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A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF THE
FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



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2023 FNPS ANNUAL FUND DRIVE

Every year, FNPS members receive a letter asking us to contribute to our annual fund drive. This year, FNPS board and staff are matching up to \$10,000 in donations.

You can help us reach our \$50,000 goal

Please help us continue our work to preserve, conserve, and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

fnps.org/donate



SOCIETY NEWS

The Year Behind and the Year Ahead

As we reflect on 2023, our thanks to our members, Chapters, Board, supporters, and staff. During times that can be challenging, FNPS continues to inspire, educate, and advocate for our native plants and their habitats.

2024

Next year we are looking forward to continuing our Central Florida plant rescues, surveying for *Torreya taxifolia* (Florida Torreya), sponsoring the 2nd Annual Groundcover Restoration Workshop, inviting you all to the 2nd Annual Dicerandra Day, and continuing our educational programming with Terminology Tuesdays, Palmetto, and our monthly Lunch and Learn series.



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Our virtual Conference in April was attended by 356 people and we heard from 38 speakers. This was closely followed by our 3 amazing Field Days in May - Naples, Tallahassee, and Sanford. Hosted by Chapters, these events gave folks the opportunity to come together, socialize, explore new areas, and learn about new topics.

Summer

A quiet time for being outdoors, our teams made the most of this relative downtime to work on FNPS. Thanks to Melanie and the Council of Chapters we launched a survey for our members and friends and were blown away by the response - 3000 folks relayed their thoughts on our organization. Our Board met in August to review the strategic plan. We launched our first National 'Make a Will' month campaign in partnership with FreeWill.



Fall / Winter

The busiest time of the year, this fall we celebrated Florida Native Plant month in style with our new merchandise. Lake County and Collier County proclaimed October Florida Native Plant Month. We held the inaugural Dicerandra Day in Marion Oaks, focusing on *Dicerandra cornutissima* (longspur balm), revamped the Landscape Awards, and co-hosted Torreya Talks for landowners and researchers in Quincy.

We also recruited our TorreyaKeepers intern - Maddie Snuggs - supported by funding from the Florida Wildflower Foundation, donated in honor of Carolyn Schaag, Nancy Bissett, and Anne MacKay.



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We're hiring!

Operations Manager

Are you looking to make a difference and have a positive impact on Florida's environment and ecosystems? We are hiring an Operations Manager to join our small and dynamic team.

To find out more and learn how to apply, please click [here](#).

Deadline for applications is Dec 29th 2023.



Torreya Talks and Field Days in partnership with the Atlanta Botanical Garden



By Lilly Anderson-Messec

In November FNPS collaborated with Atlanta Botanical Garden (ABG) to host an event, “Torreya Talks”, at the Quincy IFAS Research Station. Over 50 landowners and land managers attended. As well as important opportunities for networking and relationship-building, presentations included updates about our research, survey findings, and best management practices for *Torreya taxifolia*.

Attendees learned about the state and plight of *T. taxifolia* and the conservation projects involving the tree over the past few years.



During the same week, the FNPS staff joined forces with ABG out in the field to assess and monitor the response of surviving Florida *Torreya* trees to hurricane and post-hurricane disturbance. Working in teams, FNPS and ABG, captured data on specific trees that have been monitored over the past few years, adding to our longer-term understanding.

Habitat data for these trees includes elevation, soil moisture, depth of litter, degree of slope, percent canopy cover, soil moisture, depth of leaf litter, and distance to nearest trees. Tree data includes measurements of size, reproductive status, presence of seeds/flowers, overall tree health, number of cankers, and % of yellowing/spots on needles.

As well as the important data gathered, this was a great opportunity for FNPS to build on our relationship with ABG and explore potential collaborations.



We are grateful for our longstanding partnership with ABG which has allowed us to not only continue surveying known Florida *Torreya* range but also to contribute to the scientific understanding of what is causing this species' decline.

Dicerandra Day 2023

By Valerie Anderson

FNPS partnered with the Crandall Fire Ecology Lab at the University of Florida and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to launch the first annual Dicerandra Day. We recruited 30 volunteers to remove invasive species in the southern part of the triangle south of the Cross Florida Greenway in late October during peak flowering of longspur balm *Dicerandra cornutissima*. We primarily targeted natal grass (*Melinis repens*) but also removed hairy indigo (*Indigofera hirsuta*) and showy rattlebox (*Crotalaria spectabilis*). Habitat restoration was chosen in coordination with the land managers and researchers and was adjacent to and within an existing population of *D. cornutissima*.

