THE PAWPAW PRESS

Newsletter of the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society: October 2017

OCTOBER MEETING

Class is in session!

Last month's Pawpaw Chapter meeting turned into a Botany 101 class led by our own Prof. Don Spence. Who knew going back to school could be so much fun! Special thanks to Elizabeth Flynn for supplying all the plant specimens.

Photos by Sonya Guidry

UPCOMING EVENTS: NOVEMBER

13 Pawpaw meeting with the Darwinian gardener himself, Mark Lane

11 Field trip to Dicerandra Scrub Sanctuary in Titusville: danderson726@yahoo.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendar

NOVEMBER 11 Field trip led by David Anderson to Titusville's Dicerandra Scrub Sanctuary to search for a rare scrub mint, *Dicerandra thinicola*. This scrub sanctuary is sandwiched between subdivisions on a 44-acre section of the old Atlantic coastal ridge and well worth a visit in fall when this Brevard endemic is in bloom. *See page 4 for additional information.*

NOVEMBER 13 Pawpaw Chapter meeting, 7 to 9 p.m., Piggotte Community Center, Big Tree Road, South Daytona, with Mark Lane, the "Darwinian Gardener."

NOVEMBER 20 Workday at Park of Honor on Olive Street, South Daytona, starting at 9 a.m.

DECEMBER 2 Field trip in New Smyrna Beach: Easy plant ID walk along a paved trail, take side trip to see a native plant installation at Lindley's Nursery, and have lunch at Norwood's Restaurant.

DECEMBER 11 The Pawpaw Chapter's annual social and native plant auction, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Piggotte Community Center, Big Tree Road, South Daytona.

DECEMBER 18 Workday at Park of Honor on Olive Street, South Daytona, starting at 9 a.m.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Saw palmetto: berry desirable

Serenoa repens, or saw palmetto, is the most abundant native palm species in the U.S. Its gray-green fan-shaped leaves often serve as a quiet, neighborly backdrop to more stand-out species such as live oak, beautyberry, longleaf pine, or cabbage palm.

Although this cold-hardy plant prefers sunny locations, the drought-tolerant saw palmetto can thrive in habitats ranging from sunny seaside sand dunes and swampy wetlands to more shady pine flatwoods.

The "saw" in saw palmetto refers to the protective, saw-like teeth along the leaf stems. While the main plant grows slowly, the more extravagant fans frequently grow to two feet within a month. Those oily fans are the first to burn in a forest fire, but the plant itself is often the first to recover. After a burn newly green palmetto leaves sprout among the blackened pines.

In spring, the fragrant yellow-white flowers attract insects, including the honey bee. However, it may take 100 years for the plant to mature enough for the honey-making process.

By fall, palmettos produce clusters of fruit resembling olive-shaped grapes—a nutritious food source for birds, foxes, raccoons, gopher tortoises, and especially the Florida black bear.

Today the bears have human competition. The saw palmetto extract industry thrives as millions of pounds of the berries are harvested annually for herbal supplements. Marketing emphasizes saw palmetto as a remedy for enlarged prostate problems but medical research has not established its effectiveness.

When palmetto berry pickers raid sources of natural foods, bears are forced to search for food closer to human habitats—raiding garbage cans, etc. In 2015, Volusia County had more calls about nuisance bears than any other Florida county.

Anxiety about bears coming closer to neighborhoods triggered the 2015 bear hunt. That year, hunters in Florida killed a total of 298 bears.

After strong opposition to another hunt, state and county agencies banned saw palmetto berry picking on publicly owned land.

In spite of the prohibitions, berry poaching continues today, robbing our wildlife of a needed food source. Continued urban development further erodes saw palmetto plant communities themselves.

—Story and photo by Carolyn West

NATIVE PLANT MONTH

Ponce Inlet tour: public and private

To complete our October Florida Native Plant Month celebration Ponce Inlet's Cultural Services manager, Amy Zengotita, set us up to lead a public tour of Timucuan Oaks.

As an unofficial pre-trip, pawpaw folks gathered first at Ponce Preserve Park to take the Green Mound trail out to a 450-year-old sprawling historic oak, identifying maritime hammock plants along the way. We found frostweed, marlberry, and snowberry beginning to bloom.

The official 10 a.m. Timucuan Oaks portion of the field trip took us down a small hammock trail out to a long boardwalk. In addition to seaside goldenrod and giant leather ferns, everyone had the perfect opportunity to ID all three mangrove species: white, black and red mangroves. Members were provided with a plant list generated by Ponce Inlet and pencils to make this a great learning experience.

