



THE PAWPAW PRESS



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

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

Cracker Creek Field Trip & Plant Swap

– by Sonya Guidry

– photos by S. Guidry & Amy Spies



On a hot August day, 29 Pawpaw members and friends came out to Cracker Creek to hold the Chapter's annual "August Plant Swap". By choosing the Cracker Creek site this year, we lucked out on the added opportunity to take their pontoon boat tour on the back waters of Spruce Creek. Cracker Creek's Canoe and Kayak Outpost has to be the best kept secret tucked right here in the heart of Port Orange! Before the pontoon tour, the owner, Jill Williams, filled us in on the history behind Cracker Creek and how it was related to the historic Gamble Place property just next door, which dates back to the early 1900s.

After the boat tour, the plant swap fun began!

Members brought in a diverse pool of native plants in need of new homes. So when their number was called, both members and visitors had a chance to adopt a plant.

It was a fun day! At least 18 folks remained at the pavilion to enjoy picnic lunches together. It was also a sneak peek at one of the sites FNPS selected to serve as a 2027 Conference social event. A HUGE thank you to our

treasurer Lisa for handling all 28 of those cash-only pontoon tour fees so there would be just one Pawpaw Chapter check written to Cracker Creek for this fully loaded "group boat tour"!!!



Pawpaws Participate in Re-Grow Volusia Event

— by Mary Heasley



As part of the Re-Grow Volusia Program, the FNPS-Pawpaw Chapter teamed up with the New Smyrna Beach Garden Club and Asclepias Acres on August 22, 2026 to provide a two-hour community outreach program for adults and children ages 4-8. The fun, interactive event at the Marine Discovery Center focused on pollination, the important role of pollinators, and how to attract pollinators to your garden with Florida native plants.

Following the educational portion of the program, the event participants visited the beautiful native plant garden at Marine Discovery Center to learn more about the flowers that attract pollinators, locate and identify pollinators in the garden, as well as participate in the Great Southeast Pollinator Census. Dave Bruce did an excellent job organizing the Pollinator Census at Marine Discovery Center, as well as at Allegany Saints Lutheran Church in Port Orange. In addition to the Pollinator Census, Damien Rockwood, owner of Asclepias Acres was available to sell native plants, as well as educate others about the importance of planting native.

Thanks to everyone who gave of their time to plan and participate in this community event. Through this pollinator program, you shared your passion for gardening and educational knowledge, and inspired others so that we can all Make a Difference in our own Backyard.



Jimmy Harrell Fence Garden Update

— by Sonya Guidry

The Mary B Harrell Black Heritage Museum's Jimmy Harrell Fence Garden presented a sweet surprise to the usual monthly Pawpaw Chapter garden work crew on August 14th. On that early summer morning, Judi and Sonya couldn't have been more surprised to find that Mother Nature had already perfectly tended this beautiful garden. Special thanks to Heather for giving the tall seaside goldenrod a heavy pruning last month. Now they are perfect!



With tall (yet to bloom) goldenrod stems in the background, the flowering tropical sage was a nectar magnet to our zebra longwings! The state butterfly also enjoyed the firebush.



In addition to the Florida greeneyes pictured above, spotted beebalm (aka: horsemint) was in its glory, Sande's recently installed butterfly weed are preparing to flower, Ohio spiderworts are coming into their second bloom season and the sprawling blue porterweed proved it could survive the February freeze.

In Memorium: Dorothy Backes

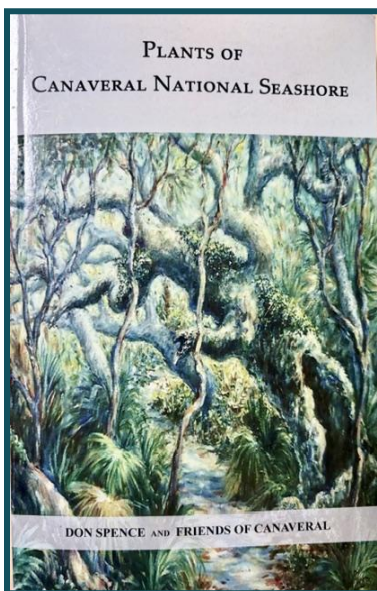
— by Sonya Guidry



Sadly, we have learned about the loss of Dot Backes, one of our treasured longtime Pawpaw Chapter members. Her family reported her passing on August 20th at Lexington Place's memory care unit where she resided for the past two years. The Dot we knew and loved shared her knowledge of native plants on field trips, and was one of the Chapter's first "petal pushers" who was already growing some of the most unusual native plants in her back yard. Along with Warren and Sonya, Dot also volunteered to help lead wintertime weekly Canaveral National Seashore plant walks.

Dot remained active well into her nineties, painting Florida's natural areas, propagating plants with some secret knowledge of just what that plant needed to grow, participating in plant walks, and giving plant talks at Pawpaw chapter meetings.

Dot Backes' 96 years of productive life is an example of a life well lived, and serves as a role model for us all.



Few knew that Dot was also an accomplished artist. I am proud to own a couple of her real Florida paintings, including the one shown above.

Along with Warren and Sonya, Dot also volunteered to help lead wintertime weekly Canaveral National Seashore plant walks. During that time, Bethune-Cookman Professor Dr. Cho was working on a book. We happily notified Dr. Cho when we found a specific plant in bloom that she needed to photograph for her publication. It was Dot Backes' painting of a maritime hammock that Dr. Cho selected for the book cover.

Partnering with Dr. Don Spence, "Plants of the National Seashore" was published in 2018 by Friends of Canaveral.

This book is still being sold at the Canaveral National Seashore visitor's Center.

