



the Tarflower

The Tarflower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

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JULY 3 PROGRAM: "People and Gopher Tortoises Can Forage Together" presented by Pat Ashton

What species of plants do both people and tortoises enjoy? You will be surprised at the diversity of plants that gopher tortoises relish and that can also be eaten (if not enjoyed) by humans. Tortoise forage plants (flowers, fruits, seeds, and vegetation) range from the highly desirable and nutritious to the edible but not necessarily palatable for humans. Many of these plants are commonly found in yards, gardens and along roadsides. Some of the tortoise's



favorites are relegated to the designation of WEEDS by humans. Tortoises also share our love of garden flowers and landscape plants – much to some people's dismay — but others choose to plant both for themselves and their tortoises. In her talk, Pat Ashton will highlight the many species both humans and tortoises can share.

Pat Ashton has studied forage plants for lizards and tortoises throughout Florida and other parts of the world.

She has taught wilderness survival and has studied ethnobotany, including medicinal, edible and useful plants from around the world in habitats from the Carolinas to the Everglades, and from the Keys to the Caribbean Islands. Pat continues with writing projects in wildlife management and curriculum development.

Co-author (with Ray Ashton) of the 3-volume *Handbook to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Florida* and two recent books on gopher tortoises as well as many other scientific works, Pat recently finished a gopher tortoise educational curriculum for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. She currently teaches all the sciences, psychology, forensic science, art, wilderness survival, and creative writing at a private K-12 school in Gainesville.

Pat and Ray (deceased) traveled all over the world doing ecotourism, wildlife management and monitoring consulting, biological survey and international development of parks and eco-resorts. They closed their Wildlife and Management consulting firm, Ashton and Ashton, Inc. in 2007 with the decline in the economy but their non-profit, Ashton Biodiversity Research and Preservation Institute, Inc., still runs Ashton Biological Preserve and hosts interns and a scaled back endangered tortoise breeding program at the 100 acre upland preserve on the northwestern edge of the Brooksville Ridge.

Pat is a Florida native, born and raised in North Miami. She spent many years exploring the Everglades, Keys and south Florida wild areas before attending the University of Miami and the University of Florida for graduate studies. Pat specialized in zoology, ecology, botany, and curriculum and instruction. Her first jobs in graduate school included doing a complete biological survey of Devil's Millhopper and with a team surveying Payne's Prairie, and San Felasco. The graduate study site at Payne's Prairie became the inspiration for the Florida Museum of Natural History "Hammock Exhibit" in the early 1970s. She is a past President of the Alachua Audubon Society and a founding member of the Payne's Prairie Chapter of the Native Plant Society.

JULY 14 FIELD TRIP: A Cool Field Trip for July

article and photos by Pete Dunkelberg

This July 14th, let's go to Wekiwa Springs and stay in the vicinity of the spring itself for a change. We'll find plenty of native plants in the surrounding high ground and along the boardwalk through the floodplain. And by noting the spring in relation to its surroundings, we may also get an idea of how Bill Belleville and Steve Phelan were able to discover a couple of small unknown springs during the recent Wekiwa Basin bioblitz.



After our investigations, we'll have a picnic on the grass. As usual bring your sandwich, water and curiosity.

Let's meet at 9am under the basswood tree in front of the concession stand. Admission to the park is \$4 for a car with one person or \$6 for a car with several people — not to mention that carpooling is a virtue. By the way, on a sunny Saturday morning in July, the park may quickly fill to capacity, so it is wise to get through the gate before 9.

Notice: Wekiwa is a great place for swimming, but our Tarflower field trip only includes our plant walk and picnic. This is because our insurance only works on land. So if, like me, you can't resist the cool clear water, you're on your own with those invasive armored catfish.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

AUG 7 – Ann Cox, FNPS Chair of Conservation, Public Land Management Partners

SEP 4 – Todd Mecklenborg, FWC Biologist: Status of Florida's Conservation of Plants and Plant Communities

OCT 2 – Rick Baird: Functioning Water Systems (tentative)

NOV 6 – Ralph Risch: Scrub Jays

What a blast our conference in Plant City was! Thanks again to our Hernando and Suncoast Chapters for a job very well done and a great event. Lifetime memories are made at these fun, inspiring and educational conferences. See the online FNPS blog (FNPSblog.org) and Facebook site for photos and more info. We already look forward to seeing everyone in Jacksonville next year.

