



### Monthly Meeting and Field Trip Information

**Chapter Meeting:**  
**April 20, 2010**  
**"Plant Evolution,"**  
**Drs. Pamela and Doug Soltis**  
**UF Botany Department**  
**See page 4.**

**Field Trip: April 24**  
**Tuscawilla Prairie**  
**CR 234 in Micanopy**  
**Leader: Ivor Kincaid**  
**See page 4.**

### Rhexia Article Submissions

**Please!** Submit unformatted word documents only. Submit pictures as separate jpg, tiff, or pdf files. Send all article submissions to: [rhexia@gmail.com](mailto:rhexia@gmail.com)

**Submission deadline date for the May 2010 newsletter is April 27, 2010**

## Spring Native Plant Sale April 16-17

*By Brian Quinn*



Ladies and Gentlemen step right up! Come and see the show! On April 16 and 17 at Morningside Nature Park there will be amazing displays of native plants available for purchase. Seize the chance to enhance your yards and wild spaces with flowers, shrubs, grasses, trees, and other unique species that have spent the entirety of their evolutionary lifetimes adapting to our local climates.

Make a significant difference in your community by supporting a needy and hungry hummingbird family or a homeless pair of nesting birds by choosing the right plants for your yard. Find an available area to help our butterflies by putting in host plants to harness their wayward larvae.

Plant that garden which will be sustainable with minimal water & nutrient needs, and also survive the cold winter weather. Finally, put that slow growing tree in the ground for our younger generations to observe and enjoy, just as we do with the mature trees planted and nurtured by our predecessors.

This is the time and the place to make a positive change in your community and congruently support our local nature parks. You can make a difference.

Please see page 5 for more information about this Spring's plant sale.

# Plant Profile: Native Azaleas

By Craig Huegel

From FNPS Pinellas chapter's newsletter *The Understory*

Right now, outside my window, the native azaleas are bursting forth once more in a spring ritual that culminates months of winter anticipation. Each year, from leaf fall to eventual bud swelling, I watch the azaleas to gauge when winter is officially past and spring arrived. Pay no attention to the calendar on the wall. Those dates are set by folks without a heart that beats green blood. A calendar is no true measure of spring the way my azaleas mark time. This past weekend, the seasons moved from winter because my azaleas heralded it.

Most of us have a landscape of oriental azaleas - or neighbors that do. These gaudy cousins have become a southern tradition in the same way that many other plants of Chinese and/or far-eastern origin have. Camellias, gardenias, citrus, and confederate jasmine are not from here. We have come to accept them without so much as a shrug, but the seasons they mark are not our own. In Florida, that role is served by native species and there are none better to usher in spring than our own azaleas.

By definition, azaleas are deciduous and rhododendrons are not. That said, Florida is home to four species of native azaleas and one rhododendron. We tend to lump them all as azaleas, however. Taxonomists lump them all under the genus *Rhododendron*. Perhaps, azalea is just easier to say. It certainly is easier to spell...

Taxonomically, azaleas are ericaceous plants and share most of the growing characteristics of the family. Knowing this first will save a lot of gardening grief. Ericaceous plants include all of the blueberries and huckleberries, lyonias, tarflower, and the mountain laurels. All are plants that require highly acidic soils and are plants no-

toriously slow to establish. Plant one of these near your foundation and they will wither. If you have fill that is full of shell fragments, do not waste your time and money. But, if your soils are reasonably native and mulched by pine straw or oak leaves, you stand a chance.

Ericaceous plants have exceedingly fine root systems. While these roots are exceptionally good at pulling in the moisture the plant requires, they are excessively slow at extending themselves into the soil once planted from a potted condition. The larger your plant and the longer it's been potted, the longer you will need to water it to get it established. Most of us kill ericaceous plants

by watering too little – even those species that are adapted to well-drained soils, such as rusty lyonia (*Lyonia ferruginea*) and tarflower (*Bejaria racemosa*).

With one exception, our native azaleas are very rare in nature and are resident to deciduous forested habitats. Under such conditions, they find soils that are relatively cool, moist and rich. These are not

species resident to barren sands, for example. Azaleas are most often found on slope forests, near creek systems, but well above the floodplain. It is a “happy medium” between the most well-drained top-of-slope region and the permanently wet one.