Services for Dorothy Whitner Backes are scheduled for 1:00 pm, Friday, September 4th at St. Peter the Fisherman Episcopal Church, [4212 Saxon Drive, New Smyrna Beach](https://www.google.com/maps/place/4212+Saxon+Drive,+New+Smyrna+Beach,+FL+34883/@28.2714,-80.6514,15z)

Butterfly Experts are Planting 15,000 Milkweeds Along Florida Roadsides to Help Monarchs! 🦋

Here's some good news! The Florida Museum of Natural History and the Florida Department of Transportation have teamed up to plant 15,000 milkweeds along roadsides in the northern part of the state.

Thanks to Gina Holt for sharing this link about the project: (Source: Research News)

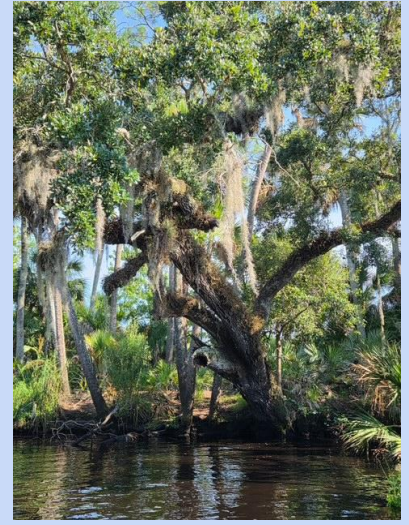
<https://share.google/VoYbutwJJBAjsquT4>

THE OBSERVATORY

More photos from the field trip at Cracker Creek!



Heather Circelli took the top three photos.
Amy Spies shared the three below.



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

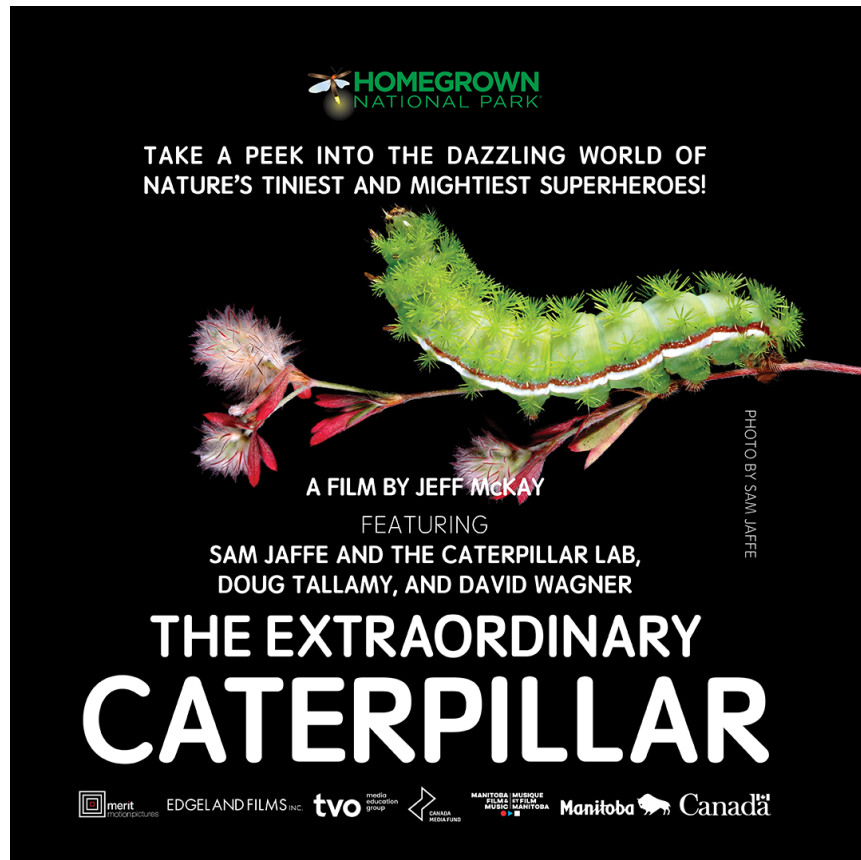
Guest Speaker: Leslie Poole

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

Special Event!
Sunday, October 4th



Join us for a Sunday Matinee at the New Smyrna Beach Library!
The Show will begin at 2:00 PM on October 4th. After the movie, Haleigh Ray, Entomologist from Stetson University, will be on hand to answer questions and bring some interesting samples of butterflies and moths. Admission is Free!

We all realize habitat is being lost that supports the pollinators that pollinate our food sources. The same loss of habitat is reducing the native plants that these pollinators need to reproduce. This event is presented to help increase awareness of the need to preserve and protect our pollinators and native plants. – Karen Walter

Upcoming Field Trips & Events:

Friday, September 4th, 9:30 am: **Save the Bees** presentation by Leslie Nixon
Ponce Inlet Town Hall, 4300 S. Atlantic Avenue
There will be a free raffle for bee-friendly native wildflowers!

Saturday, September 12th, 11 am – 3 pm: **How-To Festivals at the Ormond Beach and Port Orange Public Libraries**

At 11 am in Ormond Beach Leslie will talk about Invasive Plants and Their AlterNatives

Friday, September 25th, 9 am – noon: **EcoBuggy Tour at Deep Creek Preserve**

946 State Rte 415, New Smyrna Beach (really Lake Ashby)

Led by Tommy Nordmann, we'll search for those flashy pine lilies (*Lillium catesbyi*), aka: Catesby's lilies. BYO picnic lunch to follow at nearby Lake Ashby Park.

For more info or to sign up, visit: [Pawpaw Chapter Field Trip to Deep Creek](#)

Saturday, October 17 – Hontoon Island Field Trip lead by Danny Young

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