



# THE PAWPAW PRESS

Newsletter of the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society: February 2020

## Making a tasty case for native plants

Pawpaw members and guests were treated to a fascinating presentation on edible native plants by Stacey Matrazzo of the Florida Wildflower Foundation at the February meeting.

Who knew many of the common everyday plants we see on the roadside or on lawns have great food value? Consider the following common plants

### Rules for eating

Stacey's guidelines for tasting native plants:

1. Before you eat it, know what it is. (Everything is edible once.)
2. Know the area from which you are harvesting. Be sure it is free from pesticides and herbicides.
3. Be considerate. Don't over harvest, and remember that animals have to eat, too. Never harvest or pick an endangered plant.

for your salad: Spanish needle, dollar weed, or Florida betony (especially its roots). Try topping that salad with peppergrass. We also learned of the value of beautyberry for food and as an insect repellent, and of yaupon holly for the caffeine from its leaves, and firebush for seeds at certain times of ripeness.

Stacey also announced the publication of a book she co-authored with Nancy Bissett, *Native Plants for Florida*. This book is available to borrow from the Pawpaw library or for purchase from the Florida Wildflower Foundation.

—Karen Walter (photo by Paul Rebmann)



## A little respect, please!

Jane Andrews gave February's Plant of the Month presentation on a plant she described as "The Rodney Dangerfield" of all plants, because "it gets no respect." The Florida wildflower known as beggar's ticks, Spanish needle, or monkey's lice is *Bidens alba*. This underappreciated plant is a larval host plant, as well as a nectar plant, for butterflies and bees. In addition, as Stacey Matrazzo told us, it is edible. It is very hardy and grows in all sorts of soils throughout the state. Jane recommends separating this plant from where people and pets may roam because the seeds are easily transported on fur and clothing. She highly recommends this plant for every garden. It certainly fits this year's Plant of the Month theme of "Caterpillar Cafes and Butterfly Buffets."



## To support birds, native plants are essential

No native plants—no bugs. No bugs—no birds. That is the message Pawpaw member Melissa Lammers planted in the minds of the Halifax Audubon Society members at their monthly meeting on February 17. In a presentation that starred delightful photos of birds perched in native plants, Melissa spelled out the reasons bird lovers

should fill their yards with natives. Since birds feed thousands of bugs to their young each day, and since data has shown that bugs prefer native plants over non-natives, homeowners who want to support the local bird population must grow native plants.

This is especially true today, Melissa explained, because our country's natural ecosystems are being replaced by the sterile lawns of suburbia, the combination of which is causing our bird populations to plummet. Fortunately, Audubon has discovered this valuable attribute of native plants and they have developed a useful online tool for homeowners to find suitable native plants for their area to help bring back the birds. (<https://www.audubon.org/PLANTSFORBIRDS>). Through Melissa's inspiring presentation, the local Audubon members should now understand: No native plants – no bugs. No bugs – no birds!—*Leslie Nixon*

## If you haven't checked us out on Facebook, you missed...

The chapter's Facebook presence continues to grow. Our page now has more than 700 likes and almost 800 followers. Chapter news and events are posted with far more photographs than there would ever be room for in the newsletter. This month there has been coverage of:

- our propagation group's meeting at which they got pointers for success with cuttings from Dottie Hanna (and wished a happy 90th birthday to Dot Backes);
- the February field trip to investigate the scrub habitats of the Lyonia Preserve;
- the chapter's donation of seed packets representing more than 30 species of Florida wildflowers to the Stetson University Seed Library during a reception to mark the inauguration of a new pollinator garden on the campus.



Remember that you do not need to be a member of Facebook to visit the chapter's page. Just visit: [facebook.com/PawpawChapter/?ref=bookmarks](https://facebook.com/PawpawChapter/?ref=bookmarks)

### Chapter meetings and speakers

- March 9: Jeffrey Kneisley of DeLeon Springs State Park on its native plant garden  
April 13: Valerie Anderson, FNPS communications coordinator, on the FNPS mission  
May 11: Linda Wilinski, Florida nature photographer  
June 8: Nash Turley, UCF ecologist, on Lawn to Wildflowers  
July 13: Jenny Nazak, sustainability educator, on Soil 101  
Aug. 10: Linda Walters of UCF on Tomoka State Park restoration

### Upcoming field trips, events

- March 14: DeLeon Springs State Park, DeLeon Springs  
March 16: Park of Honor work day  
April 18: Mala Compa Trail, Palm Coast  
April 20: Park of Honor work day  
May 9: Hickory Bluff Preserve, Osteen  
May 14–17: FNPS annual conference, Jacksonville  
May 18: Park of Honor work day  
June 13: Haw Creek Preserve State Park, Seville  
July 19: Black Point Wildlife Drive, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge