



THE PAWPAW PRESS

Newsletter of the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society: July–Aug 2019

Summer's the season for some plant swappin'

The chapter's annual plant swap and walk is always one of its most popular events, despite occurring in the most swampy, sultry month of the year.

This year's edition, which drew more than 30 people, was held at Indian River Lagoon Park on the beachside of New Smyrna Beach.

Find many more photos from this event at [facebook.com/pawpawchapter/](https://www.facebook.com/pawpawchapter/)

Prior to the swap, members participated in a scavenger hunt organized



by trip leader Warren Reynolds. Armed with plant lists complete with some pictures, the group surveyed the paths in search of the plants listed. Along the way, Warren conducted plant identifications and provided interesting information about the plants.

The swap itself was held under the shade of a pavilion. Members brought a variety of plants and introduced the plants they brought as well as sharing some growing tips. We were delighted to welcome several new people to the group and to be able to send native plants home with these new plant enthusiasts. We even had a local neighbor stop by while on a bike ride! After four rounds of "swapping," lots of folks went home with new "treasures" and smiles on their faces.



It's great to be a Florida propagator!

It's time to start collecting those wildflower seeds for next year's wildflower seed packets, and we need your help.

Please label your containers or bags of seeds with the your name, the plant name, the date collected and where collected. (Remember that unless it is from your own yard, you must have permission from the owner and collect no more than 10% of the wild seeds.)

Later this fall we will hold a seed-packing work party to label seeds and give growing conditions.

We often get requests for the hard to find native milkweed plants. These plants can be tricky, but give it a try!

Here are some special instruction from FNPS member Scott Davis.

- Store (cold stratify) the seed for at least two weeks in the refrigerator.
- Then "heat shock" the seeds: Place the seeds in bowl of hot faucet water

and allow to stand at room temp 24-36 hours.

- Push seeds in potting soil until they are just beneath the soil surface.

- Keep consistently moist (not wet). Consider using mulched pine straw to help maintain moisture.
- Seeds should germinate within 2 weeks.

For the seeds of velvetleaf milkweed (*Asclepias tomentosa*) to be viable the seed pods must not be picked until they are completely ripe. It takes vigilance to look for a split in the pod, indicating it's time for it to release all the seeded parachutes, so using organza bags really helps (see photo on previous page).

For white swamp milkweed (*Asclepias perennis*), once the pod splits it may be harvested and put in a dry place to complete its maturation. (Note that *A. perennis* is one native milkweed that is green and growing all year round.)

For additional information about wildflower seed propagation, the Florida Wildflower Foundation has excellent suggestions at: flawildflowers.org/resources/pdfs/Publications/7StepsToGrowFromSeed.pdf

Please contact Sonya Guidry for more information: guidry.sonya@gmail.com

Firebush: No landscape should be without it

The plant commonly known as firebush, or scarletbush, is probably one of the easiest and most successful native plants available. It should be considered a landscape essential.

Hamelia patens var. *patens* is a member of the *Rubiaceae* (or coffee) family and is characterized as a shrub with long internodes, flaring into petioles holding 20-30 red-orange inflorescences each. It grows best in full sun to part shade with a moderate amount of water and often blooms year round. Because of the soft texture of the flowers and leaves it is sensitive to wind. It grows wild in zones 10-11, but planted in a sunny location, it does well in zone 9 as well.



Firebush is a fast grower, so a one gallon plant will grow to 3 feet in its first year and double the next. It is cold sensitive, but even if it dies to the ground it will usually regrow with vigor as soon as the weather warms. The tubular inflorescences are a favorite of butterflies, bees, and other pollinators as well as hummingbirds. The flowers turn into red berries which turn black when ripe, becoming a favorite of cardinals and mockingbirds and other berry-loving birds and animals.

