One early example of Nancy’s innovative projects involved installing over 35,000 native food plants for a gopher tortoise relocation project conducted by the Florida Institute of Phosphate Research. The tortoises proclaimed the project a success: after installation, baby gopher tortoise footprints were observed touring the new planted forage area. Recent projects include the restoration of portions of the Reedy Creek natural area. This project involved both large acreages and the complex restoration of entire habitat types, from trees to shrubs to ground cover. Nancy continues her explorations, and is now focusing on the development of an evaluation system for restoration projects as well as the cultivation of our own native grass species as sod alternatives.

And on the weekends ... Bill and Nancy’s interest and commitment to Florida's native plants does not always follow a 9-5 work week. During the weekends, at least when not babysitting the grandchildren, Bill and Nancy still find time to explore Florida’s wildlands together. These explorations have been very productive. Bill discovered a local population of the endangered scrub lupine (Lupinus aridorum) during one of these trips. The site has now been purchased by the federal government and remains the only significant preservation site to date. Nancy uncovered a new species of scrub mint (Dicerandra), a species so recently described that it has not yet received a formal name. The Bissets originally coined many of the common names used for Florida’s native wildflowers, such as sand lance and sunshine mimosa. Bill and Nancy both agree that with every trip to the field and with each additional project, there remains something new to be discovered.

About the Author: Rob Hopper is a member of the Palm Beach Chapter, works for the South Florida Water Management District, and served as Chairman of the FNPS Landscape Awards Committee for several years. Rob steadfastly pursued the Bissets for many months in quest of a few personal details.

Editor’s Note: The Natives serves the wholesale market primarily but offers some retail service by appointment only. Mark your calendar for Oct. 8, 2002, a special retail sale day, and inquire about special retail Saturday hours this fall and in the late spring (April-June). A visit to The Natives is a special treat, so consider organizing a field trip for your chapter or other community group.