



Sarracenia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society The SARRACENIA TRUMPET

SPRING 2017

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please join us at our upcoming meetings and events

April 8 - SOPCHOPPY WORM GRUNTIN' FESTIVAL
from 9am to 4pm www.wormgruntinfestival.com

April 15 - WAKULLA SPRINGS WILDLIFE FESTIVAL
from 10am to 3pm www.wakullawildlifefestival.com

April 18 - Chapter meeting
Our Local Milkweeds

Jeannie Brodhead
Our Sarracenia Chapter Representative will be presenting an overview of our numerous local milkweeds, the unusual way they are pollinated and their pollinators.

May 16 - Chapter meeting
Wild Edible Plants

Scott Allen Davis
Many of our native plants are valuable food sources. Scott will explore the various natives that are edible and nutritious.

May 20 - SHARKS & CHABLIS ANNUAL FUNDRAISER FOR GULF SPECIMEN AQUARIUM from 4pm to 7pm
www.gulfspecimen.org/sharks-and-chablis

Summer Break - no meetings - June, July, August
Have a safe and happy summer break and then join us the third Tuesday in September for our first meeting of the Fall.

Field Trips will be announced by email and on our Facebook page.

* * *

The Sarracenia Chapter meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month September - November and January - May. Meetings are held at 6:30 PM at the Wakulla Public Library, Crawfordville, Fla. The public is invited.

* * *

FNPS promotes the preservation, restoration, and conservation of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.



YELLOW POISON

Eleanor Dietrich

The yellow jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) is one of spring's earliest, showiest, and loveliest wild flowers. When you are driving down the highway or back roads, it is easy to spot as it searches for sun and support along fence rows and small trees. When you walk along a woodland path, you may see its inch-long trumpet-shaped blossoms sprinkled on the ground. Look up and see if you can find the flowers among the tree tops; it needs sun to bloom.



Yellow jessamine is native to the Southern states and may be found from Virginia south to Florida and west to eastern Texas and Arkansas. Because it is common and showy, that may account for it having a variety of common names, such as Poor Man's Rope, Evening Trumpet Flower, Woodbine, Cow Itch, and Carolina Jasmine. It is the state flower of South Carolina. Yellow jessamine is a member of the Logonia family (*Loganiaceae*) which has 29 genera and 600 species of herbs, shrubs, climbers, and trees, most of which may be found in warmer climes. The butterfly bush (*Buddleia*), which many of us plant in our gardens, is also in this family.

In addition to their common names, wild flowers have standard and unique scientific names that are used by botanists the world over to communicate about specific

types of plants. A particular plant will have two parts to its scientific name, the genus and the species. There are usually a number of different plants in a particular genus, but only one kind of plant will have the same genus and species name. In the case of the yellow jessamine, we have two different species in our area. The more common species is *Gelsemium sempervirens*. The genus name *Gelsemium* is derived from Gelsemino, the Italian name for Jasmine. The species name, *sempervirens*, means ever-living and denotes the evergreen leaves of the plant. This species is widespread, grows in drier habitats, and has a delicate fragrance. The second species, *Gelsemium rankinii*, grows in a smaller geographic range, from Leon County to southern Alabama. It is also distinguished by its preference for wet areas and the lack of aroma in its flowers. (If you must know, there are other distinguishing characteristics, such as apically rounded or acuminate sepals and winged or unwinged seeds, but the ones listed above work for me.)

Yellow jessamine is a woody vine with evergreen lance-shaped leaves about one and a half inches long. The vine is slender and winds modestly around its host to mat at the top, or grows in tangles along the open ground. It can bloom as early as January in warmer winters, but is always one of the first bloomers of the spring. Its beauty and hardiness make it a favorite for gardens. You may often see it twining around and over a mailbox. There has even been a double-flowered form cultivated, called "Pride of Augusta," but the native form is very attractive. The evergreen leaves make a nice ground cover or trellis growth. It is easy to grow, and is not invasive. Like most native plants, it is better to buy from a nursery than to dig from the woods. Plants growing in a particular habitat generally do not transplant well since they will need all of their soil, water, and light conditions replicated in order to grow well. You will not have any difficulty finding this plant at a local nursery.

If you decide to pay special attention to this plant, perhaps even plant it in your yard, beware! The Logania family contains many poisonous plants including the one from which strychnine is obtained. All parts of the yellow jessamine contain toxic alkaloids that can cause paralysis and death. No part of this plant should be taken internally. It can also cause contact dermatitis, hence the Cow Itch name. It will also poison honey bees. Despite its deadly

properties, it was once used as a medicine. One physician made a *gelsemium* remedy that he called "Electrical febrifuge." However, it is no longer recommended for medicinal purposes since even a small dose can be fatal. So let your knowledge be your guide, and enjoy this flower, but handle with care!

