres critical to wildlife which includes Kissimmee River Preserve State Park, the restored Kissimmee River floodplain, Bombing Range Ridge and the Fort Drum Marsh and Blue Cypress conservation areas," said Kent Wimmer, Northwest Florida representative, Defenders of Wildlife. "We look forward to continuing to work with the Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Forest Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and others to conserve habitat for imperiled species and the Florida Ecological Greenways Network."

**Osceola County**

Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Cabinet members approved the acquisition of a conservation easement of more than 1,100 acres for $2.6 million. The subject property is part of an approximately 4,613-acre ranch, known as Camp Lonesome. The ranch is located in central Osceola County, northeast of the Florida Turnpike and about 15 miles from St. Cloud.

"The conservation easement over the Big Bend Swamp/Holopaw Ranch is a key component of the greenway network between Three Lakes and Bull Creek water management areas and will contribute to the Everglades Headwater National Wildlife Refuge," said Kent Wimmer, Northwest Florida representative, Defenders of Wildlife. "We look forward to continuing to work with the Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Forest Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and others to conserve habitat for imperiled species and the Florida Ecological Greenways Network."

“This easement creates a partnership and allows conservation of native habitats and ongoing economic use within the very important Everglades Headwaters area. Ranching, which is an important part of Florida’s economy and history within the Lake Okeechobee watershed, also plays an important role in managing water resources,” said Audubon Florida Executive Director Eric Draper.

A conservation easement is a restriction placed on a piece of property to protect lands for future generations, while allowing owners to continue to live on and use their land. Through this conservation easement, the State of Florida will protect the land and water resources found within the Camp Lonesome Ranch.
FNPS News....

It’s almost October - that means Florida Native Plant Month! This is the third year that we have gotten support from our local communities and most of Florida in recognizing the importance of Native plants.

Oct 18, 9 AM - Hillsborough County proclamation for Native Plant Month, 2nd floor Boardroom of County Center, 601 E. Kennedy Blvd in downtown Tampa

SNPS News

- Don’t forget to send Tina any volunteer hours so that she can enter it on the FNPS website
- We need new Board members and Field Trip leaders for next year - please let Devon know if you are willing to serve on the SNPS Board of Directors
- The October plant sale will be here soon, mark your calendar and volunteer to help us in our big fundraiser.
- The next SNPS Board meeting will be Sept 20 at 4 PM, all members are welcome to attend

Connections with Nature by Lucy Fuchs

A palm tree in our backyard went unnoticed for many years until it died. Then its second life began and that snag attracted more attention from us than in all the years that it lived. In a short time we noticed holes made in the sides by various birds, especially woodpeckers. This spring a pair of pileated woodpeckers settled in.

We watched them each evening at dusk as they returned from their day’s foraging for food. We could hear them communicating with each other. Unfortunately we could not understand bird-speak but we imagined them asking each other, “So how was your day? Anything interesting happen?” We named them Peter and Paula and enjoyed watching them each evening.

We never knew what time they left in the morning; they were probably out and about before we work. While they were gone, we noticed many other birds, especially red-bellied woodpeckers took advantage of their home. I guess that comes when you don’t lock your door. They came daily for weeks until the heavy rains came. Then we did not see them again, we imaged them deciding that the roof leaked too badly.

We don’t know if they will ever return or if their children will. We never saw baby birds in their nest but that snag with all its holes was a source of delight for us.

Mark Your Calendar

Sept 22-23  Florida Wildflower Foundation Symposium, Orlando
Sept 30  9 AM  Lettuce Lake Walk
OCTOBER is NATIVE PLANT MONTH in FLORIDA!
**New date** - Oct 18 9 AM Hillsborough County proclamation for Native Plant Month
2nd floor Boardroom of County Center, 601 E. Kennedy Blvd in downtown Tampa
Oct 14-15  USF Fall Plant Sale - we need volunteers
Oct 15-16  Florida Birding and Nature Festival, Ruskin floridabirdingandnaturefestival.org
Oct 21  9 AM Lettuce Lake walk
Oct 21  Rootstock Plant & Garden Festival at Bok Tower
Oct 27-29  Fall camping trip at Myakka State Park, tent camp overnight or come for a day
Dec 9  11 to 3  Holiday gathering at Lettuce Lake, pavilion 10.
**September 23 Fieldtrip**  
**Rock Ponds Restoration Site**

