



THE PAWPAW PRESS

Newsletter of the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society: August 2021

Joint effort brings new home for Rugel's

Thanks to a partnership between Bok Tower Gardens and Volusia County Land Management, there is a new Rugel's pawpaw patch on Volusia County conservation land.

Volusia County Environmental Specialist Richard Harris had the conservation area gate open on Aug. 11 as he awaited the arrival of Cheryl Peterson, manager of rare plant conservation for Bok Tower Gardens. Cheryl's pickup



bore shovels, hand trowels, and 20 rescued plants and tissue-cultured seedlings of *Deeringothamnus rugelii*. The site was selected for its suitable soil type, hydrology, and practical location for ongoing county management. It is also remote from other known Rugel's locations.

Cheryl mentioned they could be adding 80 more Rugel's pawpaw plants in two years. The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens' rare plants tissue culture division just sent Bok Tower 80 more seedlings to grow out.

Prescribed fire is a key tool in the successful management of our chapter's namesake, a federally listed Volusia County endemic. So, it is doubly important to partner with an agency that can provide the necessary management. Hopefully the recently passed Volusia Forever funding and its 15 percent earmark for conservation land management will be a safeguard for Rugel's.

I had expected to be an observer of the day's proceedings, but it was quickly apparent that a third pair of hands would be expedient. So we all got dirt under our fingernails as 19½ Rugel's found a new protected homesite. Alas, the top part of one plant broke off, so hopefully the root will resprout and Cheryl can coax the rescued stem to grow roots.

Just as we were starting to water in the plants with the help of a large tank on Richard's truck and a 100-foot hose, Mother Nature decided to bless the event with a little more.—*Story and photo by Sonya Guidry*

Seagrape: a superior buffer for coastal sites

The July plant of the month was seagrape (*Coccoloba uvifera*), presented by Paul Rebmann, who started out by showing photos of several large plantings of seagrape at an oceanside residence.

In Florida seagrape is found throughout the Keys and along the coasts of the peninsula, from Flagler County southward on the east, and Pasco County southward on the west.

Seagrape is a sprawling shrub that can grow upward of 20 feet tall. The large, round, leathery leaves are green, turning red with age or when stressed. Small white flowers are borne in racemes that later form clusters of grape-sized fruit that can be used to make jam.

Coccoloba uvifera is highly salt and wind tolerant, and is often used to stabilize beaches. At least part of this salt tolerance is the result of the ectomycorrhizal fungus *Scleroderma bermudense*, which alleviates salt stress in seagrape seedlings. Cold may damage plants, but even after a hard freeze that kills the above-ground portion, regrowth from the rootstock is possible.

The genus name is derived from the Greek *kokkolobis*, a type of grape. The specific name *uvifera* means grape-bearing.

During the discussion following the plant of the month presentation a question was raised about pruning these shrubs into a tree-like form. Several examples of that can be seen along A1A in front of the Dunkin Donuts in Ormond by the Sea and along the North Causeway in New Smyrna Beach.—*Story and photo by Paul Rebmann*



Heat does not deter native plant seekers

Almost 30 hardy souls showed up for this year's plant walk and swap, held at Buschman Park on a predictably sultry August 21. More than 20 members contributed plants for the event, making for two picnic tables full of enticing offerings. The event also gave Karen Walter the chance to introduce a backyard milkweed propagation initiative. For more on that: karenlw72@gmail.com.

Mark your calendar for programs, field trips

September 13, Meeting, via Zoom: Bonnie Basham, FNPS president, on North Florida natives endemic to Wakulla County

September 18, Field trip, Tomoka State Park, Ormond Beach

September 20: Park of Honor work day, 9 a.m., Olive Street, South Daytona

October 11, Meeting, via Zoom, with recorded presentation by Craig Huegel.

October 16, Field trip, Lake Beresford, DeLand

October 18: Park of Honor work day, 9 a.m., Olive Street, South Daytona

November 8: Meeting, via Zoom: Paul Rebmann on beetles and native plants

November 20, Field trip, Gamble Rogers State Park, Flagler Beach

The Observatory

Leslie captured two generations of monarch on *Asclepias incarnata* at the Environmental Discovery Center in Ormond Beach. Share your delights and discoveries by emailing Doug at shalehill@gmail.com.