Deciduous forests are very different from the live oak forests we are most familiar with here in Pinellas. Do not plant native azaleas under the canopy of a live oak forest and expect them to thrive. The difference is light. Native azaleas grow in the understory of forests that lose their leaves during the winter and regain them in mid-spring. The winter and early-spring sunlight is important to the ecology of these species. It is needed for proper leaf and



Photos submitted by Claudia Larsen

flower production and it is vital for pollination. Native azaleas are very fragrant – which means they are pollinated by butterflies and other sun-loving insects. And, by hummingbirds. But, don't put your native azaleas in full sun. The winter and early-spring sun is a very different beast from the one of summer and early fall. The deciduous forest closes in and protects plants such as our native azaleas before the summer sun arrives to scorch them. If you don't have a deciduous forest to work with, you might get away with planting them where they will get only early morning sun. Don't expose them to any more if you want them to thrive. Native azaleas are not showy foliage plants. They tend to grow a bit lanky and the leaves are mostly concentrated at the ends of the thin branches. They also tend to grow taller than their Asian cousins. Without pruning, they will reach 8-9 feet tall – eventually. If you have to prune them (I don't recommend it), do so right after flowering so as not to eliminate next year's flower buds.

Enough of the cautionary and on to the positives... Despite their rarity and their limited natural geographic range, native azaleas can be successfully grown in the landscape – even here in Pinellas County. As always, the secret is finding or creating the microclimate conditions they need to prosper. Without them, however, you should not waste your time – and their lives. Our most common native azalea is our least showy. Of course, Swamp azalea (*R. viscosum*) is the only species native to the central peninsula and occurs as far south as Highlands County. This is a plant of wet to moist hammock and pine-dominated forests, but it will adapt to somewhat drier soils once established. Swamp azalea is not a spring-blooming species either. Its flowers open several months after the leaves develop. Because of this and because they are a simple white color, swamp azalea does not put the same kind of floral show together that the others do. It is fragrant, however, and pretty in its own understated way.



The other four species have colorful blooms that open by early to mid-March. Three of them, being deciduous, bloom in exciting floral clusters before the leaves develop. The other, being evergreen (and more technically a rhododendron) has buds at all the branch tips – well above the foliage and right there for the world to see. I will describe each briefly.

Flame azalea (*R. austrinum*) typically produces clouds of bright orange flowers, but yellow and pinkish flowered forms are also available in the trade. Alexa and I saw whole hillsides ablaze with this species in parts of Torreya State Park, but the plant's commonness there belies its true rarity in nature. In Florida, it is restricted to 12 counties, mostly in the western panhandle and it is a state-listed endangered species. Because of its great beauty and ease of propagation, however, it is fairly

widely available in the trade.

Pink, Pinxster or Piedmont azalea (*R. canescens*) typically produces numerous clusters of pure pink blossoms, but some forms are very pale (almost white) while others are salmon or deep red. Like the flame azalea, this species is commonly propagated and widely available. The flowers also are tubular, but it

differs by its greater range and distribution. Pink azalea is found throughout the panhandle and occurs well into the northern part of the peninsula. Its growing requirements are similar to the other, rarer species.

Alabama azalea (*R. alabamense*) is the least available of our native species from Florida native plant sources, and seemingly the poorest known to our gardening public. It is a state-listed endangered species and limited to only one or two counties in the state. But, it is easily propagated and widely available from nurseries specializing in native azaleas. Alabama azalea has spreading (not tubular) flowers that are white with a conspicuous lemon yellow blotch in the center. They also are fragrant.

## 2010 Calendar of Events

Please check the Paynes Prairie chapter page at [www.FNPS.org](http://www.FNPS.org) for most current information and directions to field trips. All 2008 meetings will be held at the United Church of Gainesville, 1624 NW 5th Ave, Gainesville, 7:00-8:30pm. The plant ID workshop prior to the meeting begins at 6:15.

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|--------------------|--|
| <b>April 16-17</b> | <b>Spring Native Plant Sale,<br/>Morningside Nature Center</b>   |
| <b>April 20</b>    | <b>Meeting: "Plant Evolution"<br/>Drs. Pamela &amp; Doug Soltis,<br/>UF Botany Department</b>                  |
| <b>April 24</b>    | <b>Field Trip to Tuskawilla Prairie,<br/>CR 234 in Micanopy</b>  |
| <b>May 4</b>       | <b>Chapter Board and Planning Meeting,<br/>Environmental Hort Dept Greenhouses,<br/>UF Campus, 5:30pm</b>      |
| <b>May 18</b>      | <b>Meeting: "The Sweetwater Branch<br/>Project," Jim Weimer, Park Biologist,<br/>Paynes Prairie State Park</b> |
| <b>May 22</b>      | <b>Field Trip Prairie Creek Ranch – tentative</b>  |
| <b>May 20-23</b>   | <b>FNPS State Conference, Tallahassee, FL</b>  |


## Tuskawilla Prairie, Micanopy Field Trip Saturday, April 24

Tuskawilla Preserve is a 372-acre wet prairie with a mature live oak forest on the uplands surrounding it. The Preserve was acquired by ACT with Florida Communities Trust and private funds and is adjoined by the Town of Micanopy's Native American Heritage Park.