In the mid-1980s a non-native species was introduced to the commercial market as a Florida native. It was sold as African firebush and came from Pretoria, South Africa. The correct name for this plant is *Hamelia patens* var. *glabra*. The native has whorls of three broadly lanceolate leaves, tinged red with flattened hairs on the leaves. The non-native has whorls of four and generally smaller leaves which are glabrous or smooth (hence the variety *glabra*).

The native Florida firebush is an excellent choice as a specimen shrub or as a backdrop of the garden anchor. Your hummingbirds and butterflies will love you and your *Hamelia patens* var. *patens*.

—Karen Walter (photo by Ginny Stibolt via fnps.org)

When common names lead to a thorny question

The Pawpaw Chapter's plant of the month for August was *Aralia spinosa*, aka devil's walking stick or Hercules club. At first, I assumed it was the same plant as the Hercules club or Southern prickly-ash, which abounds in my sandy back yard in Ormond Beach. A better-informed member of the chapter set me straight—the plant in my back yard, *Zanthoxylum clava-herculis*, is different from *A. spinosa* in many ways. After doing some research, I realized that I am not the first person who has confused the two plants.

Both plants grow to be large shrubs or small trees, and both plants have similar or identical common names



because they have formidable thorns on their trunks and branches. However, they belong to different families—*Aralia* is a member of the ginseng family, *Araliaceae*, while *Zanthoxylum* belongs to the very large *Rutaceae* family, which also includes citrus.

The plants live in different habitats. *Aralia* is widely distributed throughout the temperate regions of the United States in Zones 5-9a. It is a woodland plant, though it needs some sun, and it does not thrive in coastal areas. *Zanthoxylum*, on the other hand, is much

more sensitive to cold and grows well in warm coastal areas in Zones 7-9.

Both plants spread by rhizomes or runners and my personal experience is that *Zanthoxylum* is hard to transplant and also hard to get rid of once established. *Aralia* blooms in midsummer—showy white panicles are followed by black fruit. The small greenish yellow flowers of *Zanthoxylum* bloom in early spring. Both have pinnate leaves, but *Aralia* has huge compound bipinnate or tripinnate leaves. (Each leaf has a number of compound pinnate leaflets.) *Aralia*'s foliage turns yellow or bronze in the fall.

Zanthoxylum is sometimes called the toothache tree. Indians are said to have chewed the bark (which may have antibiotic properties) because it produces a numb or tingling sensation that relieves the pain. *Zanthoxylum* is a larval host plant for the giant swallowtail, *Papilio cresphontes*. When I collected a branch of *Zanthoxylum* to bring to the meeting I spotted the huge black and yellow banded butterfly floating gently near the plant. I hoped it was a female preparing to lay some eggs.

This story has a moral, or at least a lesson. Because some species of plants (and animals too) have multiple common names and often share common names with other species, it is helpful to learn scientific names and understand something about taxonomic relationships.—Ellen Nielsen (image by Paul Rebmann)

Pokeweed: Yes, you do want it!

Phytolacca americana has many common names: pokeweed, pokeberry, pigeon berry, poke sallet, plus about 20 more. It is a distinctive berry-laden plant that probably is one of the natives often considered a “Rodney Dangerfield” type of weed. But don't let that reputation fool you. This is one star performer that makes a good specimen plant in the informal garden.

Place it in the back of your landscape, ensure it has plenty of sun and a moist to

very dry soil. Pokeweed is a stunning beauty that matures in late summer with its flowers, bright berries and red/magenta stems. It will grow to a height of 6–10 feet with a width of about 6 feet. It propagates by seed and the very large and heavy tap root. Give it plenty of room and you won't be disappointed in its performance.

This fabulously showy native is a favorite food source of our fine feathered friends: mockingbirds, brown thrashers, bluebirds, and cardinals. Ruby-throated hummingbirds will nectar at the plant's greenish white blossoms. It is also a host plant for the stunning giant leopard moth.

This would be a good time to say, “Danger, Will Robinson!” This native should be handled with care as most of the plant parts, especially the seeds and roots, are very toxic to humans and pets if ingested.



