



### Monthly Meeting and Field Trip Information

**Chapter Meeting:**  
**May 18**  
**“Sweetwater Branch Restoration Project”**  
**Jim Weimer**  
**See page 4.**

**Field Trip: May 22**  
**Paynes Prairie’s Newest Acquisition:**  
**Prairie Ranch Creek**  
**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 September 2010 newsletter is Augustt 29, 2010**

## Pump, Baby, Pump

*By Brian Quinn, President*

As we head into the grind of summer, we should really contemplate and plan our water usage. Installing native plants is a given for our group, but many of you have thirsty exotics in your yards, and of course, my dear old friend St. Augustine. I constantly see massive water abuse in our community, due to these malevolent bits of construction called automatic sprinkler systems. I fight this problem at work, with friends that swear by them, and especially, general landscapers. Gosh, we sure did make it easy to flood our yards at the push of a button, and it is no bloody wonder why we are entering a water crisis in a water-rich area. Many people find it hard to fathom that we use just as much drinking water on our lawns as we do for all other household uses combined.

So instead of doing something like say banning the use of automatic sprinklers in residential areas, we have created water czars and czarinas in each of our Water Management Districts who can give away massive amounts of our water in the stroke of a pen. Our tax dollars pay for a plethora of cheesy commercials telling you to only water on certain days (full well knowing that the money goes all for advertising with no enforcement). Instead of truly making people save water in their personal lives and landscapes, the utility companies in conjunction with local

governments and Water Management Districts are mapping withdrawal rights from every surface water and groundwater source available. That’s right - Pump, Baby, Pump. Let’s stress the system a little bit more. A couple of hurricanes will bail us out, anyway.

What harm can it do? Gosh, I need my lawn to be greener than my neighbors or I won’t get voted Grand Poobah of my homeowner’s association and get that special sign in my front yard extolling my horticultural brilliance. I must fertilize weekly and water daily, even in the dead of night, so I don’t get caught by – wait I won’t get caught, because no one truly cares – water in Florida is limitless. Ha, even if I do, there is really no enforcement. They can’t hurt me with their toothless approach. And all for what? A sterile monoculture called a lawn that is some otherworldly green color and smells of insecticides and industrial fertilizer, which won’t get trod upon all summer, because its stewards are not accustomed to the heat and the bugs. Floridian governments and utilities are not serious about water conservation, but instead want to breed another economy based on growth and sprawl. This means more automatic sprinklers in a neighborhood near you. Pump Baby Pump – it is our right as Floridians to use it as fast as we can.

# Roadworthy Wildflowers Need Your Help

By Claudia Larsen

Many area roadsides are now displaying wonderful spring blooms from wildflowers. At the recent plant sale a few folks told me about some great blooms they were enjoying. The great disappointment every year is that as the plants achieve their peak beauty, the mowers come along and cut them down.

I recently was wowed by a display of 300 to 400 rain lilies (*Zephyranthes atamasca*) on a Gainesville roadside. They were absolutely gorgeous, and I brought my camera the next morning to find only a half inch of neatly mown grass.

Although some public managers and road superintendents are interested in preserving natural stands of wildflowers—and recommend contour mowing around anything that is blooming—they can't be expected to anticipate blooming or be responsible so that all flowers be allowed time to reseed before mowing. However, citizens can join the effort and speak up.

Members of the Florida Wildflower Foundation hope to promote wildflower conservation by listing spectacular areas on their Web site and in newsletters. There is al-

ready a northeast Florida loop trail that exists for bikers. Go to [www.Floridawildflowerfoundation.org](http://www.Floridawildflowerfoundation.org) and see a photo gallery with lots of wildflowers that are blooming now on Florida roadsides, highways, trails, and in yards. The last photo on the page is a picture of Dr. Walter Taylor's yard. Dr Taylor is the author

of a popular and well-used Florida wildflower identification book, *The Guide to Florida Wildflowers and Florida Wildflowers*.

I would like to promote planned mowing for Alachua County and surrounding counties by creating a list of particularly showy or important stands of wildflowers. You can help by letting me know about roadside wildflowers stands that you pass by or that are in your neighborhood. If you don't know the names of the plants, you can always take a quick digital photograph to send it to me, letting me know the location. Send the locations of your favorite blooming roadsides to Claudia Larsen at

[Micanopywildflowers@yahoo.com](mailto:Micanopywildflowers@yahoo.com).

