



Sustainability, Sharing Ideas From My Yard

Joni Ellis, VP Paynes Prairie Chapter

Monthly Chapter Meeting and Field Trip Information

**Chapter Meeting,
November 15, 2011**

**Jaret Daniels
Pollinators & Their
Relationship to Native
Plants**

See page 4

**Field Trip
November 19, 2011
Watermelon Pond
See page 4**

As we face tough economic times, I think it is important to stop and evaluate some of the small things we can do to be more self-reliant.

Where did the water go? It seems like there is less each year. Install a cistern, catch water off your roof and use for watering your landscape. Cisterns are used all over the Caribbean where fresh water is scarce. We installed four, 1100 gallon food grade plastic tanks that we purchased from Plastic Mart on the internet. They filled up in 30 minutes during a heavy rain. During those dry spells between rain, it is wonderful to be able water with a gravity feed hose. If there is an emergency, we have water we can boil or filter to use.

In this economy, it is also wise to think about what edible plants might do well in your yard. There are a slew of native herbaceous plants that have some medicinal qualities.

Fruit and nut trees provide seasonal treats. Did you know you could grow olives in Florida? Blueberries and pineapple guavas make a lovely hedge. Native persimmons make a sweet treat.

Consider solar panels where feasible, or solar hot water. We built a solar food dehydrator to dry persimmons for future use. I made sun dried tomatoes this summer, to last into the winter for pizzas and soups. Plans can be found at HomePower.com, issue 57 and 69.

A couple of chickens can provide the average yard with a lot of fertilizer and the eggs are a bonus. No roosters in the city limits, but hens are a joy to watch and easy to keep. They

provide decent pest control when allowed to free range a few hours a day.

Plant native plants. Florida has an amazingly diverse landscape. Just a few inches of change in elevation creates a whole new ecosystem. As you drive down the highway you can often see the change from one plant community to the next. The transition of pinelands to dry prairie and then in to cypress strands is one my favorites to look for as I head south on the turnpike around Kissimmee.

Our longleaf pine communities are as rare and precious as the rainforest. Yet no one is crying out to save them or encouraging us to replant them. We are so lucky to be living here among such fabulous natural processes that store our excess water, clean our water and air, and provide habitat for diverse and endemic wildlife.

I encourage you to get to know the landscape around you, know what it used to be there before development planted your house and do what you can to restore a bit of it. In the NW section of town, there are some wonderful red oaks that are reaching maturity and dying off. There is a need to replant some of these fabulous trees.

Take a look to see what you find around your neighborhood and consult with one of our members or professionals about how to improve your native footprint.

Sparkleberry



Editors note: The following is a contribution from one of our long-time members Dr. Paul Lyrene. Dr. Lyrene who recently retired as a Professor of Horticulture at UF is a world-renowned plant breeder. His development of early ripening, high-quality blueberry cultivars that are productive in Florida's humid climate made our successful blueberry industry possible.

Sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*). By Paul Lyrene.

Florida native berries in family Ericaceae are in two genera: true huckleberries (genus *Gaylussacia*) and blueberries (genus *Vaccinium*). Florida *Vaccinium* species fall into 3 groups called sections (subgenera). Two sections are currently considered monospecific in Florida: Section *Polycodium* has the deerberry (*Vaccinium stamineum*), and section *Batodendron* has the sparkleberry (*V. arboreum*). The third section, *Cyanococcus*, contains the other Florida *Vaccinium* species (I count 6 other species), two of which (highbush and rabbiteye blueberries) have been domesticated and are grown for commercial berry production.