**Where:** 4480 County Line Rd, South Ruskin/ Palmetto, FL  
Gate 3, (Please carpool to this spot if possible)  

**When:** 9:00 AM

The Southwest Florida Water Management District, in cooperation with Hillsborough County, completed the largest habitat restoration project ever done in the history of Tampa Bay. Located on three public parcels in the southeastern reaches of Tampa Bay (adjacent to “Cockroach Bay”), the project involves sites that historically were coastal pine flatwoods, scattered hardwood hammocks, and various estuarine and freshwater habitats. Use of the upland areas for agricultural purposes and sand/shell mining removed the majority of the historic plant communities and habitat values from these parcels. More info at [https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/projects/swim/rock_ponds/](https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/projects/swim/rock_ponds/).

The project involved the restoration of approximately 1,043 acres of various coastal habitats, including 645 acres of uplands, such as pine flatwoods and hardwood hammocks, and 398 acres of various estuarine and freshwater habitats. The estuarine habitats include: 1) open water tidal channels and lagoons, 2) low and high intertidal marshes, 3) islands, 4) sand/mud flats, 5) deeper water “holes,” 6) natural limestone artificial reefs, and 7) more than 16 miles of new Tampa Bay shorelines. Cascading freshwater wetlands include both permanent pools as well as ephemeral freshwater habitats. Rock Ponds provides habitats for several wildlife species and plant communities.

This is a driving/walking tour. We will carpool to various locations within at least two of the three restoration sectors, and then stop and get out and discuss that restoration sector. We will allow members to explore the area's plant populations

Please dress "field friendly". Wear clothes that you do not mind getting dirty/wet/destroyed (worst case!). Everyone needs shoes that tie to their feet (no sandals, flip-flops, etc.) or rubber boots. If you want to go into the wetlands, you should be prepared to get your feet/legs wet. Hats, sunscreen, sunglasses, insect repellent, water and a snack are recommended. Mosquitos typically are not a real problem, but come prepared. Binoculars and/or a camera may also be nice.

*There are no restroom facilities on site.*

After the field trip, you may want to go to lunch at "POPI'S", just a few miles away on us 41, or choose another option in Ruskin.

**DRIVING INSTRUCTIONS TO THE EAST GATE OF THE WESTERN RESTORATION SECTOR OFF COUNTY LINE ROAD:**

From Tampa  
Take I-75 south  
Take Ruskin Exit 240B (SR 674), veer right on exit and merge onto “College Avenue, heading west toward Ruskin  
Drive 3 miles to US 41  
Turn left (south) on US 41 (Ruskin Elementary School on your left at intersection)  
On US 41 south, drive 7.6 miles to County Line Road  
Turn right (west) on County Line Road and drive about 0.1 to 0.2 miles to a gate on the right (north) side of County Line Road (also, will pass over railroad tracks and then watch for project construction sign on right). Congratulations, you are at Rock Ponds!

Contact for trip - Shirley Denton  813 625-5031

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**2017 Field Trip schedule**

| Sept 23  | Rock Ponds Restoration Project with SWFWMD near Ruskin, more details to come |
| Website | [https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/projects/swim/rock_ponds/](https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/projects/swim/rock_ponds/) |
| Oct 27-29 | Camping trip at Myakka State Park, reserve your site at Old Prairie camping area |
| Nov 18  | TBD |
A BioBlitz is a community event in which teams of volunteer scientists, families, students, teachers, and others work together to find and identify the many species of plants, animals, and other organisms that inhabit our surroundings.