Hopefully we can preserve the exceptional diversity of blooming plants on our roadsides for future generations.



[cricket.biol.sc.edu/acmoore/527/plants.html](http://cricket.biol.sc.edu/acmoore/527/plants.html)

## Wow! What a Sale!

By Lisa Jelks

The recent Paynes Prairie Chapter Native Plant Sale at Morningside Park was as good as it gets. We had a tremendous turnout both Friday night and Saturday. Unofficially, this was one of the biggest sales in years. Perhaps the harsh winter left many yards in need of sprucing or maybe it was the glorious weather or maybe advertising reached more people. Whatever the reason, we are all grateful for the heavy traffic.

At least one vendor sold out on Friday night, and most others were forced to bring in more material on Saturday after Friday's buyers voraciously went through their booths like

hungry locusts (the term "feeding frenzy" was used more than once).

Our chapter signed up or renewed 27 memberships during the course of the two days, and we officially sold the last of our t-shirts.

We appreciate all our volunteers—at Friday night's check-in table, Saturday's booth, and at the cashiers table. Thank you to Joe, Howard, Ellen, Ann, Tootie, Jennifer, Mark, Goldie, Jamie, Brian, Erick, and Bill!



# Edible Native Recovering from the Frost

By Eleanor K. Sommer

As I surveyed our acreage after the months of frost damage, I wondered where all the *Opuntia* had gone. As I walked about, I noticed it was flat, “deflated,” and reddish. Now that the weather is eking toward warmer, some of the stems are swelling and starting to look once again like cactus instead of deflated pin cushions. After months of freedom, the dog is once again limping toward me holding up his paw for spine extraction.

There are more than 200 species of *Opuntia*, which is endemic to the western hemisphere but has naturalized worldwide. Our native species include *O. humifusa*, *O. stricta*, and the rarer *O. triancanthos* (tropical), *O. pusilla*, and *O. cubensis* (tropical).

*Opuntia* are nourishing food for gopher tortoise that luckily lack pain receptors in their mouths. For us the effort to prepare them may outweigh the culinary attraction, although “no-pales” have been a traditional food in native cultures in the Western hemisphere and seeds have been found in archeological sites in Texas.

Found on sandhills, in pinelands, and near the edges of dry woods, the plant is easy to identify, especially if you happen to walk into one! Edible species have flat joints (pads) and inedible ones have rounded joints, but there are no poisonous look-alikes (Brill). Leaves are absent, and the edible pads (once the spines and glochids are removed are actually the stems, which store water and nutrients. Tea can be made from the yellow, waxy flowers, which are radially symmetrical and solitary with one pistil. The red pear-shaped fruit, which is covered with glochids is also edible and medicinal.

## Harvest Tips

The pears are best picked when they are young and succulent, in early spring, but look for fruits forming at other times of the year, particularly near the end of the summer and into the early fall. When collecting the pads, choose ones that are young, healthy, and succulent. In Florida around the beginning of May, the prickly pear cactus blossoms begin to open, dotting the field with gorgeous yellow flowers attracting all manner of insects and butterflies.

## On the Table

You are limited only by your imagination for finding clever culinary uses for prickly pear cactus. Some people liken the taste of cactus jams and candies to strawberries. From the pears you can make juice, which will be red and can be made into a beverage, jelly, or candy. You can add prickly pear pads to stir fry dishes, pasta dishes, salads; make pickles; scramble them with eggs; or add them to soups.

However you choose to use *Opuntia*, special preparation techniques are clearly in order with this spine-ridden plant. You can “pressure” wash them with a hose, which removes most the fine hairs (called glochids), but even after that, handle them with care because the glochids are so tiny it is difficult to see if any are left. Alternate methods include roughing them up with a dish towel, cutting out the spines, or roasting of the spines.

To collect the juice from the fruit, simmer the pears, mash, and drain. The bright red juice can be made into a beverage, jelly, or candy. You can freeze the juice for later use. To prepare a refreshing summer drink, mix the juice with water (1:1) and add sugar or honey. Prickly pear juice can also be blended with other drinks or seltzer water with a twist of orange. (Note the fruit will turn your urine red!)