Our Ponce Inlet trip was the perfect opportunity to visit a miniature hammock created by chapter member Kriem Michel. The front yard has a path which circles around Hercules'-club, varnish leaf, necklace pod, yaupon holly, Simpson's stopper, white indigoberry shrubs, a small mountain of palmettos and coonties, along with a privacy hedge of Florida privet. Quite an inspiration! *—Story and photos by Sonya Guidry*

More photos from October events are on the chapter's Facebook page at facebook.com/PawpawChapter/

NATIVES IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

Ormond church plants native garden

As you cross East Granada Blvd. and drive north along Halifax in Ormond Beach, you will note the sign for the Unitarian Universalist church building. You may also notice nearby the new native plant demonstration garden.

The church Green Team volunteers assisted UU team leader Kurtland Davies in preparing the area alongside the sign.

Then Pawpaw member Rene Luedke, owner of New Moon Natives, designed and planted the garden, filling in the front with low-growing, salt-tolerant native wildflowers like Tampa verbena, dune sunflower, and creeping mimosa, in an area where they will not obscure the church sign. Behind them are taller plants—including necklace pod and fire bush, with a row of coontie in back.

The garden was not specifically created as a butterfly garden, but in mid-August, we noticed busy pollinators hovering over the plants. When the larger plants are in full bloom, even more butterflies will come.

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ormond Beach has been recognized as a Green Sanctuary by the national Unitarian Universalist Association since 2009. Originally, volunteers from the Green Sanctuary Team spent many hours removing invasive plants and performing other labor in order to preserve the dune hammock on the west side of the church.

The UUA Green Sanctuary Program "invites congregations to build awareness of the significance and complexity of environmental issues, encourage personal lifestyle changes, engage in community action on environmental issues, strengthen the connection between spiritual practice and Earth consciousness, and work to heal environmental injustices."

The new native plant garden will help build such awareness while gracing us all with its beauty.

—Ellen Nielsen and Carolyn West

NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP

In search of a rare scrub mint

On Saturday, Nov. 11, David Anderson will guide the chapter through Dicerandra Scrub Sanctuary in search of the remaining fall blooms of Titusville's rare, endemic, purple-flowering scrub mint, *Dicerandra thinicola*.

This rare population of about 1,000 plants is found only in this remnant of Brevard County's Atlantic coastal ridge. Dr. Suzanne Kennedy, who has been closely monitoring this population for the past 15 years, pointed out at the last FNPS conference the positive value of fire in maintaining *Dicerandra thinicola* population's vigor and health.

The field trip will also include a visit to nearby Wuesthoff Park and Homer Powell Nature Center. This is a natural area with a variety of habitats from red maple swamp to a subtropical hammock.

Picnic tables and restrooms will be available.

Contact trip leader David Anderson by email at danderson726@yahoo.com or by calling (386) 334-8463

For carpool information, contact Sonya Guidry at guidry.sonya@gmail.com or (386) 690-1797.

—Photo by Dave Anderson

OCTOBER FIELD TRIP

From fire, diversity grows

Pawpaw Chapter was fortunate to have FNPS President-Elect Dr. Susan Carr as a guide on its Oct, 14 Ocala National Forest longleaf pine sandhill excursion. Dr. Carr is a botanist and noted expert on the diversity of fire-managed pinelands throughout the state of Florida.

Dr. Carr's goal for the trip participants was to demonstrate the diversities of two fire-maintained Ocala National Forest "pine island" communities. In this case she is actually referring to islands of pine-sandhill communities surrounded by the famous white-sand Ocala scrub, species which had evolved with the Florida ecology through the ages.

Dr. Carr pointed out that all fire-suppressed pineland communities have a trio of major understory plant families: grasses, composits, and legumes. (In scientific terms: *Poace*, *Compositae-* or *Asteraceae,* and *Fabaceae* or *Papilionoideae* families.)

The one-year burn site with longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) and turkey oaks (*Quercus laevis*) had a predominate understory of wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*), blazing star (*Liatris spicata*), and partridge pea (*Chamaecrista faciculata*).

The three-year post-burn longleaf pine community the group visited, found more shrubby plants, as small sand live oaks (*Quercus virginiana,* var. *geminata*) and rusty lyonia (*Lyonia ferruginea*). Of the three major understory species, there was lopsided Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum seundum*), Eastern silver aster (*Symphyostrichum concolor*), and sand ticktrefoil (*Desmodium lineatum*). It was a plus to see that this more mature longleaf pine environment also supported a well-monitored red-cockaded woodpecker colony.

The small group of trip participants all agreed they would love to see the longleaf pine sandhill community in the spring or after a recent burn.

—Story and photos by Sonya Guidry