



THE PAWPAW PRESS



Newsletter of the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society – August 2026

The Florida Native Plant Society's mission is to champion Florida's native plants and their habitats.



Rugel's Rescue: Conservation - Check, Preservation - Check, Restoration - Check!

– story & photos by Karen Walter

On Wednesday, July 8th, Danny Young of Young Bear Environmental and his team accomplished these three main goals of the Florida Native Plant Society. After securing the appropriate permits, Danny and Asclepias Acres owner Damien Rockwood rented a small backhoe required to dig out the long taprooted Rugel's pawpaw, *Deeringothamnus rugelii*. Rugel's pawpaw, the namesake of the Pawpaw Chapter, is a rare and threatened plant endemic to Volusia County. It also has a unique preference for Immokalee-type soils typical to pine flatwoods.

Left: This is Nat, displaying the Rugel's pawpaw long taproot.

Below: Holes were dug using a large auger, planted with some soil from the original site, watered in and flagged.

The rescue of these Rugel's pawpaws from an area off of I-4 is a key element of the purpose and function of the Florida Native Plant Society.

The plants were replanted in a conservation area known as D Ranch with the appropriate conditions in hopes this will maintain the population of this rare and endangered species.

Through teamwork, elbow grease, and a lot of sweat, these plants will have an opportunity to feed gopher tortoises and other small animals that count on the fruit for part of their diet, as well as the zebra swallowtail which relies on the pawpaw as its host plant providing food for the young caterpillars.

A small plant that does so much!





Pawpaw's VIP Tour of the Marine Science Center

– story by Sonya Guidry

– photos by Barb Davis & S. Guidry

Barbara Davis did an excellent job of organizing the July field trip: a terrific inside-outside private tour of Ponce Inlet's Marine Science Center, guided by MSC's Director, Chad MacFie.

We were so impressed with the outdoor native landscaping, the indoor sea and lagoon life displays, and especially the dedicated medical staff's surgical and rehab services offered injured turtles. After the Marine Science Center tour, Barbara invited everyone to her house to participate in a beautyberry insect repellent workshop...and lunch! We all learned so much and had a great time!



🐝 The Great Southeast Pollinator Census! 🦋

Saturday, August 21st & Sunday, August 22nd, 2026

Prepare for the count days!

Download the printable [Counting Sheet](#) and
check out the [Insect Counting & Identification Guide](#)

For more information, visit: <https://gsepc.org/>

Park of Honor Blooms!

– by Sonya Guidry

Due to a busy field trip on Monday, just two people showed up on July 20th to collect a huge bag of weeds and snap pics of what's blooming at the South Daytona Park of Honor. What a comeback after the harsh February 1st hard freeze! The Simpson stopper is just loaded with fruit, the dotted horsemint is beginning to bloom and the firebush bounced back after the freeze. Here are a few other natives thriving there:



fiddlewood



spotted oleander moth



tropical sage

A Tale of Two Murals at Asclepias Acres



Asclepias Acres owner Damien Rockwood helped students at Oak Hill's STEAM Station Preschool and Liberty Oaks Academy build a native plant and butterfly garden. In gratitude, the students painted the colorful fence panel pictured above for use as a backdrop in a demonstration garden at the entrance of the Edgewater nursery.

Meanwhile, a team of Pawpaw members created their own mural for Asclepias Acres. Kate Muldoon drew in the 6 by 8 foot panel and other members pitched in to finish the painting.



Kate prepares the mural, outlining details for artistic volunteers to fill in.



Left: Sande Habali, Barb Davis and Amy Spies pose in front of the nearly completed mural.



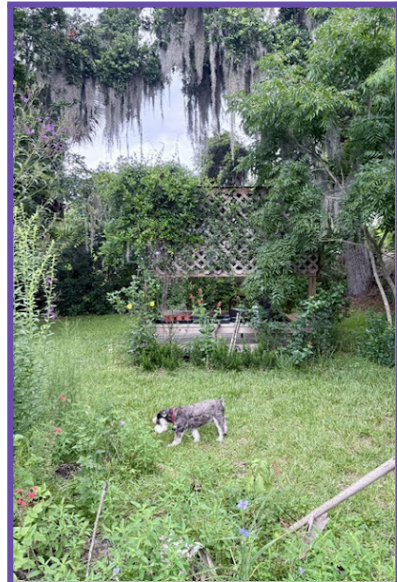
Right: Barb's dog Choclaw helps Sande mix the perfect shade of green.



