

# Sabal minor

A bi-monthly newsletter for the members of

THE FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



VOLUME 7, NUMBER 4

August-September 2005

## August

August is the beginning of our fall planting season. Also, alligators hatch from mid-August to mid-September. Young sea turtles are still hatching, too, so watch where you're walking on the beach.

This is a good month to learn the different eupatoriums (there are 17) and asters (29), as there will be many in bloom. Buttonbush will be displaying the reason for its name. Look for the lilac-flowered Spotted beebalm and Sky flower

## September

This is the peak blooming period for water-spider orchids in central Florida. Watch for blooming blazing star, rabbit tobacco and blue curls. Look up after those tropical storms, you may get some unusual bird sightings. Florida scrub-jay fledglings will have completely blue heads; no more the brown juvie plumage.

**Paynes Prairie Chapter** has its **Fall Native Plant Sale** September 16, 17 at Morningside Nature Center (3540 E. University Ave, Gainesville, FL.) Note: FNPS members only on the 16th, 5-7pm! Open to the public Saturday, September 17, 8:30am-1pm. There will be native trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers suited to the north-central area of Florida. There also will be vendors, educational booths, and a wildflower walk in the park's flatwoods, which are reknowned for their fall wildflowers. Check the chapter website for more information.

## FNPS President Urges Protection and Restoration of Native Species

Last December, The Florida Native Plant Society joined with several other environmental organizations to form the Florida Endangered Species Network. (See the February – March 2005 *Sable minor* for more details).

In July, a draft version of legislation that will affect the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was leaked to the **New York Times** by a lawmaker on the House Resources Committee. (See "Bill Would Reduce Government's Role in Protecting Species" by Felicity Barringer, **New York Times**, July 4, 2005). On July 22, NPR's *All Things Considered* covered the draft and interviewed the Committee's Chair, Richard W. Pombo, R-CA. You can listen to this on their archive.

Details are murky at best, and I'm reluctant to repeat shrill spin. The two "sides" are exemplified by Partnership For The West, a group representing Western ranchers, farmers, and industries, against The Defenders of Wildlife. Environmentalists are picking up some unusual support from Americans for Tax Reform and Gun Owners of America who want property owners to be compensated if their land values drop because of use restrictions while the draft calls for compensation only if government action causes the land value to drop by at least 50%.

Pombo cites statistics that show 1200 species are listed as endangered, but since 1973, only 10 species have recovered sufficiently to be removed from the list. He wants the Act to emphasize incremental changes rather than setting the bar at total and complete recovery that could take decades. The draft would take the ESA off the books in 2015.

One key provision concerns habitat protection. The current law protects territory essential for a species recovery to include the species' historic range. The draft legislation would limit that protection to areas currently occupied by the species, unless that range is inadequate to prevent the species' extinction.

The Draft also defines what is "best available science," calling for use of empirical data rather than studies that use statistical models of a species' number, range, and viability. Scientists object to this when the species' numbers are small and scattered. The Draft also restricts listing of subgroups within a species.

In short, the draft focuses on ensuring that the status of species gets no worse rather than helping to make it better.

When President Nixon backed the ESA in 1973 it enjoyed widespread, bipartisan support. That was years before some concerned Floridians started FNPS. Today growth, sprawl, and the need to drill threaten habitat from the ANWAR to the Keys, but environmental issues are met with apathy or outright hostility. Please do something about it. Urge your member of Congress to support and strengthen the ESA.

*Bob Egolf, FNPS President*

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## Species Spotlight

*Sericocarpus tortifolius*

synonym: *Aster tortifolius*

WHITE-TOPPED ASTER; DIXIE ASTER

Family Asteraceae [or Compositae]  
(aster or daisy)

This is not a glamorous flower, more like an easily-found friend on any given walk. It also seems to tolerate sharing a few of its branches in a watered vase on your tabletop without wilting. You will find them in sandhills, flatwoods and hammocks throughout the state.

Some say it's useful for colic in horses. Botanists like to analyze its position as an aster or a sericocarpus. And, you know, discussions like that could give some people colic.

The stems on this perennial plant are slender, hairy and much branched. It grows to about three feet tall. The flower heads are at the ends of the branches ("terminal"), numerous, and small with a few short, white ray florets and creamy-yellow disk florets. The outer leaf-like structures at the base of the flower heads (called "bracts") are hairy, and white with green tips. The leaves attach directly to the stem (no petiole; "sessile") in an alternating pattern, and they are short, hairy, broadened near the tips, with a smooth edge along the margin ("entire").



Photo by  
Shirley  
Denton

## Wildflower Education Grants

July 31 was the deadline for this year's round of grant applications available through a combined effort of The Florida Wildflower Advisory Council and the Florida Wildflower Foundation, Inc. If you receive one of these grants, please send an article about your project to the *Sabal minor* (rosrowe@comcast.net). Not only will it spread the word about your project, but it will help educate others about the usefulness of these grants.

