



Sarracenia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society The SARRACENIA TRUMPET

FALL 2016

UPCOMING EVENTS

Welcome back to another season of Chapter meetings, field trips and festivals. Please join us to welcome these outstanding educators, naturalists and researchers.

Sept 20

The Importance Of Fire Regime In Native and Old-field Southern U.S. Pine-grassland Plant Communities

Kevin Robertson, PhD
Fire Ecology Program Director
Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy

October 18

Wildflowers of Tate's Hell

Lesley Cox
Florida Green Guide
Florida Master Naturalist

October 22

Monarch Butterfly Festival (see page 4)

November 15

The benefits of green infrastructure and living shorelines

Rosalyn F. Kilcollins
Coastal Community Consultant for Resilience
Florida Master Naturalist Program Instructor
Retired: Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve

September and October Field Trips will be announced by email and on our Facebook page. Please let us know about any swell swamp, flood plain or coastal trails we should investigate.



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 POTION

David Roddenberry

There is a tonic for wildflower gardeners whose spirits have been pummeled by germination failures, plant-to-site mismatches, weak flowering and other disappointments. It's not in a bottle, but can be in your yard or your meadow garden sooner than you think. This North Florida native and restorer of confidence is the softhair coneflower, *Rudbeckia mollis*. (The species, an annual-to-perennial one, is not indigenous to Wakulla, Franklin, and several other east-central Panhandle counties between Taylor and Calhoun.)

The softhair coneflower is much taller than the best-known *Rudbeckia*, the blackeyed Susan, and it's as floriferous as the latter (flowering mainly in summer), with flowers equally large. And it obliges. When you need that tonic, surface-sow the seeds of *R. mollis*, or set a seedling in an adequately drained, sunny place, and jump out of the way.



Rudbeckia mollis

photo by David Roddenberry

Plant species naturally adapted to the sandhills, like this one, can be a challenge in residential sites that are on the moist side. But that spurs us to see little ersatz sandhills in the otherwise moist yard. Two examples are drain field mounds and the duff slopes of large pines. The softhair coneflower likes both of those.

An *R. mollis* seeding transplanted from a drainfield mound to a duff slope in late winter this year in Wakulla County shot up in spring and reached full flowering in the first half of May, the stalk three feet tall and the big flowers numbering three dozen at a time across a crown two feet wide. Full flowering continued a phenomenal nine weeks or more, deep into July. That no watering was ever needed in this case may have been somewhat lucky; the leafiness, and largish leaves, of *R. mollis* indicate a lot of transpiration of water (though countered by the dense pubescence of the leaves, the softness of which inspires the species epithet *mollis*.)

The species tends to out-do its putative self found in blogs and guides. The stature, flower count, and flowering period are most impressive. There may also be a too-robust self-seeding; that seeding of the drainfield mound by a gardener indicated a high germination rate, and suggested that a weediness caveat may be apt here.

The size of this plant dictates its utility for wild-flower gardening. If your motivation to garden with wildflowers runs the full way to creating naturalistic, diverse plots with them, the sofhair coneflower's profile fits it to a rear location. But outside of naturalistic plots, a base-of-pine situation is attractive. Or two or three specimens closely ringing the utility pole, if you have one within the property, can effectively soften a utilitarian presence for a season. But maybe the sofhair coneflower's highest and best use is to restore your confidence.

RIVER CANE (*Arundinaria gigantea*) - NORTH AMERICA'S ONLY NATIVE BAMBOO

Sammy Tedder

Arundinaria gigantea, locally known as river cane, is North America's only native bamboo. This unique plant is a member of the grass family with a woody, hollow sectioned stem growing from subterranean



Arundinaria gigantea, or River Cane, near the Wakulla River
photo by *Sammy Tedder*

roots and rhizomes.

According to *Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of Northern Florida and Adjacent Georgia and Alabama* by Robert K. Godfrey *Arundinaria gigantea* in its larger form (33 feet tall by 1 3/8 inch diameter) only exists in fertile alluvial habitats where flooding is of short duration while the smaller more common size cane grows abundantly along our wet sandy ditches and creeks, especially in Wakulla County. The smaller form is considered to be a subspecies *A. tecta*, commonly called switch cane.

Before the Europeans arrived in North America extensive canebrakes of *Arundinaria gigantea* stretched along most of the rivers from North Florida to New York State. As of now, cattle grazing, fire suppression and the clearing of the fertile river bottom land for farming has reduced these once vast canebrakes to only small isolated pockets of existence.

For centuries Native Americans used river cane for many essential every day purposes such as baskets, mats, cradles, internal wall panels, structural support for mud and daub outer wall construction for dwellings, blow guns, duck calls and flutes. Matting and basketry technologies that used river cane have been found in archaeological sites dating back to at least 2300 B.C.¹



River Cane Basket - made by Claude Medford, Choctaw Master Basketmaker
photo by *Guy Darry Wood*

(River Cane con't)

¹ USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service – Giant Cane Plant Guide (https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/cs_argi.pdf)

River cane basket weaving, especially the extremely difficult double weave style is an art form that almost disappeared but recently has been revived by Lucile and Ramona Lossiah, two of the last living people capable of passing along this tradition².



