Endangered Plants in the Garden

A grant from the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program and additional cash donations allowed us to purchase plants for the garden. Other plants were donated. Cheryl Peterson, Bok Tower Gardens Conservation Manager, provided endangered plants from the Bok collection and supervised their planting. Many are not native to Charlotte County, and Chapter volunteers regularly report on their status to Ms. Peterson. This data will add to research being conducted on the requirements of endangered plant species growing outside their normal geographic range.

Designing the Educational Signs

Committee members toured local gardens to review signage systems and discovered that many signs contained a multitude of information but were also very large. Since our garden features a variety of plants of differing sizes, often growing close together, large signs are impractical.

We chose a basic 2 x 4 inch aluminum sign with a satin background and black text, mounted on an 18 inch stake. An FNPS Chapter Grant made the purchase of the garden signs possible. Since the cost of $1,002.30 to purchase 94 signs from Precision Design Systems of Rochester, New York slightly exceeded our grant, the difference was made up from Chapter funds.

Each sign contains common and scientific names, and native plants are indicated by a solid black graphic of the state of Florida with the word native or endangered underneath. These designations were determined by using the Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants, which can be found online at florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

We considered showing plant distribution by county as depicted in the Atlas, but decided against doing so because of several factors – the state graphic is small, plant distribution is changeable, and Charlotte County is under represented with vouchered plants.

Endangered plants contributed by Bok Tower Gardens have a “courtesy” line under the scientific name. One definition of courtesy is “willingness or generosity in providing something needed” – that definitely fits the actions of the Conservation Program at Bok Tower Gardens.

Select non-native species were planted to provide nurture for butterflies and their larvae, and signs identifying these plants include the word introduced. We felt this term a better choice than non-native or exotic, which could be misconstrued by the public.

One sign design has no graphic, and identifies associated plants as common garden herbs. I was asked several times if the fennel, parsley and rue we had planted as larval food were the same plants used in herb gardens. We used this signage to answer the question.

To complement the signs we created a garden guide that provides information about butterfly larval host plants and also gives us a way to monitor visitors to the garden.

We are very proud of our garden and its signage and invite you to visit. To see the garden online, go to the garden section of our website, mangrove.fnpschapters.org.

Jane Wallace retired to the Englewood area in 2004 and became a member of the Mangrove Chapter soon after. She began coordinating the establishment of the Chapter Garden in 2008.

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The purpose of the Florida Native Plant Society is to conserve, preserve, and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

Official definition of native plant:
For most purposes, the phrase Florida native plant refers to those species occurring within the state boundaries prior to European contact, according to the best available scientific and historical documentation. More specifically, it includes those species understood as indigenous, occurring in natural associations in habitats that existed prior to significant human impacts and alterations of the landscape.

For more Information:
http://fnps.org

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