The following description of the sparkleberry tree comes mostly from Robert K. Godfrey's 1988 book, "Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of Northern Florida and Adjacent Georgia and Alabama." Small tree, 8-10 meters tall, lower trunk to 30 cm diameter. Bark of larger stems sloughing in irregular thin plates, exposing smooth, reddish-brown inner bark, usually with a pleasantly mottled effect. Crown branching, tending to be crooked or somewhat contorted, yielding a rounded crown. Flowers white, borne in profusion in racemes or sprays. Berries black, dryish, 5-8 mm diameter, often some of them persisting into winter. Range: Va. to northern Fla., west ward to east and south-central TX, north to southeastern Ks., Mo., southern Ill., southern Ind., and Ky. In Alachua County, sparkleberries flower in April and ripen in late September and October. The national champion sparkleberry tree as of August 2011 was in Walton County in the Florida panhandle (39 ft. crown spread, 27 feet tall, 48 inch trunk diameter).

Like other Florida blueberries, sparkleberry is easy to propagate from seed planted on peat in November in an unheated greenhouse in north Florida, the seeds not covered, but the surface of the peat kept continually moist for 6 weeks. Sparkleberries are relatively hard to root from stem cuttings, although it can be done, especially if the cutting wood comes from young seedlings. Sparkleberries readily produce adventitious shoots from cut root pieces and can be propagated by this method. In burned-over piney woods, root sprouts can turn a single sparkleberry seedling into a sparkleberry thicket, with hundreds of separate sprouts from the ground.

Sam Vander Kloet, from Acadia University in Nova Scotia, a friend who died a few months ago, spent his life studying wild blueberries from all over the world. Sam said there were about 400 species of *Vaccinium*, and all but one produced edible ber-

ries, the exception (you guessed it), the sparkleberry. I consider this judgment harsh, since I have eaten thousands of sparkleberries, usually only one or two per plant, hoping to find a plant with more palatable berries. (The berries vary considerably in size, shape, and flavor from plant to plant). The berries are dry, slightly astringent, and filled with sclerids (little conglomerates of "stone cells"), which have the texture of finely shredded peach pits. James Miller and Karl Miller (2005, "Forest Plants of the Southeast and Their Wildlife Uses") note that sparkleberry apparently is not as preferred by animals that eat blueberries (wild turkey, northern bobwhite, scarlet tanager, American robin, northern cardinal, eastern bluebird, brown thrasher, black bear, deer, and others) as are the berries other *Vaccinium* species, and the sparkleberries persist into winter, when other more preferred forages are scarce. *Vacciniums* are the preferred larval food plant of the Henry's Elfin butterfly. I have never in the woods seen a plant that looked like a hybrid between sparkleberry and any other blueberry species. In the blueberry breeding program at the University, we made crosses 20 years ago between sparkleberry (which is diploid, with 24 chromosomes) and two diploid blueberries of the more edible type (*V. elliotii* and *V. darrowii*). The crosses were surprisingly easy to make, although we had to hold the blueberry plants in a cooler for 2 months to delay their flowering until the sparkleberry flowers were ready. We grew 100 seedlings from the *V. darrowii* x *V. arboreum* cross in a row at the old Horticultural Unit on Millhopper Road in northwest Gainesville. The hybrids grew vigorously and flowered heavily almost every year, but produced few berries and little seed. Years later, we crossed sparkleberry with cultivated highbush blueberries, hoping to get hybrids with desirable sparkleberry plant traits: a deep, wide-ranging root system, drought tolerance, and tolerance to higher soil pH. There were problems with chromosome numbers. Cultivated highbush blueberry is tetraploid, which, for technical reasons, made it hard to cross with diploid sparkleberry, but also permitted fertility in the hybrids). During 5 years of crossing, with more than 10,000 flowers pollinated, we obtained over 200 first-generation hybrids. Some were fertile enough to set seed when crossed back to cultivated highbush blueberry, and we now have more than 1,000 backcross seedlings growing in a test field. I fruited the first 30 backcross seedlings in a greenhouse last spring. As expected, the plants were extremely variable in berry size, color, flavor, and grittiness. In general, the berries were a lot better than I had expected but not nearly as good as I had hoped (Hope is cheap).