Volunteers were educated on the evolutionary history, ecology, and proper habitat management of both blushing scrub balm (*D. modesta*) and *D. cornutissima* by Andre Naranjo, PhD, Rashelle Deak, and Kelly Conley. Volunteers removed 200 pounds of invasive plant material in 209.5 volunteer hours.

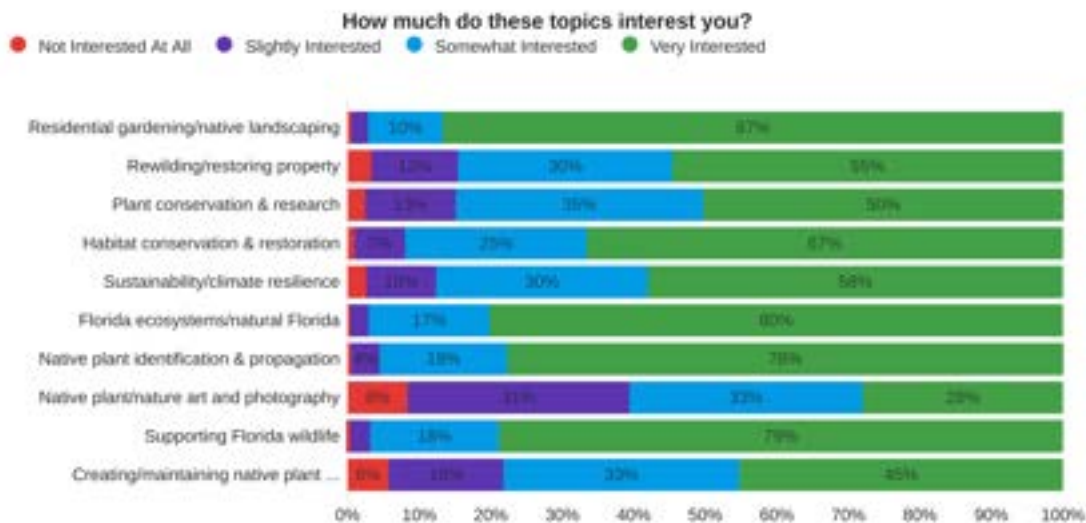
The event was wildly successful and we are planning a 2024 Dicerandra Day focusing on a different dicerandra species in another region of Florida. See you there!



Members & Friends Survey Results

Remember the survey we asked you to take in June? We're delighted to share that 2,413 current members, lapsed members, and non-members responded, providing great information and helping us hear and better understand the voices of our members and friends.