If having pokeweed in your landscape as a species for birds isn't a good enough reason, consider that this native has a rich and varied role in our nation's history. Native Americans and colonists of Colonial America used the berries for inks and dyes. Communities of Appalachia have for years used pokeweed as a food staple (I guess they know just how to prepare it). Even "The King" (aka Elvis) recorded a song, *Poke Salad Annie*, referencing pokeweed.

The only thing left to say about this marvelous native plant is it may be difficult to find a specimen at a local nursery. My recommendation is to phone a nursery that carries Florida native plants and they may be able to get one for you. Otherwise, find a friend who has one growing, collect some seeds and sow away. An adventure of the Americana pokeweed awaits you.—*Story and photo by Nancy Hull*

Mark your calendar: Events through December

Sept. 7 (Sat) Propagation group meeting at Dot Backes's house, 9:30 a.m.

Sept. 8 (Sun) Pawpaw Board of Directors meeting at Karen Walter's house, 2 p.m.

Sept. 9 (Mon) Pawpaw Chapter meeting, Piggotte Community Center, South Daytona, 7 p.m. Paul Haydt, president of the Friends of Gamble Rogers and North Peninsula State Parks, will speak about the Tomoka Marsh restoration. Plant of the Month: American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) Sonya Guidry

Sept. 16 (Mon) Park of Honor work day, Olive Street, South Daytona, 9 a.m.

Sept. 21 (Sat) Member's only landscape tour. Warren and Sonya have lined up two public gardens and three to four home landscapes, with optional picnic lunch at Marine Discovery Center. Members must sign up for carpools.

Sept. 14 Annual Natural History Festival and Fossil Day, Museum of Arts and Sciences, Daytona Beach, 10 am–3 pm.

Sept. 28 (Sat) "Plant This Not That" event at North Peninsula Park (Smith Creek)

Sept. 28-29 (Sat-Sun) Port Orange Family Days

Oct. 1-31 Florida Native Plant Month

Oct. 1 (Tues) Tarflower Chapter Meeting at Leu Gardens for Native Plant Month

Oct. 5 (Sat) Tomoka Fest in Tomoka State Park

Oct 12 (Sat) Field trip to visit the UCF Arboretum with tour led by Ray Jarrett

Oct. 14 (Mon) Pawpaw Chapter meeting, Piggotte Community Center, South Daytona, 7 p.m., with Patrick Bohlen, director of Landscape and Natural Resources and Arboretum, University of Central Florida

Oct. 19 (Sat) Tarflower backyard biodiversity event

Oct. 21 (Mon) Park of Honor work day, Olive Street, South Daytona, 9 a.m.

Nov. 11 (Mon) Pawpaw Chapter meeting, Piggotte Community Center, South Daytona, 7 p.m., with Dr. J. Cho of Bethune-Cookman University on the restoration of Reed Canal area. Plant of the Month: Chapman's and seaside goldenrod (*Solidago odora* and *S. sempervirens*) presented by Carol Hawkins

Nov. 16 (Sat) Field trip to Scrub Oak Preserve and Lake Beresford Park. Leaders: Warren Reynolds and Marcia and Mike Hafner

Nov. 18 (Mon) Park of Honor work day, Olive Street, South Daytona, 9 a.m.

Nov. 22 (Fri.) Demonstration of hypertufa by Karen Walter at Ponce Preserve, 10 a.m.

Nov. 23 (Sat) Propagation group meeting at Sonya Guidry's house, 9:30 a.m.

Dec 1 (Sun) Field trip to Canaveral National Seashore. Meet at 12 p.m. for lunch at JB's Fish Camp. After lunch carpool from JB's into Canaveral National Seashore to tour historic Eldora House and walk the Eldora Loop Trail.

Dec. 9 (Mon) Annual chapter holiday celebration and plant auction, Piggotte Community Center, South Daytona, 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 16 (Mon) Park of Honor work day, Olive Street, South Daytona, 9 a.m.

Keep up with chapter events at facebook.com/pawpawchapter/