

SAVING NATIVES on Public School Property

by Norman M. Moody

There is no reason why our Florida native plants cannot be saved and utilized on land developed by federal, state, county, and city organizations. Native plants can be and are being successfully used in landscaping Palm Beach County schools. But what is needed to make the turnaround in saving our natural heritage is some advance planning and contact work. By relating the steps we used in a recent experience on a new Palm Beach County school property, perhaps we can help others in their efforts.

The school district is a large one, spread over 50 square miles, and the school system is divided into many departments which are responsible for — in the final analysis — a well-

You Can't Refuse Wanderlust Tour

glimpse of some endangered birds and mammals. Nothing about the itinerary is guaranteed, however, except that we can't go wrong in letting John Edscorn take us where his instincts dictate.

We expect to be back at the Audubon Center in Winter Haven by 5 p.m. Your parked cars will be waiting to transport you back to the world of mundane things.

All participants in the Spring Wanderlust Tour will become Sponsors of the non-profit Florida Conservation Foundation and receive its informative newsletter, **ENFO**, without further charge.

Host and hostess for the tour will be Ken and Helen Morrison. Ken is retired director of Bok Tower Gardens at Lake Wales and is vice president of FCF. His book, **Mountain Lake Almanac**, is scheduled for publication in late spring. Helen conducts field trips at the Mountain Lake Sanctuary and Tiger Creek Nature Preserve. She taught conservation education in Lake Wales area schools for 10 years.

Even before the tour's announcement, reservations have been coming in; hence early enrollment is recommended. The total fee (including bus transportation, services of the tour conductor, twin-bed lodging and meals [dinner on Mar. 28, breakfast on Mar. 29], is only \$65 per person. To avoid disappointment, send in your reservation at once. Make your check for \$65 per reservation payable to Florida Conservation Foundation and mail it to FCF, 1203 Orange Ave., Winter Park, FL 32789.

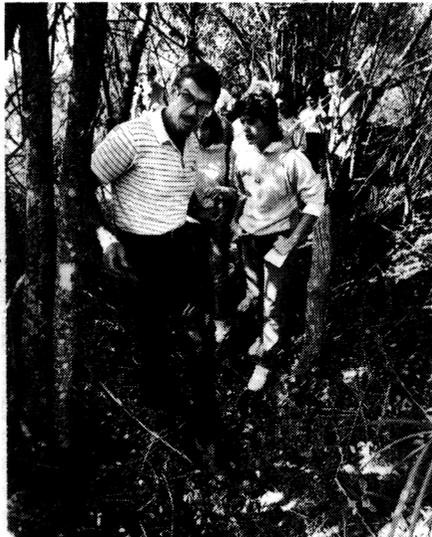
If you have questions about the tour, call the Morrissons at 813/638-1614 between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. Reservation deadline: March 12.

run school.

I work in the maintenance department of Palm Beach County Schools, and in our efforts to rescue native plants, we become involved with many of those other departments that acquire land, contract for the building of a school facility, and maintain the finished school plant.

Factors which helped:

1. I was knowledgeable enough about native plants to know their identity, value, requirements, and moving needs. If



Norman Moody and students on a nature trail at a Palm Beach school.

such a person is not already employed by an organization, the Florida Native Plant Society can provide the necessary advice and help.

2. I requested that, as soon as a piece of property was acquired, the school plant planning department notify me. After visiting the property, I offered recommendations with regard to saving the plants and trees on the site.
3. I sat in on pre-bid meetings with prospective bidders who would be putting the land into a condition for the builders to begin their work. I took this opportunity to request proper clearing methods and to give information on what types of plants were valuable.
4. I became acquainted with the superintendent on the job and kept in close contact with him, maintaining a good working relationship.

The project:

The school property was

approximately thirty acres, with half of the site to be in buildings, parking, driveways, and bus turnarounds. Part of the area had to be demucked and raised with fill. Recreation and play fields were located and much of the area had to be cleared with heavy equipment. We had enough advance notice to remove many of the large plants prior to clearing. We saved dahoon holly up to 6" in diameter, and large sabal palms, successfully moving 24 sabals and 20 dahoon holly to a nursery. We also relocated dahoons on site and moved some to a nearby school ground.

By pre-arrangement, I asked that pruned dahoons and pruned sabals be saved and cleared around. I asked that all perimeter plants be saved, and that no clearing be done from the property boundaries to within twelve feet of playfield, parking lot, or building. If a drain or fence had to be installed, only the necessary area was cleared. It was agreed that my maintenance department would later take out any undesirables in these areas. We were able to save saw palmetto, tarflower, mercine, blueberry, two types of lyonia, wax myrtle, gallberry, small pines, wildflowers, and grasses.

The superintendent on the job was very helpful and cooperative. I believe this was due to our contact well before the project was begun so the company knew of our intent. We did not have to put up barriers or use marking tape because we had an understanding well in advance.

A possible result!

We hope the presence of native plants on school grounds will arouse interest in natives and help in having this specific group of plants included in the curriculum. According to Dr. David Lee of Florida International University, in addressing the Florida Native Plant Conference recently, courses on native plants are non-existent in the State of Florida on a primary and secondary school level. What a rare opportunity for the maintenance department to play a part in helping with the education of students!

We can all work together in preserving native plants, not only on public land, but private land as well. Recently we moved 80 sabals from a proposed parking lot on private land.

As we all become more knowledgeable, we can help each other learn through working together with city, county, and state agencies.