Sparkleberry can be used as a rootstock onto which edible blueberries can be grafted. Both rabbiteye and highbush blueberry can make large and productive plants when grafted onto sparkleberry. Grafting can be useful because sparkleberries are able to grow on certain soils not tolerated by the more edible blueberries. It is not true, however, that sparkleberry will grow on soils with alkaline or neutral pH. Years ago, a graduate student from Texas travelled the range of the sparkleberry, from Texas to Florida, to southern Missouri and southern Indiana, collecting soil samples from around the roots of sparkleberry trees growing in the woods. The highest soil pH he found was 6.6. As with the other blueberries, sparkleberries grow best in highly acid soil (pH of 3.5 to 5.5). Good drainage and coarse soil texture are also needed for good sparkleberry growth, since the root can go down 8 or 10 feet into well-drained soil.

No Lawn Needed

Report on Saturday October 22, Field Trip
Goldie Schwartz

About 10 of us met at Marc and Maria Minno's home at 9:00 AM in rather nippy weather. Their home is in an established neighborhood north of University Avenue and west of 34th street. I can guess from how long, I have known the Minno's that their yard is a work of about 20 years. The diversity in their landscape was stupendous. I tried to keep up with my note taking but could not get it all on paper. So the listing that follows will only be partial. A couple of web sites can be useful to help you "see" the plants listed. The Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu and Plant Real Florida www.plantrealflorida.org.

Marc told us that he had to bring in loads of sand to duplicate more natural growing conditions. When we moved to the backyard that had a lovely layer of pine needles and oak leaves, Marc shared an anecdote of how to get rid of grass. When his daughter kept chickens they roamed the fenced back yard and successfully got rid of the grass. Anyone who has worked to dig up areas of grass can appreciate this suggestion as a labor saving device, of course if you want to have chickens.

Plants Seen In Minno's Yard:

Spanish Needles, *Bidens alba*
Elephant's Foot, *Elephantopus elatus*
Gayfeather, *Liatris*
Tropical Sage, *Salvia coccinea*
Sassafras, *Sassafras albidum*
Dotted Horsemint, *Monarda punctata*
Snakeroot, *Aristolochia serpentina*
Native Azalea, *Rhododendron*
River Oats, *Chasmanthium latifolium*
Saw Palmetto, *Serenoa repens*
Eastern gamagrass, *Tripsacum dactyloides*
Scarlet Morning-glory, *Ipomoea hederifolia*

There are plants that need to be monitored so they do not take over too much territory. The Florida Betony, *Stachys floridana* is not an exotic plant but it is considered to be troublesome. After many years of trying to eliminate, he was able to still pull a couple for us to see.



Plant Sale Report

Normally, the Fall Native Plant Sale is not quite as busy as the Spring sale, and this Fall was no exception. Unfortunately, the questionable weather kept many shoppers away. This was a mistake. The vast array of beautiful plant material was incredible. From yellow sunflowers, to blue mistflowers, to purple blazing star, we had it all! And of course Morningside was itself awash in a wonderful display of wildflowers and grasses (the Muhly grass is looking particularly vibrant this season). Friday's weather was actually perfect with cooler temps and no rain. We missed our members who usually inundate their exclusive members-only sale (where were you all?). On Saturday the cloud cover was pervasive but the rain appeared only briefly very late in the morning. Our booth was quite lucky in that David Hall generously donated \$10 for every one of his new books we sold at the sale (*Wildflowers of Florida and the Southeast* with Jason H. Byrd; they will be available for \$40 at the next general meeting). We are very grateful to David for his generosity. We also had the pleasure of listening to the audacious musical sounds of Leo Nico, while enjoying the delightful scones, cookies, coffee, and sandwiches from Terranova Catering (thanks Laura NeSmith and Gracy Castine!). I'd like to personally thank all the FNPS volunteers who helped make the sale successful, especially those from our chapter: Connie Caldwell, Howard Jelks, Charlie Pedersen, Kelly Perez, Brian Quinn, Bill Russell, Sandi Saurers, Goldie Schwartz, Erick Smith, Jennifer Staiger, and all those who helped cashier. Be sure to save the date for the Spring sale which will take place March 30-31, 2012.



