



Sam Hopkins

## **Samuel B. Hopkins**

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*Charter Member, Tarflower Chapter*

*Interview by Teri Godts - 2003*

When it's time for the "What's Blooming" segment of the FNPS Tarflower Chapter meeting, Sam Hopkins steps up to the slide projector, plant list in hand, as he has done for years. Sam is a charter member of the Tarflower Chapter of FNPS and he is still one of our most active and knowledgeable members.

Sam was born in Greenville, Alabama, in 1917. He attended Emory University in Georgia, where he received a Bachelors and a Masters degree in chemistry. After graduation, he was employed as a chemist in Savannah, Georgia, where he researched the use of resin and turpentine. This career was interrupted by World War II, during which Sam served from 1941-1946 in the Army Corps of Engineers in the Pacific and ultimately achieved the rank of Captain.

After the war, Sam returned to the U.S. and began work as a sales representative of industrial and agricultural chemicals for the E.I. du Pont de Nemours Company in Alabama and in Florida. During this period, Sam married Sara Layton who was from Orlando, and together they would eventually have a family of three boys.

After his marriage, Sam made his home in Orlando and began work with Sara's father at Standard Oil Company. Later, when Sara's father passed away, Sam and Sara worked together for many years in their own company, Hopkins Oil Company.

Sam's growing family led him into many civic activities, including Little League baseball and the Boy Scouts of America. Sam is proud of his many scouting accomplishments, having earned the Scouter's Award, the Eagle Scout Award, the Silver Beaver Award, and having served as Cubmaster, Scoutmaster, and Wood Badge Course Director. In addition, Sam and his family enjoyed the outdoors and birdwatching. An interest in biology and botany led Sam to the University of Central Florida, where he took post-graduate courses in those subjects. As he studied, Sam developed a particular love of the native plants of Central Florida. He worked tirelessly at the UCF Herbarium, collecting literally thousands of plant specimens which he identifies, classified, and mounted.

As Sam's interest and knowledge of native plants grew, he gave talks on that subject to local civic and natural groups. He worked as a field botanist for several local engineering firms and worked with planners and engineers as a consultant on native flora to the Central Florida Zoo in Sanford and the City of Orlando Parks Department.

Sam joined several organization related to the natural world, including the Audubon Society, the American Fern Society, and the Florida Native Plant Society. Sam was very involved in the establishment of the Tarflower Chapter of FNPS. He served as the initial vice-president and later as field trip committee chair, and he gave many talks, especially concerning the identification of native plants. An early precursor of "What's Blooming" was "what You Always Wanted to Know About Natives, but Were Afraid to Ask," in which Sam discussed a single plant with specimens, slides and cultural notes. In addition, along with fellow FNPS members Dick Deuerling [interviewed in Spring Issue, Vol. 20, No. 1] and Dr. Elaine Norman, Sam was part of a segment called "Name That Plant," in which members brought plants to the meeting for identification. Later in the development of FNPS meeting topics, both Sam and Dick Deuerling began a monthly series relating to the cultural and botanical history of certain native plants and plant families. Throughout the years, Sam has given lectures on many topics, including native ferns, trees of Central Florida, plant identification, and landscaping with native plants.

We'll always know "What's Blooming" in Central Florida as long as Sam Hopkins is at the slide projector.