River Cane Mat - made by a student of Lucile Lossiah, Cherokee Basketmaker *photo by Guy Darry Wood*

Blow gun making has also almost disappeared but it seems that making flutes from river cane has experienced a revival due to the increased popularity



River Cane flute made by Sammy Tedder

of Native American flute music over the last 3 decades brought about by Native American artists such as Carlos Nakai who plays cedar flutes and especially Cherokee river cane flutist Tommy Wildcat.

In North Florida stalks large enough for flute making (3/4 to 1 3/8 inch diameter) occur only along the Apalachicola River and in a few isolated places near the Wakulla River.

Efforts are underway by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and the Eastern Band of Cherokee to reestablished canebrakes on tribal lands where they once existed in order to continue their artistic traditions.

² *Cherokee Rivercane Basketry: Most Ancient of Living Traditions* by Guy "Darry" Wood

A LITTLE ABOUT PLANT COMMUNITIES

This fall our speakers will weave defining factors about plant communities into their programs on forests and shorelines. When we find a shrub or wildflower, we look around to see where it is growing. This is a pretty basic concept, but it takes time to recognize the characteristics of various plant communities. Because this can lead to confusing appraisals for growing conditions we look further for some clarification.

The *Atlas of Florida Plants* (florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/) lists citations with descriptions of habitat for specimens. Descriptions of the growing conditions for **pink azalea** (*Rhododendron canescens*) includes loblolly bay swamp muck, flatwoods of longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) and wire grass (*Aristida stricta*), and the scrubby roadside near ridge of sandy stream. This shows some adaptive qualities for germination and growing sites. Lizard's tail (*Saururus cernuus* L.) is found in wet ditches and standing water. In this case, the surrounding plant community can provide good clues on growing conditions.



Mesic hardwood forest. horse sugar, southern magnolia (shown) southern beech, Shumard's oak, varied *Quercus* spp., ironwood, red bay, winged elm, *Ilex opaca*, *Ilex decidua*, *Ilex ambigua*, green dragon, Walter's violet, partridgeberry *photo by Linda Smith*

The definition of the term 'plant community' has long been under debate. It is accepted to be an association of plant species within a designated geographical unit which forms a relatively uniform patch distinguishable from neighboring patches of different vegetation types. They are a part of the surrounding ecosystem. Native plant communities have not been greatly altered by modern human activity.

Native plant communities are described by climate, water dynamics, soil content, tilth and sub-strata as well as the occurrence of fire, drought and flood. They are often named for the characteristic plant species or a geographic feature.

Ecotones are in between specified plant communities. These are marginal habitat that contain features from adjacent communities.

Community composition can change along environmental gradients. They are dynamic.

And so we return to the appraisals of the growing conditions that are described in part by the plant community. The Florida Native Plant Society provides descriptions of various plant communities. Go to the FNPS web site: [FNPS.org/natives/native-plant-communities](https://www.fnps.org/natives/native-plant-communities) or use the drop down tab on the [FNPS.org](https://www.fnps.org) home page.

Many Native Plant Society members go on field trips and improve ability to recognize plant communities the factors by which they are determined and the plants associated with them. Keep in mind that original plant communities may appear only in fragments and the determining factors vary within the community.

Linda Smith

MONARCH BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL

The St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge hosts the Monarch Butterfly Festival each year on the 4th Saturday in October. This year the date is **October 22**, 10am to 4pm, so mark your calendars. Come to the Refuge and watch the migrating monarchs as they pass through Wakulla County on their wondrous journey to Mexico and points south. Along the shoreline large stands of **saltbush** (*Baccharis halimifolia*) provide nectar at the right time for this annual migration. The Festival has educational demonstrations. There will be tours, tagging of butterflies, presentations, food and music. Our Sarracenia Chapter will have a booth at the Festival as in past years. Please call the Refuge for more information: 850-925-6121.



WILDFLOWER TRAIL

Eleanor Dietrich of the Florida Wildflower Foundation sent us this wonderful notice:

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is working with the Florida Wildflower Foundation to develop a model for a wildflower trail in the Apalachicola River Wildlife and Environmental Area off SR 65 in Franklin County. The Florida Wildflower Foundation is documenting the wildflowers on this trail monthly during the summer/fall blooming season.

Enter the area on Sand Beach Road. Turn left on Tank Island Rd. This is the wildflower trail.

For current photos please visit

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/wildflowersflorida/sets/72157670867254850>.

Thank you Eleanor for all you do!



SHOUTING OUT TO ZAXBY'S

A very big thank you to Zaxby's Restaurant for planting and maintaining the natives in their landscaping. Please check out the native plants growing along the front and side of Zaxby's next time you drive past.

Summer Wildflowers

Photos by Kitty Loftin

Life on the roadsides and trails rejuvenates after the Summer Solstice. Wildflowers emerge between the grasses, rushes, sedges, bare spots and seedling trees. Bees, butterflies, skippers, dragon flies, spiders, and beetles fill our native landscapes with activity.

Tall ironweed

(*Vernonia angustifolia*)

Had a good summer.



Carolina Redroot

(*Lachnanthes caroliana*)

Bloomed in sunny
moist places



Lined roadside ditches

Sky flower (*Hydrolea corymbosa*)

Sarracenia Board and Regular Volunteers

George Weaver
Jeannie Brodhead
Katherine Gilbert
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

Please (pretty please?) write an article about natives for the Trumpet.

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

Visit and post on Facebook at Sarracenia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society