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The Rhexia

Paynes Prairie Chapter
Florida Native Plant Society
February 2004

Brewing with Native Fruits

By Jack Jordan

Brewing with native fruits is probably one of the less orthodox ways to develop an interest in propagating native plants, but it worked in my case.

North Florida is blessed with a combination of numerous local honey flavors and several varieties of native fruits. Add honey, fruit, water, and yeast, and in a few months you have melomel, a type of mead (honey wine); depending on the proportions and bottling process, you can produce a sweet, non-sparkling Scandinavian or Ethiopian style mead, or a dry, sparkling English style mead.

Local honey (check your farmers market or county agricultural extension office for bulk suppliers) is labeled by its predominant nectar source, such as tupelo, palmetto, gallberry, citrus, or wildflower. Of these, the citrus honey is the strongest flavored, and will tend to overpower the flavor of any added fruit other than more citrus—so typically it is used with the juice of sour-orange (formerly grown for marinade, now used as rootstock or found naturalized in hammocks).

Native fruits suitable for brewing include blackberry, blueberry, elderberry, grape, prickly-pear, and persimmon. Commercial growers exist for some of these, although the cultivated versions are typically table-varieties (bigger, less tart) so you need more fruit to flavor the same amount of brew.

Wild fruits in parks and preserves should be left to the critters, of course, but you can often find them growing on margins of agricultural fields—for

example, wild blackberries growing between blueberry plants at U-pick farms. Or you can grow a patch of them in an open spot on your own property—but keep in mind that blackberries, blueberries, and elderberries will spread by root-runners, and that grapes will need annual pruning if you want to get fruits instead of just leaves.

Wild blackberries are prickly but prolific fruiterers—you can choose between species that are lowbush (*Rubus cuneifolius*), highbush (*R. argutus*), or vines (*R. trivialis*); keep them watered before and after the flowers have set, not during flowering; the brew from them varies from red (if some picked red) to golden-brown (if all picked black).

Wild blueberries range from lowbush types (*Vaccinium darrowii*, *V. myrsinites*) to highbush types (*V. corymbosum*, *Gaylussacia* spp.), and the brew from them is red; probably the only species not useful for this purpose would be the sparkleberry (*V. arboreum*); when cultivating blueberries be sure not to fertilize them with ordinary garden fertilizer which will kill them instantly.

Elderberries (*Sambucus* spp.) have distinct advantages and disadvantages in the home garden—they bloom fragrantly and fruit prolifically throughout the year, and respond quickly to steady moisture and any kind of fertilizer (give them a ditch or mound of manure), but have toxicity in their green parts (bad news for kids and livestock) and their growth habit is a bit shabby (numerous lanky

(Continued on page 4)

Paynes Prairie Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

The *Rhexia* is published monthly September - November and January - May by the Paynes Prairie Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society. The purpose of the Florida Native Plant Society is the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida. See our website at www.fnps.org.

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Dudley Farm Ardisia Eradication Report

Hundreds of invasive Ardisia shrubs were pulled from the Dudley Farm State Park sinkhole and cave area by a dozen enthusiastic FNPS members in January.

We are gradually working our way around the sinkhole and have eradicated invasive plants in about 75% of the targeted area. The park staff is appreciative of all our help and hopefully next year we will reach our goal. The park looks better than ever and will soon be planting its heirloom vegetable and field crops with horse-drawn plows.

Plan to visit soon and be magically transported to 1890's Florida.

Notes on Pruning

Thanks to Ed Gilman for an informative talk at our January meeting. Ed taught us some biology on woody plant structure that led into descriptions of dominant tree limbs and tree collar formation.

His emphasis was on the arboriculture art of pruning for structure, thinning, reducing plant canopy, raising (removing lower limbs) and cleaning (removing dead limbs).

If you missed the talk on pruning landscape trees, or would like more information you can check out his excellent website "Pruning Shade Trees in the Landscape" at <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/pruning/index.htm>.

The site is offered through the Environmental Horticulture Department web page and contains not only info on pruning, but also tree landscape design principles, species selection, planting techniques and tree care.

Program Notes for Tuesday, February 10, 2004 Plant ID Workshop - 6:00 pm Meeting - 7:30 pm *Dr. Dana Griffin*

Edible Plants of Florida and the Southeast

Come by the Matheson Center at 7:30pm to hear Dr. Dana Griffin speak on "Edible Plants of Florida and the Southeast." Dr Griffin, professor emeritus at the UF Botany Department, is an expert on Florida native plants. He taught the Local Flora Botany Class for many years and authored a great identification guide used by the class called "Keys to the Common or Occasional Plants of North-Central Florida". Dr. Griffin serves as curator of the bryophyte and lichen collection at the UF Herbarium and is always one of our most popular speakers. Our regular social time and plant raffle will follow the program.

