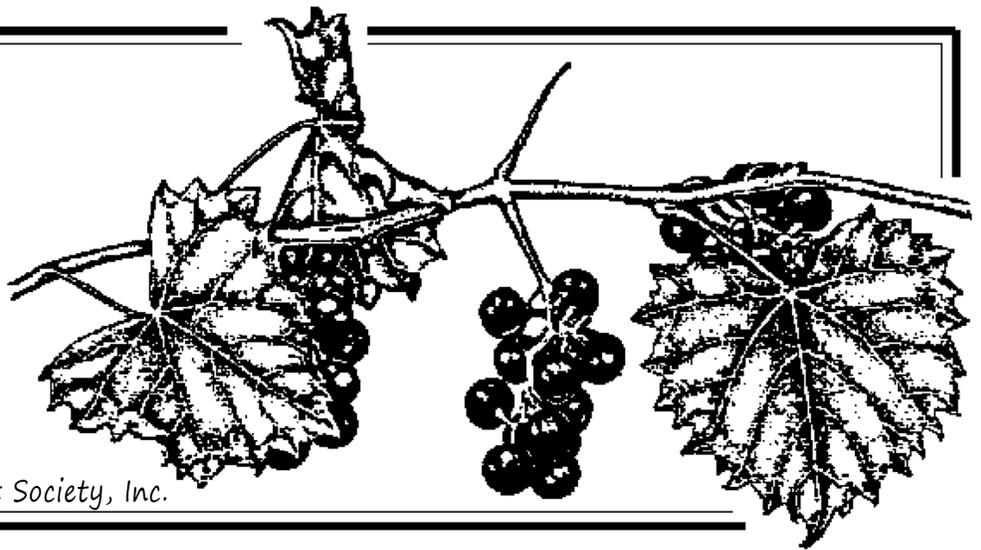


# The Suncoast Grapevine

Newsletter of the Suncoast Native Plant Society, Inc.



May 2020

Volume 37, Number 5

*This is an online meeting. We will send you a link the day before the meeting.  
We will be back with in-person meetings as soon as our venues are open and safe.*

**May 20, 7:00 pm**

Program

**Why Native Plants**

by Virginia Overstreet

Virginia will discuss the decline of natural habitats in Florida and the effects on birds, pollinators and other native wildlife. She will also discuss Florida native plants that homeowners can grow to support wildlife.

Virginia Overstreet is our Suncoast Chapter President. She loves native plants and the incredible diversity in wildlife they bring to home gardens. She has been a Florida Master Gardener Volunteer since 2001 and always encourages homeowners to avoid pesticides. She has been a Florida Certified Arborist since 2009 and encourages homeowners to prune trees properly to maintain health and proper structure, not for aesthetics alone. She has been a Florida Master Naturalist since 2018 and enjoys sharing information about Florida's unique environments. Virginia enjoys camping and hiking throughout Florida's natural areas, but her favorite way to view Florida is from her kayak.



## Field Trip! Saturday May 23, 8:30 am

To the Green Swamp area. The area we are planning to visit has flatwoods, swamps, and hammocks. It is also known for birds some of whom breed in this area. Plan on walking 1.5 miles.

We will be social distancing. We will be following CDC and State of Florida guidelines and requirements. You will be asked to sign our waiver saying that you will honor them.

In accordance with this, we will be limiting the number of field trip participants to 10. Priority will be given to members. You will need to register for this trip by calling Tina Patterson at 305-298-6381. Location and directions will be given only to registrants.

### April in My Yard

By Janet Bowers

Though I had lots of other plans for April, I found my yard was a good place to be stuck. I got inspired to do some *Bidens* cleanup and transplant things that were in wrong places. Lovegrass and seaside goldenrods pop up everywhere so it seems like a good idea to put them where they can fill in spots and flourish. I have been doing pickup orders at The Nectary nursery of native plants getting vegetable seeds and a Seminole pumpkin. I get inspired when I go there, and it resets my pessimistic outlook to a more positive state. I have enjoyed seeing



the *Hibiscus aculeatus* plants that I bought there bloom. (I was confused for a few days when the seeds pods that I thought were flower buds didn't open.)

I *Asclepias incarnata* seeds left over from the fall, and the speed with which they grew was surprising (not sure what I will do with 30 plants but hopefully I will be able to share them.) I have had monarch caterpillars as well as caterpillars of black swallowtail (on parsley) and great southern whites (on pepperweed). I planted several pots of scarlet hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccinea*) in the fall and the first one got the distinctive leaves, I added it to one of my tubs where the adult resides.