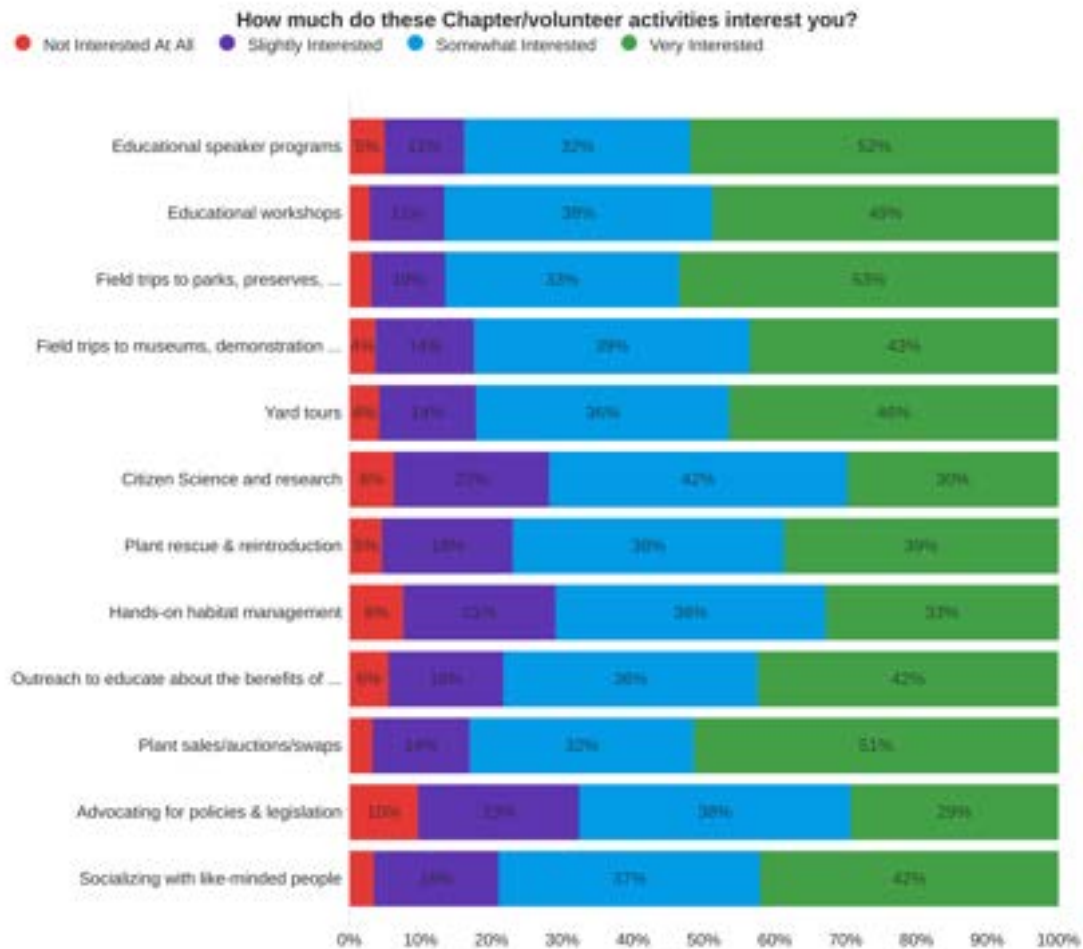
We found that, by a small margin, Native Landscaping got the highest average interest rating among all respondents; however, interest in Landscaping was higher among non-members and lower among lapsed members compared to current members. Interest in Florida Ecosystems/Natural Florida, Supporting Wildlife, Habitat Restoration, and Plant Identification/Propagation was also high, especially among current members. Younger respondents indicated more interest in Habitat Conservation & Restoration, Sustainability/Climate Resilience, Rewilding/Restoring Property, Plant Conservation & Research, and Demonstration Gardens than older respondents.



As far as Chapter and volunteer activities go, interest in Field Trips to Natural Areas and Educational Speakers were rated highest by current members. Non-members and lapsed members showed the most interest in Plant Sales. And younger respondents were significantly more interested in Plant Rescues, Habitat Management, Citizen Science, and Advocacy compared to older respondents.



Only 29% of respondents said they volunteer. The majority of volunteers are older and retired, but about half of the respondents who do not volunteer indicated an interest in participating more. Since we rely on volunteers to fulfill our mission, feedback tells us our challenges will be to find meaningful activities, convenient times, and ways to provide training for new volunteers.



How are we doing?

Over 90% of current members feel their chapter is contributing to the FNPS mission and that they are making an impact on Florida through FNPS. Overall, 84% of current members indicated they are somewhat or very satisfied with their involvement with FNPS, with younger members indicating less satisfaction.

Committee to help plan the 2024 Annual Conference, and the Membership Committee to improve membership management and plan membership drives. Chapters can use the survey results to inform adjustments to their meeting times, activities, and educational topics. Responses to the open-ended feedback question are still being reviewed, but they appear to contain relevant and thoughtful comments and ideas that can be acted upon.

Thanks!

Thanks and appreciation to everyone who contributed their time to respond to the survey, and congratulations to the survey respondents who won the drawing for a free membership or renewal: Avi Gardener, Savannah Nease, Stewart Weimer (gifted to Cathy Hammond), and Hilda Dillman (gifted to Barbara Dennett).

FEATURES

Tales from the Baranoff Oak

The historical ecology of Pinellas County

By Cameron Dasher

A man sat beneath the canopy of a mighty live oak, leaning against its trunk with his notebook laid open. He came to talk with the tree, but had no words to say. The man had traveled far, all to hear stories from the elder whose life tells a history older than any other. Though, he had to be patient just as the oak had for centuries, unwritten. So, he sat with the tree.