February Field Trip - Goethe State Forest Saturday, February 14, 2004, 9:00 am-Noon

Field trip for Saturday February 14th, 2004 is a hike in Goethe State Forest. We will drive through the forest making a couple of roadside stops and finish with a short level hike to a champion size Bald Cypress. Meet at the McDonalds on Archer Rd. just east of I-75 at 9am to carpool.

Directions from I-75 and Williston Rd (SR 121). Go west-southwest on 121 to Williston (~15 miles). Stay on SR121 through Williston (121 makes a couple of dog legs in Williston, left, right, left, right) From Williston go south on SR121 to SR326 (~8 miles). Make a right on 326 (west), and enter Goethe State Forest. Roughly two miles after crossing 337 there will be a dirt road on the left-hand side, to the south called Cow Creek Road. We will stop briefly on 326 and then go south on Cow Creek Road to the Big Cypress Boardwalk. Bring water and a lunch if you would like to eat at the end of the boardwalk.

For more information or weather cancellation, call Erick Smith at 380-0648.

Volunteers Needed

The City of Gainesville manages several conservation areas, like Morning-side Nature Center, the Hogtown Creek Greenway, or Bivens Arm Nature Park. After city staff writes a management plan for a park, plans are reviewed and critiqued. Several plans are written every year. A field trip open to the public is also scheduled.

The chapter is looking for volunteers willing to help provide feedback to these plans. If you are willing to help with this project, please contact Mary Rhodes, (352) 475-2344 or Charlie Pedersen, (904) 291-5532.

New Invasive Plant Publication

The USDA Forest Service has a new publication titled "Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests" out. It is available from the Southern Research Station and is General Technical Report SRS-62 by James H. Miller.

It can be requested via email at pubrequest@srs.fs.usda.gov or call (828) 257-4830. Just 33 species but it includes herbicide rates.

In My Yard

By John Shryock

It's difficult to be satisfied in January. Dead stalks of last summer's flowers litter the yard. Trees are bare. Days are short, the soil is dry, unwanted "weeds" suddenly appear on spots of bare ground.

And the gardener, walking through the chill landscape with a critical eye, bending twigs of favorite shrubs to judge their moisture content, prepares a mental list of problems and shortcomings in the yard. Will that dormant native grass come back, or must it be replaced? Has yet another year's plantings of *Liatris* and/or *Asclepias tuberosa* died, or will they return? What's wrong



© 2003 Floridata.com
Asclepias tuberosa

with those sorry-looking [fill in the blank here]; did I put the "right plant" in the "wrong place", again? Can I really grow blueberries on top of the limestone Hawthorne formation? Is there any native plant to replace my *Gardenia radicans* as a ground cover? Should I move the bird box that the rat snake raided last year? It takes a lot of chocolate to get through January.

February brings hope. This month I'll again have my hands in the soil and a smile on my face. I'll welcome back the sunning Eastern glass lizard and the black racer, thankful that my small piece of property in a subdivision is still receiving a good "bill of health" from its long-term residents.

The *Mahonia bealei*, one of my

favorite non-natives, has already bloomed and begins to ready its fruit for migrating flocks of cedar waxwings, and the new crop of shiny gardening equipment arrives at Lowe's and the Home Depot, as testament to America's creative mechanization of home landscaping in an era of increased purchasing power. After 10 years of ogling and sometimes buying lawnmowers, mulchers, trimmers, edgers, chain saws, blowers, etc., I have conquered the desire to purchase the latest annual editions to the power tool line, but accept their appearance as a sign that spring is here.

My attention is now on plant nurseries and plants. Plants yield an increasing return on investment each year; they, like daily exercise, are a form of retirement planning on the cheap.

Every February, I feel the investment is ready to "pay off" again. Not that I have always "invested" wisely. I have purchased and later rid myself of as many poorly chosen plants as the next person. *Ligustrum*, running bamboo, crepe myrtles, red-tipped *Photinia*, tropical passion-flowers, Japanese climbing fern, confederate jasmine, *Ampelopsis*, *Nandina domestica*, and many Asian azaleas have come and gone.

Native plants are more likely to support the native wildlife and fit the "unstructured" design (euphemistically speaking) of my yard. Early blooms of the flatwood plum, *Prunus angustifolia*, will nourish every small bee and wasp in the yard at the beginning of spring. January flowers of *Forestiera segregata* will be joined this month by those of the summer haw *Crateagus michauxii*, the parsley haw *Crateagus marshallii*, the native blueberries and violets, and the red mulberry, which will soon be loaded in a month with the best wildlife/human fruit of the season. Not quite the all-out flowering and fruiting display of March, but more than sufficient to dispel the January blues and welcome us back as participants in the life of the land.