My cutleaf coneflowers (*Rudbeckia laciniata*) are blooming early this year, they are one of my favorites and I look forward to a mass of blooms soon.

As I walked around the yard this morning I noticed the yellow anise and partridge peas are blooming and the coral bean and blackeyed susan are fading. I'm on my second batch of bluebirds in the bluebird box that Devon installed. This time of staying home is definitely a time to 'stop and smell the flowers'. Every day is different, there is a lot to see and appreciate.



# Gardening for Native Bees

IFAS has published a brochure on gardening for native bees. It has lots of good information on the needs of native bees and the types of flowers that they prefer. The brochure contains a list of plants that native bees frequent that are suitable for use in gardens. You can find the brochure at

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/IN/IN125500.pdf>

Be aware that there are some non-natives on this list. Some bees are generalists – they will likely thrive on any of the species whether native or not. Others have very specific host preferences and may only thrive on specific native species. Good data is not available for most native bees, so our recommendation is to err to the side of natives – there are multiple reports in the literature that suggest that in general, native to the native habitat of the bee is likely going to be the best for the health of the bee.

The list also covers the whole state. It is in tabular form, so pay attention to the column that tells you whether or not the plant is native. Also, pay attention to the column that indicates the general regions in the state where the plants grow. Hillsborough is in the “central” region.

There is a brief video, from Ireland, about the importance of native bees to native plants. It lasts all of 3 minutes. Through the end of May, you will find this video on the home page of the FNPS website (<https://fnps.org>). Enjoy. One thing that struck me was the accent of the speaker, so I did a little investigation – the young lady appears to be a past member of FNPS. Our voice as an organization appears to be spreading.

Tentative Schedule		
May	20	Online meeting with Program (See p. 1)
	23	Field Trip: to Green Swamp (See p. 2)
June	17	Meeting with Program: TBD
	20	Field Trip: TBD
July	---	Joint Meeting Cancelled
	18	Buying Trip to a Native Nursery
August	---	No Meeting or Field Trip
September	16	Program: Troy Springer- Lessons Learned
	19	Field Trip:
October	12-13	USF Plant Sale
	21	Program: TBD
	22-24	Camping Trip: Kissimmee Prairie State Park –contact Tina for camping info
November	7	Field trip: Conner Preserve
	18	Program: Member Sharing & Elections
December	?	Party in a Park

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ENV2042

## Attracting Native Bees to Your Florida Landscape <sup>1</sup>

Rachel E. Mallinger, Wayne Hobbs, Anne Yasalonis, and Gary Knox<sup>2</sup>

**Introduction**

Florida is home to approximately 315 species of native wild bees. These bees rely on flowers for survival; their diets consist exclusively of pollen and nectar harvested from flowers. Recently reported declines in some bee species have heightened awareness of bee conservation across the United States and motivated efforts to increase floral resources for bees (Biesmeijer et al. 2006; Colla and Packer 2008; Ricketts et al. 2008; Potts et al. 2010; Burkle et al. 2013). Gardeners and land managers can aid in conservation efforts by planting flowers for bees in home or community gardens.

**Bee-Friendly Plants**

Generally, the best plants for bees will be those that have abundant and accessible pollen and nectar. Avoid pollen-free plant varieties (e.g., some sunflowers and lilies) because they will not provide pollen, which is the essential food source for bees. Additionally, choose plants with flat flowers or short to medium-length flower tubes (corollas), and limit plants with long flower tubes such as honeysuckle (Figure 1). Many native wild bees have relatively short proboscises, or tongues, and may not be able to access nectar from



Figure 1. From left to right are examples of plants with relatively flat flowers, short-medium length flower tubes, and long flower tubes from left to right: nasturtium, *Siphium* sp., blue sage *Salvia azurea*, and firespike (*Dodonaea viscidiflora*). Credits: R. Mallinger and UF/IFAS

Increasing the number of flowering plant species in your garden can increase the abundance and diversity of bees attracted to the garden (Kearns and Olivers 2009; Pardee and Philpott 2014; Blaauw and Isaacs 2014). Aim for at least ten flowering plant species selected to complement one another (Williams et al. 2015; Mader et al. 2011). Specifically, design your garden to have three or more different plants blooming at any given time during the growing season, which is year-round in southern Florida, and March through November in northern areas of the state. Because bees often prefer dense floral displays, arranging flowering



Sweat bee (*Agapostemon* sp.) on a tickseed (*Bidens alba*) by John Lampkin

Program suggestions? Contact Shirley Denton, [ecotypes@verizon.net](mailto:ecotypes@verizon.net)

Field trip suggestions? Contact Steve Dickman, [palmtobug13@yahoo.com](mailto:palmtobug13@yahoo.com)

# Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa* L.)