Where: Terra Ceia Preserve State Park  
Time: 8 AM - 1 PM  
Date: Saturday October 14th  
Contact: Tracy Muzyczka  
Tracy.Muzyczka@dep.state.fl.us  
RSVP necessary for details

Burning at Blackwater Creek Preserve  
by Janet Bowers

Historically, especially with the days of Smokey the Bear in my past, it seemed like fire was something to dread. It is still hard for me to believe sometimes that we actually set fires on purpose with specific steps and checks to make it as safe as possible but still, we burn up plants on purpose. The results of a prescribed fire done correctly is almost always an extra special display of flowers which definitely gets me interested in knowing when and where the fires are happening. We saw a lovely display of calopogons and Feayi’s milkweed out at Triple Creek after a fire about a year and a half ago. The milkweed display made more sense after I heard Scott Davis talk about milkweeds and I realized that they need bare soil to sprout. I try to keep the flowers in mind when I see acres of wildfires burning in Florida during the spring or out west in the summer.

Recently, the Sperry Chalet burned down in Glacier National Park. While I did not hike out to it during my recent Montana trip, I can still appreciate its history and special memories of the many people who did visit it. It was in a remote location that was very difficult to protect from nature’s force. Shift of wind, drier conditions and lack of rain can make a smallspark from lightening turn into an inferno. I did see many areas with fireweed among dead, black trees while I was there, indicating past fires that been through the region. Sometimes it’s hard to take the bad with the good but since it is out of our control there isn’t too much point in dwelling on it.

So back to Blackwater Creek preserve, I have been visiting this preserve for several years now. I’ve only been to the creek once, normally I make the same loop of about 2 miles to see a wide diversity of plants. Every year is different. It is teaching me to appreciate being in this moment. Being an analytical person, I’d like to walk out there on Oct 15 and see the same plants in the same place as last year but that doesn’t happen. Rain, temperature and other factors help determine what plants will be doing well and what might have to wait for another year.
Blackwater continued …...

Instead there are surprises every time, some good, some not so good but I hope I am getting better at taking it as it is, being grateful just to be outside and able to walk around the lovely preserve that is close to my house!

This year started out slowly- drought mostly postponed the normal spring flowers and I was forced to be patient. Then it started raining but still not much blooming, where were the fields of wildflowers that I had pictures of from previous year? The pawpaws are pretty tough, they seem to survive drought and rain but not much else was very interesting. Then in July, I came across a burnt area and I anticipated the flowers to come. The wire grass was sprouting and the pawpaws were spring green, there was hope.

I marked my calendar to go back in 3 or 4 weeks and was rewarded with lobelia, savannah milkweed (Asclepias pedicellata) and more. Swarms of zebra swallowtail butterflies were flying around looking for nectar, mates and pawpaw host plants. I could see all the phoebanthus plants growing in the field so I marked my calendar again to check on those.

I went back about 2 weeks later and the blooming was starting. An area of Carolina redroot blooms were attracting butterflies and other pollinators. There were dozens of zebra swallowtail butterflies. 2 days later, I went back for another look August 27.

On Labor Day, I sloshed through ankle deep water to get to the phoebanthus field. It was the wettest I have ever seen it since normally I don’t go out there if we have had a lot of rain in Plant City. I gave my ‘waterproof’ shoes a good test. It was the peak of the phoebanthus and lovely to see so I’m glad I went or I would be wondering what I missed.

All the life and color was due to the fire, if you walk over to the fields burnt last year or the year before, they look quite different. Thank you to the county employees who manage this preserve and gave us the gift of flowers!
The Suncoast Grapevine
September 2017

Plant City HCC Garden News

Thanks to all the rain, our new plantings by the ditch are pretty happy. Some pruning and weeding is needed, I hope to get out there soon to tidy up. The beauty berries (*Callicarpa americana* - top picture) are looking good, I was surprised to see that one of them has white berries, I guess I didn’t notice last year. All of the berries should provide good food for birds and other wildlife.

The rattlesnakemaster (*Eryngium aquaticum* - bottom picture) is blooming, I’d like to get a couple more to make a group planting of it. I love the purple color.