For those of you who missed this deadline, mark your calendars now for next year!! Keep those dreams and schemes alive. Anyone or any organization may apply. CONTACT: Gary L. Henry, L.A., Executive Director Florida Wildflower Foundation, Inc. 1126 Brandt Drive Tallahassee, Florida 32308 (850)877-7101 [maximumH@WorldNet.Att.Net](mailto:maximumH@WorldNet.Att.Net)

## Florida Turtle Conservation Trust Launches New Website

George L. Heinrich

The Florida Turtle Conservation Trust (FTCT) was formed in 1999 by a group of Florida biologists and conservationists concerned with Florida turtles. Our purpose is to promote the conservation of all Florida turtle species and the preservation of intact, free-ranging populations and their associated ecosystems throughout the state of Florida. The FTCT focuses its efforts on the conservation of non-marine species, such as Diamondback Terrapin and Gopher Tortoise.

Florida is home to over 8% of the world's known turtle species and is a significant area for both turtle diversity and habitat. Twenty-five of the 54 turtle species found in the United States occur in Florida. Habitat diversity and species richness makes Florida a chelonian hotspot.

To date, the FTCT has organized and cosponsored workshops and symposia on various Florida turtles, partnered with the Gopher Tortoise Council on educational projects which have brought materials to nearly 3000 elementary schools, and provided exhibits at nature-related events, among other projects.

In addition to supporting conservation work, members receive discounts on meeting registration fees and opportunities to attend organized field trips. For more information please visit [www.ftct.org](http://www.ftct.org) or contact me at [george@heinrichecologicalservices.com](mailto:george@heinrichecologicalservices.com).

*"Making the planet a better place, one backyard at a time"*

## Animal Planet to Air "Backyard Habitat"

Kerri Drylie

The first five episodes were filmed in central Florida:

- A butterfly garden in Winter Park
- A habitat for the Green Anoles lizards in Umatilla.
- A habitat for tree frogs in Orlando
- Purple Martins and Swallows in Mims
- Osprey Habitat on Merritt Island

David Drylie was the landscape architect and the native plant material and installation was from our native plant nursery, Green Images, in Christmas, Florida.

The National Wildlife Federation is producing this program in conjunction with Animal Planet. Additional episodes were filmed around the United States, including Knoxville, District of Columbia, and Los Angeles. Others are planned for New York City and Seattle.

**Starts August 15th.**

## Hernando Chapter Installs a Healthy Landscape

Cindy Liberton

In June, the Hernando Chapter designed and installed the foundations of a Florida native plant landscape at Green Bean Organic Market in Spring Hill. To our knowledge, this may be the first all-native commercial landscape in the County.

When the proprietor of a local health food store, Joe Lemieux, was ready to move his business to a larger building, he asked the Hernando Chapter to help him introduce his clientele to landscaping practices that promote good health. As a natural foods grocer, Mr. Lemieux' views on eliminating pesticides and herbicides from the environment made him a natural partner for the Chapter.

Mr. Lemieux provided a generous budget for the plant material. Gene Kelly, Conservation Chair for our Chapter, quickly sketched out the site, and members collaborated via email on a plant list, and filled in the plan. We had to work quickly to take advantage of the summer rains and have the installation correspond with opening day for the new business. Chapter Secretary Jason LaRoche trailered in a mountain of free mulch from the County, and we were ready to implement the plan.

Eight members dug in to install the foundations of the landscape, and the parking lot was soon ringed by plants suited for dry places as most of Spring Hill was historically sandhill community.

Trees planted include Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*), Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*), Flatwoods Plum (*Prunus umbellata*), Wax Myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), and a large Red Bay (*Persea borbonia*) that will someday shade the front entrance. Simpson's Stopper (*Myrcianthes fragrans*) served as the principal shrub for the medians, and Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) filled a bed on the side. In the beds, we planted silver Saw Palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), Adam's Needle (*Yucca filamentosa*), and Coontie (*Zamia pumila*). If all goes well, the unsightly chainlink fence will someday be hidden by Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) with Muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) at its feet.

At the front door, we are establishing a rare scrub plant community, which will provide public education on scrub preservation, as well as fragrant beauty. This parched bed may be a perfect home for Scarlet Calamint (*Calamintha coccinea*) and other delicate members of the scrub community such as *Conradina canescens*. Over time, the Chapter hopes to fill this bed with year-round color.

We will soon put up a sign acknowledging the Hernando Chapter's role in designing and installing the landscaping, and Mr. Lemieux will distribute our newsletters and public education information at his store.

### HELP WANTED

FNPS is looking for members who are attorneys who would be willing to advise the Society on tax and insurance issues on a *pro bono* basis.