The man and the tree watched the sun move through its daily arc, one time of countless before. And yet, the sun was only a spectator to the great epic told. The man listened to stories of wildfires that healed forests, tempests that turned land in to sea, luminescent nights full of fireflies and meteors, infestations of concrete and metal, children painting stones with pokeberry, inconceivable acts of war. The oak had borne witness to a land ever changing – time etched into the very fibers of its bark. With his notebook full of ink, the man stayed with the



Long ago, where the iron fences stand and cobbled bricks lay, liatris once blossomed and goldenrod swayed. They were strokes of a painting – no, more as wisps of color twirling above an earth washed in wiregrass and huckleberry. Passionflower skipped along the ground side by side the runner oaks and blueberry, all of who preferred a life close to one another. Where these buildings stretch and pull, great pines towered. Their resinous breaths flew beneath red-cockaded woodpeckers on a search for olden trees to hold their nest; their dense trunks a trellis up to the canopies for restless green briars, only for these vines to fall back into the earth by winter; their roots a mother to all those above and below. The pine forests were all of this land, in a time where the sea laid beyond the horizon and water came only as rain and springs.

These springs, Baranoff explained, were different. Their cavernous depths lured life itself to drink from them, pulling down strangler figs by their roots to swim within the schools of bluegill and sheepshead. The trees watched butterflies turn into fireflies as the day gave way to the night and orchids bloom into stars as the seasons gave way to the year. It was here where they saw people for the first time, entering the land just as the trees had millions of years ago.

For thousands of years, the west sea crept up the shores and into the forest plains. What had once been pine flatwoods was now a mixing pot of seagrass beds, beach dunes, palm hammocks, mangrove mangals, and oak forests. Some trees greeted another as old friends while others introduced themselves by their first names. Together, they trailed in succession from the sea, traveling nearly fifty miles inland. The long journey brought them to an already-inhabited peninsula, but the trees chose to find permanence in their cohabitation – and the people followed.

As elder trees bartered ecotones and established communities, the young saplings were left to watch the people build a family of their own. They moved across the land as a rapid web, just as the mycorrhizae beneath their feet, and erected earthen mounds where temples stood, just as the ants had along their sandy trails. Before the young pines tabled in their canopies, the people became an empire that had settled most of the land and sea. Their growth depended on the lives given by the land's flora and fauna, something both the plants and people understood as their dialectic. These people came to be known as the Tocobaga and, on this land, lived hundreds of years among the ancestors of these trees. The land continued to intrinsically change, from shell middens reaching above beautyberries to imprints left on the shore by toddlers chasing sanderlings. Though, in 1528 A.D., they witnessed the arrival of a Spanish

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These were the stories Baranoff learned from the elders as a sapling, a history living within their leaves and passed through their roots. It would then be years till Baranoff grew tall enough to be missed by the thousands of feet running across the land.

The Baranoff Oak is, likely, the last surviving tree in Pinellas County to breathe the same air as the Tocobaga. It was born in a time of radical change where thousands of Indigenous people died directly by the hands of colonizers or indirectly by introduced disease. By the time the Tocobaga were ravaged, the Creek-Seminole, a conglomerated Indigenous tribe, were brought into wars against the United States traversing nearly the entirety of western Florida. As the Seminole reached Tampa Bay, any remaining people from the Tocobaga, Calusa, and Timucua, including runaway slaves, joined the resistance across the bay to present-day Hillsborough County. By the end of the third war, only three hundred Seminoles remained but were never defeated. These last Seminoles gave rise to the Seminole Tribe of Florida, earning them the title, “The Unconquered People.” Baranoff had witnessed it all, adding a ring every year.

It would take nearly three centuries to establish the first white settlement on the Pinellas Peninsula from Narvaez’s initial contact. The pines that had once towered over the land were cleared, swamps brimming with cardinal flowers and leather ferns drained, and mangals – an enigma of their own – leveled. With each year Baranoff survived, another branch erupted from its buds only to cast shadows over those that had been felled. The Oak watched the land transform from a barren of splinters to a village of iron, then town of steel, and then city of electricity. People from all over flooded onto land to, not to explore, but replace. The Orange Belt Railroad, Sunshine Skyway Bridge, and Gandy Bridge, they built these all for the permanence of a lifestyle meant to only live twenty years. In a blink of an eye, a snap of twig, all that remained of Baranoff’s childhood home were the Spanish moss scarves left by the once giant oaks. But, Baranoff was never alone. The Oak kept company with the garden beds of sage and roses, royal palms pinned between sky high glass panes, and grass mats enduring a never ending cycle of growth and cut. The land was changing, again, and, this time, growing.