The pads can be eaten raw or cooked. Once the spines and glochids are removed, blanch the pads in boiling water to remove the skin. Slice into long thin pieces and simmer in water until tender. Or cut them in smaller pieces and scramble with eggs. Young pads are typically boiled, simmered, or sautéed and older pads are best roasted or dried



Photo by Ellie Sommer

for use later (Austin).

Although *Opuntia* is more palatable to some people when cooked, you can eat it raw after carefully brushing off the spines and glochids with twigs or a knife. Then slice the pad and peel back the sides to get at the edible pulp.

The seeds (each fruit can contain as many fifty hardy seeds) can be cleaned and dried and ground (use a coffee grinder) into flour that is relatively high in protein (about 12%). and can be used along with conventional flour in baked goods or as a thickener for soup. The pulp and the fruits can also be dried and stored (in a cool, dry place) for later use.

continued on page 6

## 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>May 18</b>    | <b>Meeting: "The Sweetwater Branch Project," Jim Weimer, Park Biologist, Paynes Prairie State Park</b> |
| <b>May 22</b>    | <b>Field Trip: Prairie Creek Ranch</b>   |
| <b>May 20-23</b> | <b>FNPS State Conference, Tallahassee, FL</b>  |

## Prairie Creek Ranch Field Trip Saturday, May 22

The Saturday May 22 Native Plant Society field trip will be a safari tour of the newly acquired 750 acre Prairie Creek Ranch. Come see what will soon be the newest addition to Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. Meeting time will be 9:00 am at the neighboring Prairie Creek Preserve/Gainesville-Hawthorne Trail trailhead at the junction of County Roads 2082 and 234 in Rochelle. Directions: from Waldo Road and E. University Ave, drive 5.5 miles east on State Road 20 (Hawthorne Road). Just beyond the Prairie Creek bridge, take a right onto CR 2082 and drive one mile to grass parking area on the right. Space is limited, so please RSVP.

To RSVP or for more information, please contact Ivor at 352-377-6253



## Paynes Prairie Park Biologist Jim Weimer to Speak About the "Sweetwater Branch Restoration Project" at May 18 Meeting

Jim Weimer, park biologist at Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park will present a program about the Sweetwater Branch Restoration Project on May 18 at the last chapter meeting before the summer break. Join us to listen to this knowledgeable and enjoyable speaker as he shares the details of this important and beneficial project.

Years ago a ditch was dug to channel run-off from the City of Gainesville directly into the Alachua Sink. As a consequence, the water and all the pollutants in it go directly into the aquifer. The Sweetwater Branch Project was developed to correct this problem and restore the natural filtering sheet flow of water into the Prairie.

And for those of you who have not heard, Jim was awarded the Joe Kenner Interpretive Award for State Parks this year. Congratulations from the Paynes Prairie FNPS Chapter!



## April Field Trip Report - Tuscawilla Preserve

*By Ivor Kincaid*

The attendees of the field trip to Tuscawilla Preserve on April 24th were treated to a special guest tour of north Florida wetland plants and their anatomy by local expert botanist Dr. Mark Garland. In addition to a great lecture on local native plant taxonomy and structure, guests witnessed a bobcat on the trail with nesting bald eagles flying overhead. If you haven't been, be sure to explore one of the best kept secrets in Micanopy.

Photo by Robert Hutchinson, 2010



## Upcoming Events of Interest

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

Don't Miss the Annual FNPS Conference May 20–23 Rooted in History, Forever Blooming. Look for fellow Paynes Prairie FNPS members in Tallahassee when you attend the 2010 state conference. This is a great time to network with other chapter members, as well as learn new ideas and communication skills. FNPS is celebrating its 30th year and the annual conference in Tallahassee will be great place to join the festivities and enjoy a variety of field trips, talks, and social events. Chapter members in that area there have been working hard all year long to organize this state-wide event. For conference details go to <http://www.fnps.org>.



### **FNPS Has a New Blog!** *By Karina Veaudry*

The very first post, from Jolly Blogger Sue Dingwell: It's a new dawn! It's a new day! It's a new blog! Yes, we've gone postal. I mean, coastal. Well, what I really mean is that we are happy to be blogging and happy that you chose to spend at least these past three and half seconds with us. We hope you will come back often, because we will be posting a wide range of topics by a great team of writers. We want to write about what interests YOU, so let us know what you think!