Plants and People

at the

Florida Museum of Natural History

Dye Naturally

February 12 - 1:00 to 4:30 PM

Join us for a lecture by Barbara Carlswald from the UF Botany Department and a hands-on demonstration of dyeing techniques with plants.

Pre-Columbian Food and Fibers

February 26th - 1:00 to 4:30 PM

Hear a talk by Dr. Barbara Purdy and follow with an informative walk by Erick Smith.

Wild Toxics, Medicinals, & Edibles

March 4th - 1:00 to 4:30 PM

Dr. Dana Griffin, III will discuss the helpful and harmful plants found in Florida, followed by a guided tour.

\$25 each or \$60 for the whole series

For more information call

846-2000 ext. 206

Native Viburnum gains FNGA Recognition

The Florida Nurserymen & Growers Association (FNGA) has named All Native's *Viburnum obovatum* cultivar, Walter's Viburnum "Withlacoochee" as the **BEST NEW INTRODUCTION OF THE YEAR**, the first time we know of that a native has received this distinction.

"Withlacoochee" is an upright form of Walter's Viburnum with a compact growth habit and larger leaves which are held throughout the winter; profuse white blooms in spring and burgundy tips appear on juvenile leaves during winter months.

Hats off to Brightman Logan and his crew for promoting this fine plant (which does meet the AFNN's recently accepted definition of a Florida native cultivar).

For more information contact:

Central Florida Native Flora, Inc.
Post Office Box 1045
San Antonio, FL 33576-1045
(800) 449-2363 * Fax (352) 588-4552

Plant ID Report by Paul Cohen

This from Jack Jordan: The "mystery plant" at the January plant-ID session--the one that looked like a bumelia more than anything else--it is a Barberry. The one brought to the meeting had fewer and much smaller spines than usual. Prob-

bly it was spread by seed from a nursery-bought hedge somewhere nearby, and might be worth cultivating as a less spiny variety. Thanks, Jack, for the follow-up!

General consensus was that the oak specimen presented was *Quercus hemisphaerica*. But even the experts debate *Q. hemisphaerica* and *Q. laurifolia*.

Whereas Wunderlin considers them synonymous, Clewell and Nelson don't agree.

Nomenclature is based on "Guide to Vascular Plants of Florida" by Richard P. Wunderlin, University Press of Florida (1998).

Conservation Projects on Display

The Florida Community Design Center will be exhibiting several recreational and conservation projects for the months of January and February. They are the Conservation Trust for Florida's project, the Camp Blanding to Osceola National Forest Ecological Corridor and two additional projects that were recently funded by Florida Forever including the Lake Santa Fe Swamp acquisition that was spearheaded by FNPS member Jill McGuire.

Also included is design work conducted by UF landscape architecture students for Williams Elementary School under the direction of CTF Advisory Board Member and UF Professor Peggy Carr. Their landscape drawings showcase ideas for a combination school playground and community park. There is also a design for the proposed Archer Community Center that will be housed in the old Archer school after renovation.

The Design Center is located at 300 East University Avenue in the Commerce Building, right across from the downtown library. Easy parking and entrance at the rear of the building.

For more information contact:

Busy Kislig Shires
Program Assistant
Conservation Trust for Florida
P.O. Box 134
Micanopy, FL 32667
Phone & Fax: 352-466-1178

and ages to golden-brown.

Other plants which might serve this purpose, but which I have not been able to gather enough fruit to try out yet myself, include mulberry (*Morus* spp.), wild plums (*Prunus* spp.), black cherry (*P. serotina*), May haw (*Crataegus aestivalis*), rusty blackhaw (*Viburnum rufidulum*), and corky-stem passionflower (*Passiflora suberosa*).

Plants with very pulpy fruit, such as bayonet-bush (*Yucca aloifolia*), maypop (*Passiflora incarnata*), pawpaw (*Asimina* spp.), and naturalized guava (*Psidium* spp.) probably lend themselves more to pie or jelly than brew.