Sands were pulled from the depths of Tampa Bay to expand the peninsula for beachfront bars and sun-catching villas, just enough room given to gardens out front and potted plants on porches. Baranoff saw the western shores slope into crystal white beaches and apartment building foundations fill with muck. The Oak wondered why the people spent so much time moving earth when what they sought had been beneath them all along. Though, some of the people, Baranoff explained, were different. They would spend their days holding magnifying glasses up to teetering beetles on dotted horsemint leaves, napping under sweet magnolias with field guides over their faces, and sketching roseate spoonbills soar into the sunset. Falling leaves walked with them as they marked boundaries for parks and preserves, one to become Baranoff Park. Acorns slept in their pockets as they wrote to their governments asking for change, one that would recognize this land and all that it is. They listened to the trees as the trees had to them after all this time.

They, with the land, would sit beneath great oak crowns and wonder how it was before.

PLACES TO VISIT

Angus K. Gholson Nature Park

by Lilly Anderson-Messec

Visit Angus K. Gholson, Jr. Nature Park in Chattahoochee to experience some of Florida's rarest plants in the unique ravine ecosystems along the Apalachicola River. This region of the Florida Panhandle is one of the top biodiversity hotspots in the nation, home to several species at their southernmost range, as well as several endemic to just this region. Many of these rare species can be viewed from the meandering trails that follow along the clear, spring-fed stream in the park, and up the ravine slope.

The Nature Park was named after a renowned botanist from the region, Angus K. Gholson, who grew up nearby and played there as a child. Angus frequently botanized the area as an adult and built the park trails, which he stewarded until his death in 2014. A dedicated group of FNPS Magnolia Chapter members have since become the caretakers of the park, battling invasive species, and maintaining the trails. They have also worked hard to restore the park and trails after the region was badly damaged by Hurricane Michael in 2018.

You can find something interesting in bloom at almost anytime of year, but spring is a choice season to see many of the park's rare species in bloom.

Spring-blooming species found in the park;

- Underwood's trillium (*Trillium underwoodii*)
- Lanceleaf trillium (*Trillium lancifolium*)

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- Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)
- Blue woodland phlox (*Phlox divaricata*)
- Smooth Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*)
- Greendragon (*Arisaema dracontium*)
- Merrybells (*Uvularia sessifolia*)
- Southern horsebalm (*Collisonia anisata*)
- Southeastern flowering spurge (*Euphorbia pubentissima*)
- Florida flame azalea (*Rhododendron austrinum*)
- Fringed campion (*Silene catesbaei*)
- Baldwin's spiny pod (*Matelea baldwyniana*)
- Smooth oxeye (*Heliopsis gracilis*)
- Florida torreyia (*Torreyia taxifolia*)



UPCOMING EVENTS

These are just a small selection of our events. [Click here to see more...](#)

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Dec 16, Winter Garden Holiday Gathering Passionflower Chapter

Wrap up 2023 in style as we tour the unique yard at the home of Katrina Stephenson. A potluck meal will begin at 12:15 and tours of the yard before and after.
[Learn More →](#)

Dec 18, Sarasota Holiday Party Serenoa Chapter



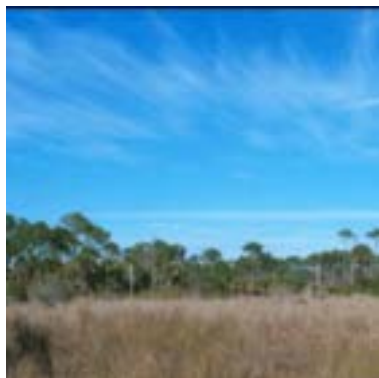
Potluck party. Share the holiday joy with chapter members at [Sarasota Audubon Nature Center](#)
[Learn More →](#)

Dec 19, Estero Plant Sale & Work Day Coccoloba Chapter



Chapter representatives and friends will be having fun together -- working and professing the amazing beauty and productivity of native plants.
[Learn More →](#)

Dec 21, Venice Walk Mangrove Chapter



Deer Prairie Creek Preserve - This preserve offers a considerable variety of habitat types- wetlands, and uplands plus some solitude which is hard to find in SW FL.