YUCCA GIANT-SKIPPER

Kitty Loftin



Our member Kitty Loftin caught a yucca giant-skipper, *Megathymus yuccae* (Boisduval & Leconte), as it first emerged from a long pupation in the stem or root of

this yucca. These photos are small and so can also be seen on our Facebook page, 'Sarracenia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society'. Thanks Kitty for your good eye and your research. Linda Smith

The yucca giant-skipper is a medium sized and robust-body butterfly. In Florida, it can be found throughout the northern two thirds of the state. It may be encountered in a variety of habitats that support *Yucca filamentosa* and/or *Yucca gloriosa* including coastal areas, dune scrubs, sandhills, pine flatwoods, old fields, and utility corridors. Adults have a fast, powerful flight and can literally be heard whizzing past.

Y. filamentosa and *Y. gloriosa* are host plants for the Yucca giant-skipper butterfly. Males perch near the host plants between 12 noon and 2 p.m. to await females. Adults do not visit flowers, but males take moisture from mud. They are not often seen and are short-lived.

The females lay amber-brown eggs singly on leaves of the yucca plant. Other species may also be used. The eggs soon hatch. The caterpillar is tea-colored with a reddish-brown head during the first few months and becomes whiter with time. The larvae start by eating the leaves and then bore into the stem and eat the contents of the stem and root. As it consumes the tuber, it creates a deeper tunnel (often a foot or more) in which it resides. Droppings are expelled through the center of the plant where they begin to accumulate. Later the larva prepares a protective chimney of silk several inches long, which protrudes from the plant and is often called a "tent". Inside, the chrysalis can move up or down. They periodically venture to the surface via "tents or chimneys". Here the caterpillars remain until fully grown. They now pupate to the top

of their tunnel and in early spring the newly emerged adult climbs out of its tent and allows its wings to dry/harden for several hours before taking flight.



Yucca tomentosa with "tent/chimney" Kitty Loftin



Drying and hardening wings Kitty Loftin



First flight and landing Kitty Loftin

THE ASH TREE

George Weaver

Perhaps best known as the proper wood for premium baseball bats and quality hunting bows, the various species of the ash tree (*Fraxinus spp.*) are a significant component of wooded areas in the temperate areas of North America, Europe and Asia. The ash trees are a member of the Olive family and are thus related to the local fringe tree (*Chionanthus*) and wild olive (*Osmanthus*). Both the common name and Latin generic name are derived from words meaning "spear", reflecting a long history of the use of ash saplings for spear shafts and other tool handles.

Three species of the ash tree are commonly found in our area, two being wetland plants, the third being found only in upland settings. Along river banks the Carolina Ash (Pop Ash), *Fraxinus caroliniana* is found. This tree is typically small and crooked with multiple trunks. Just off the river bank but still in swampy areas are found the much larger (and single-trunked) Green Ash (*F. pennsylvanica*). In contrast to the Carolina Ash, these trees can reach 90 to 100 ft. in height. The upland species, the White Ash, (*F. americana*) is comparable in size to the Carolina Ash but is only found in rich, well-drained soils.

All ash trees have quite similar opposite, pinnately compound leaves. The leaf shape is similar to that of the Hickory tree (*Carya spp.*) but they are easily distinguished since the Hickories have alternate, not opposite, leaves. As the name implies, the under surfaces of the leaves of the White Ash are whitish in color.

If you are fortunate enough to get a close-up view of the flowers (on previous season's growth, opening just prior to leaf emergence) you will see lush purple/green clusters. The flowers [see photo] are very short-lived as the new leaves quickly displace them.



Fraxinus flowers

George Weaver

The ash tree fruit is a flat samara (somewhat like that of a maple tree), 1 - 2 in. long with a terminal wing down the sides of the body-- sometimes called helicopter seeds. The particular shape of the samara is the only way to precisely distinguish members of the wetland ash species. As with several other local species--e.g., Elm (*Ulmus*) and Red Bay (*Persa*)-- there is concern about an "introduced" threat to the survival of the ash trees. The *Agrilus planipennis*, commonly known as the emerald ash borer (EAB) arrived from Asia several decades back and established a core population in Michigan. As of last year, affected areas range from north Louisiana, west to Colorado and east to Massachusetts. The EAB has not been found in Florida and there is hope that our "distributed" population (particularly in wetland areas) will provide some protection. However, the Florida Department of Agriculture asks that any die-back of ash trees be immediately reported. Quick removal of infected trees can slow spread of the borer (it has a very short range). Also, transport of firewood is now restricted in the Midwest as a preventive measure.

As always, be cautious about "common" names. While the Mountain Ashes (Rowans) have leaves and buds superficially similar to those of true ashes, they belong to the unrelated genus *Sorbus* in the rose family.



A BIG THANK YOU

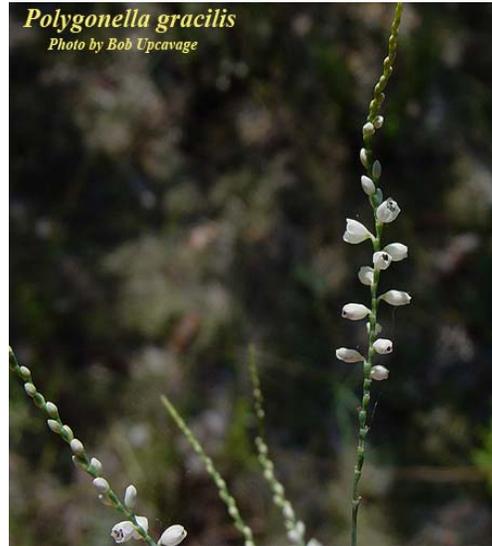


Sarracenia Chapter members coordinated with the Iris Garden Club to prepare and assemble the trees for the Annual Arbor Day tree give-away. Thanks to all of our volunteers for this event, and for their work in potting and prepping trees for next year.