Profile by Shirley Denton

**Family:** Apocynaceae

**Type of Plant:** A perennial herbaceous flowering plant.

**Size:** Typically about 1-3 ft .

**Leaves and stems:** Leaves mostly opposite, fairly thick with smooth edges. Unlike most milkweeds, the stems and leaves do not have milky sap.

**Flowers:** Large clusters of 5 petalled flowers noted for horn-like growths which bear pollinia (sacs that hold the pollen grains). Orange.

**Flowering time:** Mostly May through September.

**Fruit:** A capsule with many seeds which have tufts of silky hairs that help with wind dispersal.

**Habitat/distribution:** Occurs naturally in sandhills. Also found in disturbed areas.

**Soil:** Sandy.

**Light:** Full sun.

**Water:** Thrives in dry soils. Very drought tolerant.

**Propagation:** Can be grown from root cuttings or from seed.

**Availability:** Available from several native nurseries including Green Isle Gardens in Groveland. If you collect seed, make sure you have landowner permission. Buy seed from Florida suppliers (Florida Wildflower Cooperative is a good choice) as there is regional variation in suitability.

**Wildlife uses:** Attracts pollinators including bees. Nectar plant for butterflies. Larval host plant for monarch butterfly.

**Natural Range:** Widespread in North America from Canada south to Florida and west into the southwestern US.

## KEY REFERENCES

Florida Native Plant Society. 2019. <https://www.fnps.org/plants/plant/asclepias-tuberosa>.

Wunderlin, R. P., B. F. Hansen, A. R. Franck, and F. B. Essig. 2020. Atlas of Florida Plants (<http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/>). [S. M. Landry and K. N. Campbell (application development), USF Water Institute.] Institute for Systematic Botany, University of South Florida, Tampa.

*Asclepias tuberosa*





## Out and About with *Eryngium baldwinii*

Researched by Vikki Sinclair.

Compilation and photos by Shirley Denton

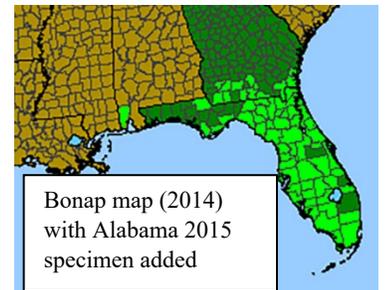
Vikki was wandering her neighborhood and admiring the things that we often walk over without seeing. She noticed a small *Eryngium*, Baldwin's eryngo, growing on low ground near a ditch and decided to look into its biology and ethnobotany. This article is compiled from her gleanings from books, blogs, and websites specializing on Florida native plants. These are paraphrased here, with the sources cited.

The name comes from a marriage of *Eryngium*, an old Greek name, then Latinized, and finally brought into English as eryngo. It apparently means "to belch" (Austin, 2004). The specific epithet, *baldwinii* honors William Baldwin (1779-1819), a Philadelphia physician and botanist who explored the Southeastern U.S. and beyond. His friends, enemies, and correspondents were a who's who of American botany of the period, their names echoing through the botanical literature as specific epithets: *Amphicarpum muhlenbergii*, *Eragrostis elliottii*, *Fraxinus darlingtonii*. (George Rogers 2011).

*Eryngium baldwinii* is close to being a Florida endemic. Most of its range is in Florida (Kartesz et al. 2015), but it has a few outlying locations in southern Georgia, and there is a 2015 record for it in Alabama (Keener et al. 2020).

*Eryngium baldwinii* has no reported ethnobotanical uses, but some members of the *Eryngium* genus were used, perfumed and preserved, and usually dipped repeatedly in sugar, as a breath sweetener (Austin 2004). One does have to wonder if it worked given that toothbrushes had not been invented and eating sugar can cause tooth decay, gum disease, and thus breath problems.