We welcome the members who joined and renewed at our plant sale and our last meeting:

Jamie Barichivich
Jennifer Staiger
Joan Flocks
Mindy Lighthipe
Laura McNamara
Annie McPherson
Geoffry Parks
Charlie Pedersen
Lee & Carol Wiltbank
Barbara Woodmansee
Lois Gorman

Fall 2011 Calendar of Events

Please check the Paynes Prairie chapter page at www.FNPS.org for most current information and directions to field trips. All 2011 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

- November 15** **Meeting: Jaret Daniels
Pollinators & Their Relationship
To Native Plants**
- November 19** **Field Trip: Watermelon Pond**

November Field Trip Saturday, November 19, 2011

The November 19 field trip will be to Watermelon Pond - Gladman tract.. **Directions:** Located SW of Gainesville, between the towns of Archer and Newberry. From Archer travel north on US 27/41, turn west on SW 46 Ave then south on SW 250 St. travel about two miles to the first entrance but continue down the road to the second entrance on the right. The trip will be from 9:00-11:00 AM. This is an opportunity to explore a scenic sandhill upland lake surrounded by diverse natural communities such as mesic hammock, wet prairie, and basin marsh. Please contact trip leader Robert Freese at 386-972-4489 or rcfreese99@yahoo.com for more information.

Watermelon Pond Protecting Water Resources and Habitat

Watermelon Pond is located on the Brooksville Ridge in the unconfined aquifer zone of Alachua County. This is an area where the Floridan Aquifer System is overlain by highly permeable, generally thin, undifferentiated sands. It is a low flat area of high aquifer recharge that allows pollutants direct access to the aquifer. The Gladman tract is part of the water feature known as Watermelon Pond. Approximately 95% of the parcel falls within the FEMA 100 year Flood Hazard Zone.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission identified nineteen animal species to which the habitats on this property could be potentially significant, including central Florida crowned snake, Florida mouse, peninsula mole, skink, Sherman's fox squirrel, striped newt, short-tailed snake, and turkey.

Paynes Prairie Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

See our Web page at: 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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Jennifer Staiger, jsstaig@gmail.com

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Dear FNPS member,

FNPS is hosting a botanical exploration cruise to the Exumas Islands in The Bahamas, Feb. 17-27, 2012. The trip will be led by FNPS president and botanist Steve Woodmansee, on the research vessel Coral Reef II, and will visit several remote islands of the Exumas, exploring different habitats and ancient endemic species.

The trip is open to FNPS members only and will be filled first come, first serve. Please email Steve at president@fnps.org or call 786.488.3101 as soon as possible if you are interested in participating.

Nov. 20, 2011 registration DEADLINE. Registration details will be final soon.

Proceeds from the trip benefit the Florida Native Plant Society.

Thank you for your membership support. Please share this exciting announcement with potential members.

Sincerely,

Steve Woodmansee, President



Last Call for Nominees and Current Slate of Nominees for 2012 Paynes Prairie Chapter Board

The Paynes Prairie Chapter will hold elections for President, Vice President, and Treasurer at our November 15th program meeting.

If you are interested in serving as an officer on the chapter board, please contact Jennifer Staiger (jsstaig@gmail.com) by November 14th. If you would like to know more about the responsibilities of the different offices, please contact Jennifer or attend our next Board of Directors meeting on Monday, November 7th, 5:30 PM, at the UF Horticulture Department Greenhouses (contact Claudia Larsen, micanopywildflowers@yahoo.com, for directions).