At the February chapter planning meeting the Paynes Prairie board members voted to donate \$500 for a bluebird nest box trail at the Preserve that will be dedicated to Alice Tyler, a longtime FNPS member, who died in 2009. Ivor Kincaid will lead us as we hike the trail and observe the nest boxes. The field trip will be from 9:00 - 12:00.

Trip difficulty: Easy, but parts of trail may be muddy so where appropriate shoes. Bring along a hat, drinking water, binoculars. Meet at parking lot on CR 234 (Chollocka Rd. in Micanopy) at 9:00. From Gainesville: Drive south on US441 for 10 miles to Micanopy (about 20 minutes) Slow down to 45 mph, go past the blinking light and take a right at CR 234 where there is a church on the corner. Parking lot is short distance on right across the street from the Preserve. For more information please contact Ivor Kincaid at 352-377-6253

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Native Azaleas, continued from page 3

Chapman's rhododendron (*R. minus var. chapmanii*) is regarded as a distinct endemic variety of a more widespread species. When not in flower, Chapman's rhododendron looks much like a lyonia, with wide leathery leaves that slightly curl under at the margins. But, it has squat fat flower buds at the end of each stem and these burst forth in the spring with spreading pink petals with darker spots on the upper petal. It is a state and federally listed endangered species, but is grown by a number of commercial nurseries and relatively easy to find. Native azaleas are not for the novice gardener in this part of the state, but they warrant much more attention than they get here by those of us a bit more seasoned. If you don't have the conditions they need, forget them – or start now to create them for the future. I treasure my native species and I suspect you will too. 

## Drs. Pamela and Doug Soltis to Speak About "Plant Evolution" at April 20 Meeting

We are excited that Drs. Pamela and Doug Soltis will be speaking for us at our April meeting! Pam is a curator at the Florida Museum of Natural History, and her husband Doug is a professor in the UF Botany Department. Together, they run the Laboratory of Molecular Systematics and Evolutionary Genetics in Dickinson Hall. The lab focuses on evolution in flowering plants at many different levels: from how speciation occurs, to the relationships of angiosperm taxa and the origin of angiosperms themselves. The Soltises also study the geography of plant evolution in regions of the U.S., the evolution of flower morphology, and the conservation genetics of rare plant species. They will be speaking about plant evolution at the April 20 Paynes Prairie chapter meeting.

## Upcoming Events of Interest

### Spring Native Plant Sale!!!

The Spring Native Plant Sale, co-sponsored by Paynes Prairie chapter of Florida Native Plant Society, Friends of Nature Parks, and the City of Gainesville's Nature Operations Division, is scheduled for April 16 and 17 at Morningside Nature Center on East

University Avenue. Friday night is for members only and provides us with the first opportunity to pick up the choice plants. Check-in begins at 4:30 and the sale ends at 6:30. On Saturday the sale is open to the public and runs from 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Pass the word and bring your friends and family to the sale on Saturday and get them turned on to our wonderful native plants! Also, a guided nature walk around Morningside will begin at 11:30 a.m.

At our booth, members will be dispensing plant advice and providing personalized customer service. An added perk to shopping at the FNPS plant sale is park-a-plant, which offers hands-free plant purchasing and one-stop loading. Remember, only cash and checks are accepted.

We still could use a few more volunteers for either Friday night's check-in or Saturday at the FNPS booth. Even just one hour of your time would be most helpful. Morningside has added a new pavillion to the plant sale area. This will be used to house the cashiers and will be a welcome addition to the park. To volunteer, please contact contact Lisa Jelks at: jelkslg@ufl.edu or 373-3028.



### FNPS 30th Annual Conference "Rooted in History, Forever Blooming" May 20 – May 23

Don't forget to register now for the upcoming Florida Native Plant Society Conference in Tallahassee. The Magnolia Chapter always has a great conference with spectacular field trips and interesting speakers. You can attend by the day or sign up for the whole event. Thursday and Sundays are field trips while the weekend is reserved for speaker programs, plant sale, and educational exhibits. This year's keynote speakers are botanical historian Dr. Betty Smocovitis, and landscape architect Darrell Morrison who will showcase the use of fire and natural processes in landscape design. There will be workshops on plant identification, propagation, and maintenance; landscapers and landscape architects can receive CEU's for attending. Check out the itinerary at [www.FNPS.org](http://www.FNPS.org).

