

THREE PROJECTS WITH NATIVE PLANTS

by Peggy S. Lantz



Sharron's favorite project — home of Linda and David Neubauer.

Sharron Richards, a member of FNPS and director for the Morning Glory Chapter, calls her Flagler County business Coastal Consulting Services, and has been spreading the good news of Florida's native plants.

Sharron has several criteria for her designs, which are low-budget, economy plans costing \$500 to \$3000 including plants, seeds, and labor. No poisons are used, ever. Plants that occur on the site are used as the basic material. Additional species brought to the site must be native species or endangered species appropriate to the site. All seeds are collected one at a time, and cuttings are obtained locally. As long as Sharron controls the project, over a two-year period, she prunes and removes noxious plants by hand.

Sharron says, "My idea of landscaping is to provide an informal floral show, arranging it for color, shape, and size, filling in voids, and treating the entirety as a living sculpture that will perpetuate itself with little or no care, depending on the degree of control needed and the refinement wanted."

Here are descriptions of three current projects:

The first of the three undertakings is on Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) right-of-way on A1A, on dune habitat in Flagler Beach. It is funded by Bremshey Investments, developer of Pebble Beach Village, a small Planned Unit

Development (PUD). The site is approximately 80 feet by 500 feet, with 160 feet abutting Pebble Beach Village and 300 feet abutting Flagler State Recreation Area.

The object is to establish saw palmetto — which may take 20 years to achieve good size from seed — over an asphalt roadbed with coquina bedrock foundation. Next to the state park only natives indigenous to the area, or endangered species, can be used.

The Pebble Beach Village section includes a series of test beds bordered with coontie, planted in six to eight inches of dirt spread over the old road. The state park section is planted in meadow flower seeds.

Though the plants eventually will require no care, the seedbeds need water to germinate and become established. But vandals cut hoses, disconnected sprinklers, and drove back and forth through the beds. In March, 1988, a telephone company dug, scraped, and backfilled 15 by 500 feet of Sharron's plantings.

Now it has been reseeded, and the Department of Natural Resources and the FDOT have put up signs in an effort to protect it. Sharron laced the east side of the dune with 60 gallons of prickly pear cactus pieces to prevent foot traffic.

The primary species selected were spiderwort, dotted horsemint, verbena, gaillardia, coontie, garberia, crinum lilies, standing cypress, morning glory, wild geranium, matchstick weed, dune

sunflower, palmetto, and cactus.

The second undertaking is also dune habitat on FDOT right-of-way on A1A, in Ormond-by-the-Sea, abutting a Volusia County recreation area with an ocean overview. Funded by DeLand DOT, this is a stormwater management area 500 feet by 75 feet with a swale running the length of it. It is also a "no-water" project, done entirely from seed, with a flowering meadow the intended result. Only the common varieties will bloom this year.

Excessive foot and vehicular traffic has already caused damage. Sharron has asked for "keep off" signs, and has circled three sides of the bed with 60 gallons of prickly pear cactus pieces. (She says she would like to add double roofing nails!)

Species selection includes gaillardia, rudbeckia, standing cypress, cactus, morning glory, garberia, crinum lilies, and dune sunflower. In addition Sharron planted California coastal seed from her December 1987 researching and collecting trip. Recently, after hand-weeding 2/3 of the area, someone clear-cut the entire project. Many things have survived, and rains will help them recover; but a project is never really finished.

Sharron's third project, her favorite, is the work she has done at the new home of Linda and David Neubauer. David is a vice president of the Charles Wayne Group, one of the area's largest developers. The house is in Ormond Beach on the Intracoastal Waterway in an area designated both scenic and historic. The site is approximately 2½ acres; the house is 160 feet by 70 feet, surrounded by large oaks, palms, magnolias, cedars, hickories, bays, and beauty berries. Flowers, ferns, grapevines, smilax, and blueberries that grew wild are being encouraged to multiply in controlled areas. Selected new plants have been added to broaden the diversity of color, shape, and season of bloom. An area of St. Augustine grass is bordered by flower beds.

The plants used here have been cultivated on site, culled from nearby developments, and supplemented with available nursery natives. Sharron has also added experimental California coastal seed plots.

Species include a winged elm, coreopsis, yellow jessamine, Boston fern, bracken fern, and other native ferns (still to be identified), spiderworts, coontie, blazing star, rudbeckia, zephyr lilies, ironweed, morning glories, cucumberleaf sunflowers, spider lilies, woody goldenrod, partridge pea, coral bean, garberia, lupine, dune sunflower, twinflower, iris, ruellia, cardinal flower, crinum lilies, shamrocks, standing cypress, and others, both rare and common.