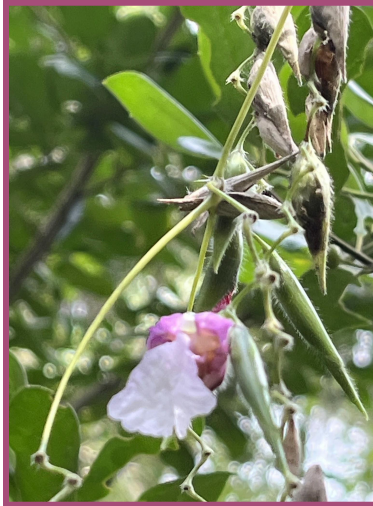
Several Pawpaws met with Damien Rockwell on August 8th to see the mural panel installed.

THE OBSERVATORY 📷 🌻

Sonya reports her ironweed reached heights “tall as Kansas corn” (10-12 feet high this year!) so it’s attracting high-flying pollinators. Other visitors to her backyard pollinator meadow include our lovely state butterfly, the zebra longwing and Sonya’s cute canine, Tella.



Our president Karen Walter shared photos of these enchanting blooms new to her yard:

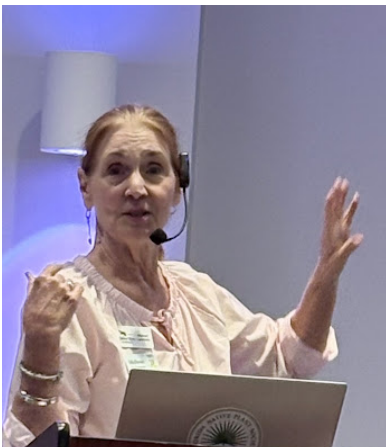


Above left: this *Hydrolea corymbosa* – or skyflower – lives in wet savannahs, so it likes some sunshine and wet feet. Center and right: *Thalia geniculata* – aka: alligatorflag – also likes wet feet and can grow up to 9' tall. It makes an unusual zipper-like pattern of flowers that are individually very interesting. It's host to the Brazilian skipper butterfly, whose larva form is apparently translucent. To protect itself, it chews a line across the leaf and folds it over itself. It comes out at night to munch on the leaves. Golden cana is also a host plant for this skipper.

Recently seen on the tag attached to a bag of tea:

🌻 **The difference between a flower and a weed is a judgment.** – unknown

Scenes from the July 13th general meeting:



On short notice, Melissa gave her excellent presentation "For the Love of Birds".



Sara and Jeannie always provide something wonderful to snack on.



Suzie and Jim faithfully transport, set up and break down the Pawpaw library.

Join us!

Monthly meetings take place the second Monday of the month at the Piggotte Community Center, 504 Big Tree Road, South Daytona

***** Next Meeting: Monday, September 14th *****

Meeting starts at **6:30 pm**, doors open at 6 for socializing

Guest Speaker: Leslie Poole

Topic: Tracing Florida Journeys

Videos of our monthly speakers and plant of the month presenters are available...
on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/PawpawChapter>
and website: <https://pawpaw.fnpschapters.org/meetings/recordings/>

Submissions to the newsletter are welcome! Send in short articles, poems or photos related to native plants! Share recent discoveries or pictures taken at Pawpaw events!

Email them to the editor at: geomeado@gmail.com

Upcoming Field Trips & Events:

Saturday, August 15th: **Plant Swap w/ optional Pontoon Boat Ride on Spruce Creek**

Cracker Creek, 1795 Taylor Road, Port Orange, FL 32128

Meet at 9 am to put your plants for the swap meet (if any) in the pavilion and pay the \$12 per person boat ride fee. Boat tour begins at 9:30, plant swap to follow.

Sign up at the August 10th meeting or contact Sonya.

Bring a bag lunch to continue the enjoyable day!

Coming Soon:

Saturday, September 12th: **How-To Festival**

Ormond Beach and Port Orange Public Libraries

Friday, September 25th: **EcoBuggy Tour at Deep Creek Preserve**

Upcoming ReGrow the Loop Event:

Saturday, August 22nd at 10:30 am – **“Making a Difference in Your Own Backyard”**

Marine Discovery Center, 520 Barracuda Blvd, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169

This collaboration with the New Smyrna Beach Garden Club will include a program geared for 4-8 year olds. A story, dress up and play acting followed by a walk into the MDC garden to hunt for real pollinators. Asclepias Acres will be on hand to offer plants for sale.

Native Plant Garden Workdays:

* Park of Honor, 9 am – 12 noon every third Monday, 755 Olive Street, South Daytona

* Dunlawton Sugar Mill Gardens, 9 am – 12 noon, every Wednesday and Saturday
950 Old Sugar Mill Road, Port Orange

* Environmental Discovery Center, 8:30 – 9:30 am Fridays following the monthly meeting
601 Division Avenue, Ormond Beach

* Mary Harrell Black Heritage Museum, 9 – 11 am Fridays following the monthly meeting
314 Duss Street, New Smyrna