The Florida Native Plant Society has been working for the past 30 years to save native plants, to protect the places they live, and to educate people about why natives are so important. We will be talking in this blog about native plants and how to use them in your landscape. We'll tell you where the good places are to go out see native plants. We'll let you know about ways we are working with legislators and local governments, and how you can help.

So bookmark us and RSS us and all that other good stuff. Also, why don't you go ahead and join the Florida Native Plant Society because it's good for the environment, and good for you, too.

In case you're wondering, many serious and scientific people belong to this society. We pride ourselves in holding a high standard for sharing only science-based information. Some of those serious people will posting here soon. On serious topics told with a light touch. You will enjoy meeting them and hearing what they have to say. Hope to see you around! Visit the new blog at <http://fnpsblog.blogspot.com/>

## **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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Paul Cohen/paulcohen2002@yahoo.com

# Plant Identification Workshop, April 2010 Chapter Meeting

By Paul Cohen

<i>Astragalus obcordatus</i>	FLORIDA MILKVETCH	FABACEAE	Native
<i>Cornus foemina</i>	SWAMP DOGWOOD; STIFF DOGWOOD	CORNACEAE	Native
<i>Descurainia pinnata</i>	WESTERN TANSYMUSTARD	BRASSICACEAE	Native
<i>Hymenopappus scabiosaeus</i>	CAROLINA WOOLLYWHITE	ASTERACEAE	Native
<i>Oenothera laciniata</i>	CUTLEAF EVENINGPRIMROSE	ONAGRACEAE	Native
<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	VIRGINIA CREEPER; WOODBINE	VITACEAE	Native
<i>Quercus laurifolia</i>	LAUREL OAK; DIAMOND OAK	FAGACEAE	Native
<i>Sideroxylon lanuginosum</i>	GUM BULLY	SAPOTACEAE	Native
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	COMMON SOWTHISTLE	ASTERACEAE	Not Native
<i>Stellaria media</i>	COMMON CHICKWEED	CARYOPHYLLACEAE	Not Native

Everyone who participated is thanked. Nomenclature adapted from Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants (<http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/>). One of the potted plants was speculated to be Bloodroot, *Sanguinaria canadensis* but nobody was sure. The leaves had sharp apices at the lobes of the leaves which does not match any of the pictures in our manuals.



## Edible Native Opuntia, continued from page 3

The flowers can be dried and made into an infusion that is rich in flavonoids (Knishinsky). Harvest carefully avoiding the glochids near the base of the flower, and strain tea through fine cloth before drinking. This is a delightful and slightly relaxing and uplifting tea and can be taken warm or cold.

### Caution Notes

In one study (Bwititi) *O. megacantha*, native to Mexico and technically a cholla (and thus in the genus *Cylindropuntia*), was reported to be toxic to the kidneys. "Green" Deane Jordan, a Florida forager, warns that you should stay away from cacti with milky sap—which are not edible.

### Conservation Notes

*Opuntia* species are endangered from a moth (*Cactoblastis cactorum*), which has been spreading from the Florida Keys, where it was first noted by Carol Lippincott in 1989. The moth is a voracious eater, and although local farmers may rejoice in the elimination of cacti in fields, *Opuntia* is a dietary mainstay of people in Mexico and the southwestern United States (Austin) and also a main source of food for the gopher tortoise. So encourage a little *Opuntia* to grow in your yard and you'll have a food source while at the same time providing more havens for this versatile native plant.

Photo by Ellie Sommer



### Recipe for Cactus Fruit Vinaigrette

2 each prickly pear cactus fruit  
1/2 banana  
2 tbsp. honey  
1-2 tbsp. wine vinegar  
juice from 1/2 lemon, 1/2 lime

Remove the skin from the prickly pears fruits and the banana. Puree in a blender or food processor. Add the honey, vinegar, lemon and lime juices and blend until smooth. Taste and season as you wish. Add more honey for a sweeter taste and more vinegar if you prefer the vinaigrette on the tart side. If too thin add more banana, and if the blend is too thick add a bit of apple or litchi juice. Important: Strain through a fine sieve (or through a handkerchief and a strainer before serving to be sure none of your dinner guests end up with glochids in their salads!



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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, May 18th**  
**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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