Please call Bob Egolf if you are interested.

941-351-2961

Thanks!!

## Martin County Chapter Goes to St Lucie County's Oxbow Eco-Center

Joan Bausch

For one of the Martin County Chapter's monthly field trips, we recently joined Steve Fousek, environmental lands specialist with St Lucie County, for a three hour tour of the Oxbow Eco-Center. Not only is the Center a wonderful hands-on experience for kids of all ages, but the wealth of natural systems to be found there is a joy for native plant lovers.

Most of the trails are covered with an ADA-approved mulch and the tower has a ramp so those needing wheels can get a close-up experience.

We noted wax myrtles with six inch thick trunks, sweetbay, loblolly bay, pumpkin ash, and several varieties of fern, including royal fern. As we followed the path through a scrub area, we tested our mettle on lichens, lyonias and oaks. Blooming along the path were yellow wild bachelor buttons, blackroot and tons of reticulate paw-paw. We clambered through the marsh to see the effects of an invasive *Ardisia*; scattered by racoons, the pesky nature of this relative of the marlberry was readily apparent in the way it carpeted the forest floor.

Eventually we came to the "double diamond" trail along the North Fork of the St Lucie River. This high mound, created by dredge material long ago, is home to a population of the native marlberry, *Ardisia escallonioides*.

Discreet markers in the pine flatwoods indicated the way to the observation tower. From treetop height, we could look back on the flatwoods or forward into the thick wet forest. We noted a thick clump of strawberry guava at the foot of the tower; while the fruit produces wonderful jelly, the easily scattered seed presents land managers with a herculean, costly task.

There had been a prescribed burn on the previous Monday and already new wiregrass shoots were emerging in the flatwoods. The saw palmettoes will soon put forth their green leaves and before long the flames will be a distant memory.

An awe-inspiring visit. We thank Steve Fousek for his talk and tour. We admire his minimalist, but choice, ways!

## FNPS TRIPS FOR 2006

Once again the FNPS is offering spring trips. For the past four years, FNPS has been offering adventure trips to its members. These trips help earn money for the society's treasury. In fact \$15,900 has been raised so far.

Talk to members who have gone on these trips and they'll tell you they are great fun as well as educational.

### Cuzco, Peru and the Tambopata Amazon Rainforest

March 31 - April 9, 2006

*Explorations* has designed a custom 10-day Peru tour for the FNPS. We will meet in Lima, Peru, travel to Cuzco, Peru and then to the Tambopata Amazon rainforest in southern Peru.

This cultural and natural history tour highlights much of the best Peru has to offer, including a diverse range of geography and ecosystems. Travel among snowcapped Andes Mountains to explore world famous Machu Picchu, the Inca capital city of Cuzco and its Spanish colonial architecture, the incredible Inca ruins of Pisac, Ollantaytambo, Saksayhuaman, and the beautiful Sacred Valley. Visit with the colorful Quechua Indians and their abundant handicrafts. At Machu Pichu, stay overnight at the luxury Pueblo Hotel with its 12 acres of lush grounds that include a bear sanctuary, butterfly display, orchids, walking trails, and birding trails located riverside in a cloud forest.

The Amazon portion of the trip takes you into Tambopata Nature Reserve. Stay in an exotic jungle lodge and explore the awesome biodiversity of the Tambopata Amazon rainforest by boat and by walking. Use the canopy observation tower, see the nearby popular clay licks visited by macaws and other parrots and parakeets, and hopefully spot the giant river otters on the river expeditions.

The tour includes great accommodations and exciting excursions. The estimated cost from Lima (not including airfare from the US) is \$2495 per person at double occupancy. Call Explorations at 800-446-9660 for a detailed trip brochure and check the FNPS website ([www.fnps.org](http://www.fnps.org)) for information there.

### Cruise Ft. Lauderdale to Panama

March 20 - March 31

Folks have been asking for a cruise to be offered so *-Voila!* - here it is. The cruise will leave from Ft. Lauderdale on March 20 and return there March 31. It will stop in Ocho Rios, Cartegena, San Blas Island, Cristobal, Puerto Limon, and the Roatan Islands along the way for shore excursions. Shore excursions are many and varied and involve personal choice, so they are not included in the cost of the cruise. An approximate cost of each excursion is \$400-500 and you can choose from helicopter trips, eco tours, scuba diving, horse back riding, city tours, and others. A detailed itinerary is located on the FNPS website. The basic cruise cost is \$1350 per person, double occupancy.

Email Jo Anne Trebatoski at [plantnative@msn.com](mailto:plantnative@msn.com) to ask about the trip or call 727-898-0555 ext. 216 to make reservations or get more information.

We hope you can join us! Keep checking the **fnps.org** website to get the most current details and to sign up.

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