Reference: Papazian, Charles. *The Complete Joy of Home Brewing*, 3rd edition

Native Plants Identified

Tillandsia recurvata	Ballmoss	Bromeliaceae
Viburnum rufidulum	Rusty Blackhaw	Caprifoliaceae
Quercus hemisphaerica	Laurel Oak	Fagaceae
Calamintha dentata	Florida Calamint	Lamiaceae
Spigelia marilandica	Woodland Pinkroot	Loganiaceae
Magnolia grandiflora	Southern Magnolia	Magnoliaceae
Dichanthelium commutatum	Variable Witchgrass	Poaceae
Crataegus sp.	Hawthorn	Rosaceae
Photinia pyrifolia	Chokeberry	Rosaceae
Prunus caroliniana	Carolina Laurelcherry	Rosaceae

Non-native Plants Identified

Berberis sp.	Barberry	Berberidaceae
Macfadyena unguis-cati	Catclawvine	Bignoniaceae
Merremia dissecta	Noyau Vine	Convolvulaceae

Brewing with native fruits

(Continued from page 1)

stems die back all year round); some brew recipes call for the tiny white flowers, but I have always used the ripe berries (being careful to sift out the green berries, stems, and the spiders that are hiding in each cluster); the resulting brew is dark purple, and since the flavor of elderberry is not heavy, the honey flavor is not overpowered; in olden days elderberry wine/mead was regarded as a peasant's drink, probably due to its slightly musky scent.

Wild grapes include species suitable for wet soils (*Vitis palmata*) and average soils (*V. aestivalis*, *V. cinerea*); the muscadine (*V. rotundifolia*) is one that I personally have not had good luck with for brewing, but some others have used it to produce successful wines and meads (California, Australia, and South Africa have promoted their vintages into commercial success; maybe one day the Deep South and Northeast will do likewise and get past the jokes about "best-of-trailerpark" and "cooks swell").

Prickly-pears grow on several native and introduced shrub-cacti (*Opuntia* spp.) which are spiny and make a good hedge plant (to harden them for winter let them dry out as much as possible--the more shriveled and purplish they get, the better their

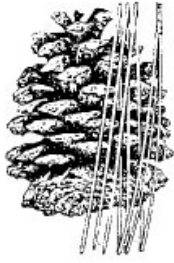
chances of not being frozen to the ground); the easiest way to handle the pears is to pick them with tongs and hold them over a flame to burn off their spines, then split them with a knife and scoop out the pulp; the resulting brew will be slightly mucilaginous, electric-red, and will stain anything it touches, including your tongue. Wild persimmon (*Diospyros*



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Sambucus canadensis

virginiana) is a tree for almost any site wet or dry (plant several to make sure you get at least one bearing tree); the orange fruits have large pits, and need to be picked when they are ripe to the point of "gooey" (which is how Mr. Possum also likes them); the resulting brew begins electric-yellow



Visit LEAFS

You are welcome to visit a longleaf pine restoration project located 2 miles south of Waldo on CR 1471 and Lake Alto Park. The trails in the flatwoods are open during all daylight hours.

Longleaf Ecology and Forestry Society

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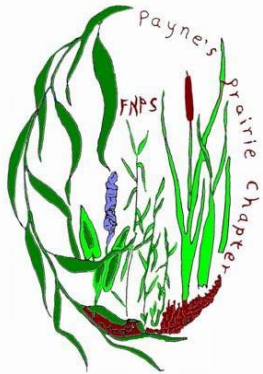
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Upcoming Meetings, Field Trips, and Events

Monthly Meetings

Regular monthly meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday September - November and January - May at 7:30 pm at the Matheson Historical Center, 513 E. University Ave., Gainesville, Florida. A Plant ID workshop precedes each meeting at 6:00 pm.

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Feb. 10 | Dr. Dana Griffin |
| | <i>Edible Wild Plants</i> |
| Mar. 9 | Geoff Parks |
| | <i>Gainesville's New City Park Acquisitions</i> |
| April 13 | |

FNPS Planning and Board Meeting

Feb. 17, 5:30pm Env Hort Greenhouse complex at UF
 Call Claudia at 846-1070 for directions

Field Trips

**Edible Wild Plants Expedition
 Gainesville Nature Park Hike**

Events

May 21 Land Management Workshop
 This 1-day course is designed for people who own or manage lands with gopher tortoises. Biodiversity and other environmental land management goals are emphasized. Contact Ray and Pat Ashton in Newberry, Florida at www.ashtonbiodiversity.org

To add an event to this calendar contact Karen Ahlers at gourdsandboards@hotmail.com

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Asclepias tuberosa and *Sambucus canadensis* www.floridata.com

Florida Native Plant Society Membership Form

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Business or Corporate | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donor | \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library | \$15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (full-time) | \$15 |

Please mail completed form to: Florida Native Plant Society, P.O. Box 690278, Vero Beach, FL 32969-0278

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendations by the state.