POLYGONELLA MEANS MANY JOINTS

Jeannie Brodhead

Plants in the Polygonella genus are called wireweeds or jointweeds. Of the nine species in Florida, Wakulla and Franklin Counties are home to four of them. They make a nice addition to a dry wildflower garden. They flower during September and October but are not noticeable for most of the year. Let their seedheads dry on the plants before collecting them.



Tall jointweed, *Polygonella gracilis* can be found statewide in dry, sunny habitats. I have found it in the Panacea unit of the Saint Marks National Wildlife Refuge, SMNWR. It is a wispy annual

herb with slender, jointed stems up to 5-6 feet tall. Its wand-like branches bear tiny white flowers on long racemes at the branch tips. It is a host plant for the gray hairstreak butterfly.



October flower, *P. polygama* is found in sandy uplands from Texas to Virginia. It is rather common but not very noticeable until it blooms. It is a woody perennial and spends its winter as a small cluster of half-moon shaped leaves. In the

spring, it begins to grow its multi-branched stems and may reach a height of 2 feet. Long clusters of bright white flowers appear at the ends of the stems in October. It is a nice addition to the center of a wildflower bed with other sandhill wildflowers and native grasses. It is an easy plant to grow but does not like to be crowded.



Sandhill wireweed or longflower jointweed, *P.robusta* is found only in Florida. *P.robusta* is a short-lived perennial that will grow 2-3 feet high. The white-pink flowers will appear for 2-3 weeks in October. Sandhill

wireweed is mostly deciduous but will maintain a rosette of basal foliage during the winter. In the spring it sends out multi-branched stems in all directions. In October it will produce an abundance of flowers that are surrounded by papery bracts in a variety of colors from light pink to deep rose. The flowers will be visited by pollinators and later birds will eat the seeds. As with all polygonellas, they need sun, well-drained sand and plenty of room to grow. They will be another nice addition to your dry wildflower garden.

Our last Polygonella species is *P.macrophylla*, Large-leaf jointweed. This plant is a perennial herb or subshrub with erect stems coming from a woody base and a taproot. It is found in Franklin County and the other counties to our west and on into Alabama. It is listed as threatened in Florida. There is a white or pinkish form and a red-flowered form. Ann

Johnson (Dr. Ann) found about 20 patches of the red form in Franklin County in 1989 according to the FSU Herbarium link on the plant atlas <http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/>. She stated, "Both the male and female plants have scarlet flowers and the leaves are moderately fleshy."



The red flowered forms are a disjunct population found only in Franklin County according to what I was able to find. We have heard that they can be observed along the dune hiking path at the edge of Tate's Hell State Forest. We'll have to go on a hike there next October and take our cameras along.

I'd like to thank Craig Huegel and his blog <http://hawthornhillwildflowers.blogspot.com> for much of the information that I found for this article.



Members examining plants at a recent hike along Surf Road. Our hikes are popular and educational!

ANNUAL ELECTION OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

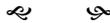
Linda Smith, President

The Sarracenia Chapter will hold the annual election for officers on April 18, 2017 at the Chapter meeting. Nomination information will be emailed to members. Your nominations are due to Sarracenia by April 8. Ballots will then be sent by email to all members. A formal vote will be held on April 18 at the Chapter meeting. Snail mail, email, hand delivered ballots and ballots collected at the meeting will be counted. All nominees must agree to be nominated. You may step up and volunteer to nominate yourself.

Officers will begin their term in October, 2017. This provides the opportunity for new board members to attend a few board and chapter meetings prior to assuming the new post.

All of our positions are open for nominations. The positions are: President, Vice-president, Treasurer, Secretary and Chapter Representative to FNPS. Detailed written descriptions of these posts are available upon request. They are traditional in terms of their roles for leadership as board members as well as responsibilities for accomplishing specific tasks. Each board member has a vote on any motion, each has an equal responsibility in the decision making process.

Please consider this opportunity to serve. We have been fortunate to have the most wonderful board any organization could hope for. We would like to maintain this long-standing tradition.



Squirrel Treefrog on Sarracenia flava blossom *by Sandy Tedder*



Sarracenia Board and Regular Volunteers

- George Weaver
- Jeannie Brodhead
- Doug Gilbert
- Kitty Loftin
- Linda Smith
- Bonnie Basham

Please Join Us at Any Board Meeting

Second Monday of September
October, November, January,
February, March, April
Email us for location:
Sarracenia.nps@gmail.com

Other Volunteer Help

Come to Chapter Meetings
at 5:45 to help set up tables
and chairs

Membership information is available at all Chapter meetings (ask Jeannie for info) or online at FNPS.org.

Find us on Facebook at Sarracenia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society