Dec 23, Parrish Field Trip Serenoa Chapter



Discover many native jewels with Tom in this amazing and somewhat obscure park known as South Fork.
[Learn More →](#)

Dec 30, Lecanto Garden Clean Up Citrus Chapter



We will be weeding, trimming and cleaning up the Lecanto Native Garden. Bring your gardening tools, including gloves, hand tools and water to drink.
[Learn More →](#)

IN MEMORY

We celebrate the lives of our friends

Howell “David” Chiappini, 1934-2023

David, an FNPS member since 1993, was well known and respected in the state native plant community and contributed his knowledge and expertise to many books on native plants. His passing will leave a huge gap in the hearts of those who knew and loved him, and he will be missed.

He cofounded Chiappini Farm Native Nursery in Melrose which was known for its great selection of north central and north Florida native plants. The nursery has no intention of closing, Manager Dickie Williams is running the nursery and the hours are regular.



Chiappini Farm Native Nursery has been a long time supporter of our Pawpaw Chapter's plant sales and we hope that you will continue to support them as David and the family has supported native plants.

IN OTHER NEWS

Everglades Coalition

Report from the FNPS representative to the Everglades Coalition

by Joan Bausch

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meeting October 12 at Flamingo in far south Everglades National Park along Florida Bay, and also made this our Annual retreat, a chance for reps to get to know each other. The Everglades Coalition was the first group to use the new Guy Bradley Visitors Center. Its beautiful design is reminiscent of 50's modern architecture, with terrazzo floors throughout! The new shipping container rooms were not yet available to rent as the certificate of occupancy had not yet been issued. I had so wanted to experience them. Our Martin County Chapter had a fabulous field trip to the original Flamingo cottages/cabins in early 2000s. The new container cottages will be available after the restaurant is completed. These cottages are raised up on pilings to avoid flooding. The other alternative for rental stays are large tents on slightly raised platforms. They were to be furnished beginning in November. Further along the bay were the boat ramp and boat slips as well as houseboats that could be rented.



Closer to Florida Bay across from the marina, as we stood on the sidewalk, we noticed an osprey sitting on a branch just above our heads. If we had been willing to venture across to the dam near the boat slips, we might have been able to see crocodiles and alligators, each on its own favorite shoreline. (one appreciates fresh water, the other salt). After the meeting we spent the afternoon driving up the Flamingo road to make stops along the way to photograph native vegetation and other interesting sights! Paurotis palm is one really interesting tree along the road which was easy to capture right from inside the car. Still further along the road we could see the

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But the most interesting sight required us to get out of the car and climb up to the Pa-hay-okee overlook to see the huge expanse of sawgrass that is the Shark River Slough. We commend this to all visitors to understand what the Everglades is all about! We noticed pond apple trees along with other natives dotting the water as we traveled up the ramp to view the slough. Further out in the distance tree hammocks can be noticed. The 39th Annual Conference of the Everglades Coalition will be held January 25-27, 2024 in Bonita Springs just north of Naples, and a fairly short ride south to the western entrance of the Everglades National Park to see the Shark River Slough from another aspect of the Everglades.

Backyard Biodiversity Day

2023

The fifth-annual celebration of local biodiversity attracted over a thousand attendees

Article by Valerie Anderson and photos by Ann Dang and author

Known locally as BBD, this is Tarflower's flagship annual event that supports Tarflower's Sandhill, Xeric Hammock, and Scrubby Flatwoods restoration areas at Mead Botanical Gardens, also the host of BBD.

Held during Florida Native Plant Month, this year the BBD was October 22nd.

Local nonprofits like Friends of Split Oak Forest, the League of Women Voters of Orange County's Natural Resources Committee, and Quail Forever were well represented. Below, Jess Kovach poses with artist Mary Nesler. BBD is a staple of the local environmental community and is reliable networking for local and regional environmental leaders.

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Attendees are greeted by an expansive native plant sale, supported by Green Isle Gardens and a shaded sea of vendors, including local nonprofits and talented artists, many of whom are also FNPS members like jewelry-maker Laura Bennett-Kimble of Limpkin Nation, photographer Paul Rebmann, and potter Jess Kovach of Earthen Stories Shop.

BBD also includes classes and ecologist-lead hikes through the restoration areas.

A vegan-friendly food truck, live music, and a juice and smoothie vendor round out the afternoon.



BBD is incredibly well-organized, with a year-round volunteer position ‘the BBD Director’, filled this year by Tamie Diener-Lafferty. Great job, Tamie and Tarflower Chapter!



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