The current slate of nominees for open positions is:

President – Claudia Larsen

Vice President – Lisa Jelks

Treasurer – Goldie Schwartz

The board meets four times a year (in January, May, August, and November) to discuss speakers and field trips, financial contributions and sponsorships, the Native Plant Sale, and other issues. We hope you will join us as we continue to serve our community by promoting the conservation of native plants and natural communities.

Living Off the Land by Paula Russo

Plant ID workshop for November 2011

Submitted by Paul Cohen

Species	Common Name	Family	Status
Murdannia nudiflora	Nakedstem Dewflower	Commelinaceae	Non-native
Commelina benghalensis	JIO	Commelinaceae	Non-native
Commelina diffusa	Common Dayflower	Commelinaceae	Non-native
Commelina erecta	Whitemouth Dayflower	Commelinaceae	Native

I wish to extend a special thanks to all participants. The workshop is educational and is not intended as a plant ID service. Nomenclature adapted from "Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants" (<http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/>).

It is early pioneer days in coastal South Florida. The family is getting things ready for a Thanksgiving Day feast. Not just one, but two, wild turkeys have been snared to roast over the fire and six squirrels gotten for the stew pot. Only problem is there's been almost no rain for months so there's not much to harvest from the vegetable garden. And there's been nothing to trade at the general store to get staples like flour, sugar, salt, and pepper. What to do?

Well, one source for salt is the Black Mangrove tree (*Avicennia germinans*). This tree is unusual because it is able to grow in salt water saturated coastal mud flats. It gets rid of the salt by excreting it through openings on the surface of its leaves. And after long periods with no rain the salt crystals coating the leaves sparkle in the sunlight. Native Americans and pioneers collected this salt to use as a seasoning.

The unripe pods of Poor Man's Pepper (*Lepidium virginicum* - in the mustard family) provided a mild peppery flavor and the leaves were eaten raw or as cooked greens.

Making flour from acorns was at least a five step process and took up to fifteen days!

The rootstock of Narrow-Leafed Cattail (*Typha angustifolia*) can be peeled, boiled, and eaten as potatoes or macerated and boiled to yield a sweet syrup.

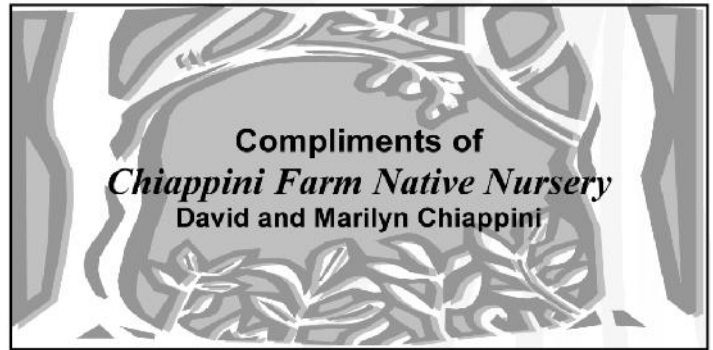
There are many other edible plants that Native Americans and pioneers ate by choice and when they had no other choice. But, when I think of the enormous amount of work and time and uncertainty these folks went through to gather and then bring the food to an edible state makes me declare that on this Thanksgiving Day when I am asked what I am thankful for I will answer, "That I do not live in pioneer times!"



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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 Goldie Schwartz at Rhexia@gmail.com.

The ads cost \$100 and run from September 2011 through May 2012.

Have You Blogged Lately?

Remember to visit the new Florida Native Plant Society blog at <http://fnpsblog.blogspot.com/>

Florida Native Plant Society
Paynes Prairie Chapter
Post Office Box 12908
Gainesville, FL 32604

Next Meeting

Tuesday, November 15

7:00 p.m.

(Plant ID Workshop at 6:15)

United Church of Gainesville

1624 NW 5th Ave.

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.

Rhexia Article Submissions Please!
Submit unformatted word documents
only. Submit pictures as separate jpg, or tiff
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**Submission deadline
date for the January
2012 newsletter is
December 25, 2011**

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