Baldwin's eryngo is a deciduous perennial or biennial with a prostrate, vine-like growth habit. It can form a sprawling groundcover, providing a hazy, light blue understory beneath other wildflowers or mixed in with grass. Like other *Eryngium* species, it lacks the umbellate inflorescence of other carrot family species. Rather, the umbel is compacted into a tight, globose flowerhead, reminiscent of an aster. In Baldwin's eryngo, the flowerhead is less than ¼-inch in diameter and comprised of many tiny, greenish-white flowers that turn a purplish-blue. It is subtended by bristly lower bracts. The fruit structure is a schizocarp that splits into separate carpels at maturity. Leaves are small and finely dissected with sharp tips (Florida Wildflower Foundation).



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# Life Goes on at Flatwoods Park

By Mary Miller

Despite all Hillsborough County Parks being closed since mid-March, life continues to thrive in Flatwoods Park, where I volunteer. Initially, I was distressed when I heard about the park closings since I monitor the Flatwoods Park Bluebird Trail and help maintain the Native Garden in front of the Ranger Station. Fortunately, I was given special permission to continue monitoring the 56 bluebird boxes on the 7-mile loop. Doing that



Newly hatched bluebird chicks



10-day old bluebird chicks

also gave me a little time to work in the native garden.

We're two months into the nesting season and the bluebirds are thriving. As of last week we had 67 eggs, 58 chicks, and 5 fledglings.

While driving the 7-mile loop each week to check on the bluebirds, I also take photos of some of the beautiful wildflowers I see.



Native garden in spring 2019

The native garden is in need of a lot of work, but once the park reopens, a group of volunteers will quickly get it in shape. I've included a picture of the garden as it looked last year, along with the newly installed sign made by the Parks Department.

I must admit that the wildlife and I have sure enjoyed the quiet and solitude of an empty park while it lasted.



In the quiet of social distancing, a great egret allows us to enjoy its presence



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<https://fnps.org/participate/membershipinfo>

## Mostly Thistles

By Janet Bowers

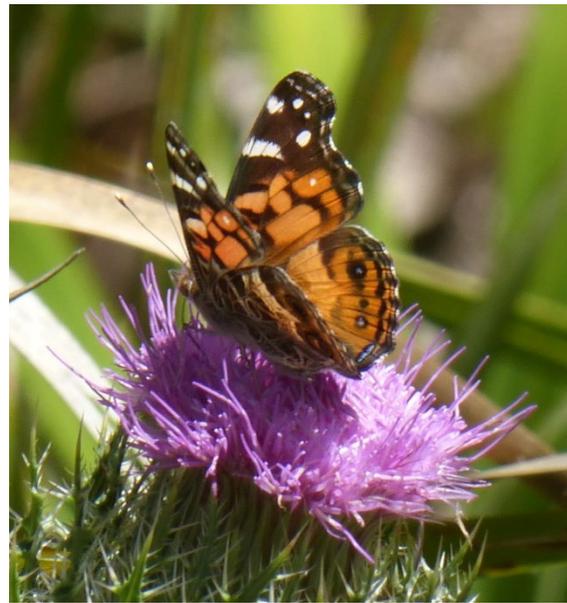
After about 4 weeks of lock down without any trips except to the grocery store, I ventured out to the closest plant place that I know of that is still allowing visitors. The McNeil entrance to the Green Swamp West Tract is a favorite place of mine and despite the dryness this year, the thistles do not disappoint! Mostly *Cirsium horridulum* is blooming along the dirt road near the parking lot but there are also a few *Cirsium nuttallii* plants shooting toward the light. Personally, I love the color, shape, and size of thistles but the frosting on the cake is the bugs that they attract. I could stand by a good clump for hours and not get bored since there is a constant array of activity. I often get help from John Lampkin on IDing the bugs, the most recent trip I saw blue mason bees and bee flies stuck in a milkweed!



Blue mason bees (*Osmia chalybea*) on thistle



*Cirsium nuttallii*



American lady butterfly on *Cirsium horridulum*



Bee flies stuck on *Asclepias feayi*



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

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## Newsletter Submissions

Deadline for May Newsletter: May 25

Send contributions to Shirley Denton at [ecotypes@outlook.com](mailto:ecotypes@outlook.com).

Contributions should be original, with references where appropriate. Photographs and drawings should belong to the submitter or submitted along with written permission from the owner, and be of appropriate resolution for printing (a width of 1000 pixels is generally adequate for this newsletter, but err toward larger so that they pictures can be cropped if needed). All submissions should be in formats standardly used in documents and readable on Windows PCs.

Submissions will be reviewed for accuracy with preference for being relevant to the FNPS mission and local environmental events.



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