Bidens alba is blooming all over the other gardens and is attracting many pollinators like the white peacock butterfly shown in the picture.

~ Janet

Lettuce Lake Update

*From Tina Patterson*

We had a good turnout for the August 26 walk. Mark your calendar for our next walks on September 30 and October 21. The water dropworts are getting ready to bloom in the garden and the caterpillars have taken out the milkweeds again.

Come and see for yourself what is happening at Lettuce Lake! The walk is free, it is $2 per car to enter Lettuce Lake Park. Meet us by the Audubon Resource Center building. We have an excellent native garden behind the building that you can visit anytime the park is open.

~ Janet

The Manchineel tree (*Hippomane mancinella*) is endangered in the State of Florida due to attempts to eradicate it from Florida’s southernmost beaches and other south Florida areas where people gather. **The Manchineel is indeed poison to the touch or from ingesting its tasty fruits.** The tree however is well known for its beneficial ability to stabilize sandy beaches from erosion, especially on Caribbean islands. It is also a food source for the endangered White Crowned Pigeon.

So why am I bringing attention to this “undesirable” native flora with the beautiful light green leaves? I love the fun and the challenge of growing plants from all over our state: from the southlands to the panhandle! I now have several young Manchineel plants in pots that are available to anyone who would like the fun of growing one. All that is needed is a sunny location. The plant should be placed where it is not readily available to the public. Of course, being from South Florida it is sensitive to freezing conditions.

Fred Mulholland
(813) 962-7020
Fredbarb1@verizon.net

For more info on the plant - [http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/Plant.aspx?id=2806](http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/Plant.aspx?id=2806)
Plant Profile - Saw Palmetto - *Serenoa repens*
Family - Arecaceae

The saw palmetto is the logo for FNPS and makes a great landscape plant. The green variety is slow growing and easy to maintain, the grayish one is much faster growing and will need pruning. Palmettos and pine trees are the iconic Florida landscape that you see for miles and miles around the state. The best maintenance of this landscape includes regular burning. As the KPP guide told us on a buggy ride, you know the quality of a preserve’s maintenance by the height of the palmettos (they should be short with regular burning.) The Archbold Biological Station has hosted many studies about the Palmetto.

Some facts in their March 2017 newsletter included -

- Wildlife depend on the fruit (including bears)
- It may take 200 years for a plant to mature
- Adult plants can easily survive drought
- Fire stimulates blooming

From the FNPS link below - As Maehr and Layne summarize, “If saw palmetto is not the plant species most highly used by Florida wildlife, it certainly is in close contention for that honor.”

It likes sun to part sun, average moisture to dry and it is a long lived evergreen perennial. Saw palmetto is available from local native nurseries, since it is slow growing it can be expensive but is well worth the investment.

Plant Atlas link -
http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/Plant.aspx?id=2664

FNPS link-
http://www.fnps.org/plants/plant/serenoa-repens

~Janet Bowers

Tree Huggers!

Mike Fite went to the Art of the Bricks exhibit in Tampa and reported back that even Lego people are trying to save trees. Good to know that we have some allies.

Join FNPS on-line - http://fnps.org/participate/membershipinfo
When it comes time to renew, FNPS will send you an email with a link in it. Your information will already be filled out, but you can edit it if it is out of date. This link is unique to you and not to be shared with others.
**Newsletter Submissions**
Deadline for the next issue: **October 1, 2017**

Please send articles and original artwork for the Suncoast Grapevine to Janet Bowers, by the deadline above - jbowers27@yahoo.com

**SNPS Web Address**
http://www.SuncoastNPS.org

**We're on Meet Up & Facebook**

Regular meetings are in Seffner

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**Meetings are normally the third Wednesday of the month at 7 PM. (no December meeting)**

DIRECTIONS TO: Hillsborough County Extension 5339 County Road 579 Seffner

Take I-4 to Exit 10 (just east of I-75). Go south on 579 for two blocks. Turn left on Old Hillsborough Ave. and park on the North side of the office.