



THE PAWPAW PRESS

Newsletter of the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society: March 2016

MARCH ACTIVITIES

Scenes from a busy month for Pawpaw



On March 5th, Ponce Inlet got an early start on Earth Day with a celebration inspired by the Dr. Seuss book, *The Lorax*. Ponce Park was transformed to such places as North Nitch and Weehawken. Pawpaw members Sande Habali and Kim Johnson supplied masks to children who stopped by so they could be like the Lorax and take care of our environment. It was good to see new member Amelia Evans there, too.

(Photo by Sande Habali)

Also on March 5, Dot Backes and Sonya Guidry put in a long day at the Water Wise Garden Fair sponsored by the New Smyrna Beach Utilities Commission. They were happy to be spelled by Warren Reynolds.

(Photo by Sonya Guidry)



At the March chapter meeting, Trey Hannah, education coordinator for Volusia County, gave us a tour of the county's diverse environmental lands, many of which will be showcased during the upcoming FNPS annual convention in May. *(Photo by Paul Rebmann)*



UPCOMING EVENTS: APRIL

11 Pawpaw meeting: Master Naturalist Roger Fulton on the state of Florida's springs

16 Field trip in search of pygmy pawpaw. Mark Wheeler, wheelmarks@bellsouth.net

UPCOMING EVENTS

Save the date for...

APRIL 2 Wildflower Festival. We are partnering with Lyonia for the purpose of promoting the conference. Contact Sande: Sadehab@aol.com if you can help

APRIL 11, Pawpaw Chapter meeting, 7 p.m. Piggotte Center, 504 Big Tree Road, South Daytona. Florida Mas-

ter Naturalist Roger Fulton, who will give a presentation on the health of Florida's springs.

APRIL 16 Giant pygmy pawpaw field trip in Graham Swamp, with Mark Wheeler. Contact wheelmarks@bellsouth.net to sign up .

APRIL 21 Ormond Beach

Earth Day, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Contact sadehab@aol.com if you wish to help.

MAY 9 This month's chapter meeting will be a planning meeting to work out final details for the FNPS annual conference. Also, there will be no field trip this month. There are still

plenty of ways you can get involved with the conference. Contact Sande: Sadehab@aol.com if you can help. And Ray Jarrett still needs donations for the silent auction, an important fund-raiser for FNPS. In particular, Ray says items like gift baskets and gift certificates are needed. To contact Ray: ray-jarrett1@gmail.com; phone: 386-295-0481.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Getting past the prickles to appreciate a cactus

For the gardener who says, "Nothing grows in my yard," this is the plant for you! Prickly pear (*Opuntia humifusa*) is one of the few native cactuses growing in our area. It is easily recognizable because of its pear-like pads, but it is often overlooked as a landscape possibility. Other species of *Opuntia* live in Florida, but most are rare and look very similar to each other. *O. stricta* is one of these look-alike cactuses. It can get a bit taller than *O. humifusa* and is found mostly on coastal dunes and shell middens.

Prickly pear has a yellow, showy flower in spring and late summer. This is followed by reddish fruits, which are edible. Many insects and gopher tortoises eat this fruit. *Opuntia* spp. will grow in pinelands, open



and dry woods, as well as sandy soils. Propagation occurs by using parts of the existing plant. Used in a landscape, they make an interesting structural focal point (away from people) or they can be used as a hedge to deter

visitors. One drawback to the prickly pear cactus is the big spines and tiny spiny bristles called glochids that are hard to see and can stick in your fingers for days, which make weeding around the plant difficult. The spines

are actually modified leaves.

The pulp of the red "pear" can be made into a drink or preserves. The pad (spines and skins removed) can be cooked and eaten. Native Americans used the pulp of the pads for wounds and rheumatism. The juice has been used to treat warts, kidney stones, and lung ailments.

Sources:

www.fnps.org

www.2bnthewild.com

The Guide to Florida Wildflowers by Walter K. Taylor

Florida's Edible Wild Plants by Peggy Lantz
Native Wild Foods: as told to Peggy Lantz by Dick Deurling, Palmetto, Fall, 1989

—Story and photos by Sande Habali



MARCH FIELD TRIP

Native plants in practice

The March field trip provided a preview of some of the South Volusia landscapes that will be a part of a tour during the Florida Native Plant Society's annual conference in Daytona Beach on May 19. Members checked out how native plants were incorporated into three residences in Port Orange and New Smyrna Beach as well as a newly installed butterfly garden at the Marine Discovery Center, where they also explored a major marsh restoration. The tour concluded with a tasty lunch at Bakka's Bistro and Books, a new addition to New Smyrna Beach's restaurant scene. *Photos by Sonya Guidry*



MAY FIELD TRIP

On the trail of the giant pygmy pawpaw

For the April 16 field trip, Mark Wheeler will lead the Pawpaw Chapter on a rough upland trail as we search for “giant pygmy” pawpaws in bloom. The mountain biking and hiking trailhead, in Graham Swamp Preserve, is accessed off the west side of Colbert Lane, three miles north of SR100.

This is a rough, uneven trail with a surprising change in elevation. (Walking sticks recom-

mended.) Along with our search for *Asimina pygmaea*, we will identify other plants on this sand ridge, which was abandoned long ago as spoil from Lehigh Cement Plant (active 1952–1965).

After the walk we will drive a short distance north on Colbert Lane to Hershel King Drive, then proceed east

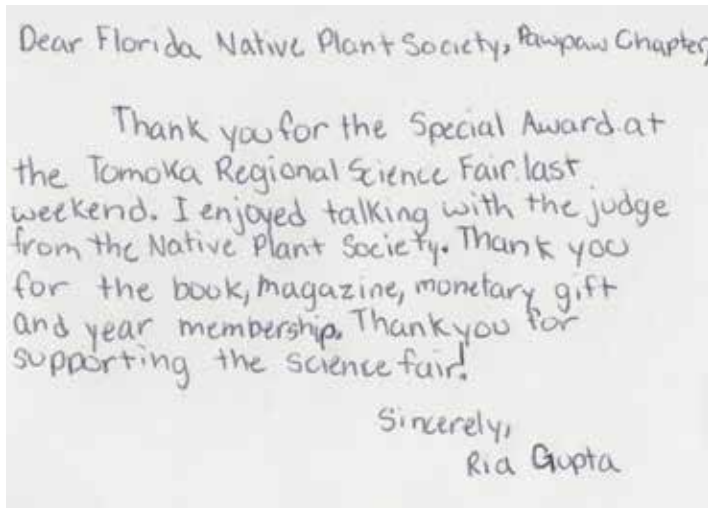


to Hershel King Park on the Intracoastal Waterway for a picnic lunch at the park pavilion.

Trip leader:
Mark Wheeler,
(386) 586-6580
(land line only)
Carpool contact: Sonya Guidry
(386) 690-1797
guidry.sonya@gmail.com
Volusia carpool meet: 9:30 a.m. behind Chick-Fil-A in Ormond Beach (east of I-95)
—Sonya Guidry (photo by Mark Hutichinson/FNPS)

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Chapter receives thanks from students, school



The Pawpaw chapter received notes of thanks from Ria Gupta, who received the chapter’s main award for her work on dissolved oxygen in the Tomoka River, which was presented during the Tomoka Region Science Fair at Spruce Creek High School in January, and Dana Greatrex, student and community support director of the Burns Sci-Tech charter school in Oak Hill, which the chapter supported with a donation of \$100 to purchase native plants. The chapter also received a note of thanks from science fair honorable mention winner Emily Keith.