### Paynes Prairie Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

See our Web page at: [www.fnps.org](http://www.fnps.org)



The purpose of the Florida Native Plant Society is the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

*The Rhexia* is published monthly  
September - November and January - May.

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#### Field Trip Coordinator

Ivor Kincaid/352-377-6253/eyevor@gmail.com

#### Newsletter

Mary Santello/352-378-3098/santellom@gmail.com

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#### Plant ID

Paul Cohen/paulcohen2002@yahoo.com

# Plant Identification Workshop, March 2010 Chapter Meeting

By Paul Cohen

<i>Andropogon glomeratus</i>	Bushy Bluestem	Poaceae	Native
<i>Aristida stricta</i>	Wiregrass	Poaceae	Native
<i>Carya glabra</i>	Pignut Hickory	Juglandaceae	Native
<i>Ceratiola ericoides</i>	Florida Rosemary, Sand Heath	Ericaceae	Native
<i>Corydalis micrantha subsp. australis</i>	Smallflower Fumewort, Harlequin	Papaveraceae	Native
<i>Geranium carolinianum</i>	Carolina Cranesbill	Geraniaceae	Native
<i>Ilex glabra</i>	Inkberry, Gallberry	Aquifoliaceae	Native
<i>Linaria canadensis</i>	Canadian Toadflax	Plantaginaceae	Native
<i>Persea borbonia var. humilis</i>	Silk Bay	Lauraceae	Native
<i>Prunus serotina</i>	Black Cherry	Rosaceae	Native
<i>Solidago</i>	Goldenrod	Asteraceae	Native
<i>Stellaria media</i>	Common Chickweed	Caryophyllaceae	Not Native
<i>Vaccinium darrowii</i>	Darrow's Blueberry	Ericaceae	Native
<i>Viburnum nudum</i>	Possum Haw	Adoxaceae	Native

Thanks to all who participated. Nomenclature adapted from Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants (<http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/>).



*Corydalis micrantha subsp. australis*

Photo by Shirley Denton



*Linaria canadensis*


Photo by Allen Boatman

<http://www.plantatlas.usf.edu>

## March Program Report

By Claudia Larsen

Our March speaker, David Hall, a nationally known expert on grasses, treated us to a program showing the diversity of this huge family of plants (*Poaceae*). Forty percent of the world's plants are in the grass family, and there are more than 700 genus types. Did you know that the largest groups of cultivated grasses are rice, corn, sugar cane, and wheat? Through his pictures, we visited different Florida ecosystems in

which he highlighted prominent and unusual grass species. Some were very tiny, while others like foxtail grass grow over eight feet tall. There was even a grass species that floats on water! He discussed identification methods and reviewed seedhead forms that are crucial in naming plants. David is a lifetime member of FNPS and we hope he will join us for future programs and field trips. 



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 you can receive the Rhexia digitally,  
 or you can view the current issue at  
<http://www.fnps.org/pages/chapters/chapterpg.php>.

To receive the digital version of the Rhexia, please contact Goldie Schwartz, who manages the member's list for our FNPS chapter, at  
[afn49@mindspring.com](mailto:afn49@mindspring.com).

Advertisements are now being accepted for the Rhexia newsletter! If you would like to support the Paynes Prairie chapter please send a business card size ad in .jpg, .tiff, or powerpoint formats only to Erick Smith at [urbanforester@gmail.com](mailto:urbanforester@gmail.com). The ads cost \$100 and run from October 2009 to September 2010.

Florida Native Plant Society  
Paynes Prairie Chapter  
Post Office Box 110670  
Gainesville, FL 32611

**Next Meeting**  
**Tuesday, April 20th**  
**7:00 p.m.**  
*(Plant ID Workshop at 6:15)*  
**United Church of Gainesville**  
**1624 NW 5th Ave.**  
**Gainesville, FL**

FNPS Paynes Prairie Chapter Meetings  
are held the 3rd Tuesday of the month  
September - November and January - May  
7:00 p.m., The United Church of Gainesville  
1624 NW 5th Ave., Gainesville  
Plant ID workshops precede each meeting  
and start at 6:15 p.m.

**Florida Native Plant Society Membership Form**

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**Please mail completed form to: Florida Native Plant Society, P.O. Box 278, Melbourne, FL 32802-0278**

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