Baldwin Park: a work in progress by Pete Dunkelberg

For our June field trip, we joined the Cuplet Fern Chapter at Baldwin Park. There was a strong turnout from Cuplet Fern, about eight of us from Tarflower, a few Baldwin Park residents and Miquel for a total of 31 — a field trip record in my experience. It was good to see friends not seen in too long. We should get together with other chapters more often.

We were there to learn more about how the extensive use of native plants in Baldwin Park was working. Baldwin Park occupies the area of the former naval base; the area went directly from military to demolition to rebuilding, with 80% native plant landscaping (although this does not appear to apply

to personal yards). Some large fields are still shrouded with vision-blocking fences. Some of the landscaped area is lakefront. These lakefront areas are maintained by the City of Orlando, have an excellent assemblage of plants and are left to their own more than most city lake fronts. Then there is a large total area

of streets, public buildings and ponds with park space around them. All of this is maintained by ValleyCrest and in particular by Miquel Garces and his crew. Miguel was our guide on this field trip.

Miquel recently addressed both chapters and gave us a very good view of the principles and some of the work involved in creating and maintaining a very large scale native planting while keeping the Baldwin Park human community (many of whom are not accustomed to native plants) happy.

After some introductory remarks, we started out along the shore of Lake Baldwin. Along the lake, we saw *Gaillardia* blooming and a good bit of ragweed. Further around the lake where we did not go, there is a lot of *Coreopsis*, buttonbush, sunshine mimosa, frogfruit and more, including native trees, and very few invasives.

Soon we crossed the street to mid-lake pond, a long wide pond between two lakes. This is part of Miguel's territory. We walked along a pleasant coquina shell pathway. Here the grass is mowed and the hedges are trimmed. On our right (the pond was on our left) were extensive plantings of Walter's viburnum; firebush; anise; dwarf wax myrtle; saw palmetto; Simpson's stopper; Fakahatchee, muhly and spartina grasses; and other natives. All along the way, Miquel answered questions and volunteered information on which plants were doing well and which were not. As anyone taking care of just one yard knows, the work is never done. We spotted two small camphor trees coming up through the hedges. At the end of the pond, the connection to another lake is bridged. We stopped there awhile to enjoy the view and the birds and then continued back on to Lake Baldwin on the other side of the long pond. Walking back along the lake to our starting point we saw some Brazilian pepper poking out from some young cabbage palms, still small enough to be easily dealt with. At the end, we thanked Miguel as he hurried off to take care of problems at a couple of buildings in the area. His work is never done.



Miquel Garces answers a question



Simpson's stopper with berries

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

A "death-trap" issue was spotted by a Gopher Tortoise Council member on the new Innovation Way–Alafaya Trail extension in east Orange County where state-threatened gopher tortoises trying to cross were (and are) being trapped by over-high curbs and subsequently are killed or die from overheating. This "entrapment" problem is also a humaneness issue as tortoises, like all reptiles, must escape the heat (i.e. thermoregulate) and are prevented from doing so due to the high curbs.

Orange County EPD wants to address this problem after assessment and arrive at a permanent solution. Volunteers are needed to help monitor the tortoises and help them out of harm's way until protective measures — whether short- or long-term or both — can be put in place.

The goal is to identify high tortoise traffic areas where road mortality (due to curb impediments) is prevalent and to implement a solution to prevent mortality.

The needs include:

- Volunteers to patrol Innovation Way (approximately 3 miles each way) in East Orlando. Times will be mid-late morning, afternoon, and early evening.
- Identify any live tortoises and locations.
- Identify any tortoise carcasses in or on the side of the road, their location, and their condition (e.g. blunt trauma, heat from not being able to get off of road, etc.).
- Identify problem and high risk areas of high tortoise activity (e.g. physical observation of tortoises, trails through grass, scat, etc).

Because gopher tortoises are slow to reach reproductive maturity, and young and eggs have a low survival rate, every tortoise counts. Anyone able and available to help monitor the tortoises, please contact Carissa Kent at carissaanddavid@me.com or 407-529-5006 (cell). For more details on how and why this situation has unfolded, see below.

Thank you to any volunteers able to stand by to help our Orange County tortoises!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FNPS has a new website! Website Chair Shirley Denton has launched a new face and some new tricks, and there may be some adjustments this month and next.

FNPS will be transitioning membership and donation credit card payments from Paypal to a new merchant account this month. This should have no effect on you but sometimes we don't predict well, so this is a heads up just in case. Please let us know if you or one of your members runs into a problem paying online with a credit card (we take Visa and Mastercard).

Also, we will begin a transition to an entirely new system for managing our membership and donation records: DonorPerfect. This transition will take a few months and we will be using the new DonorPerfect software in parallel with our old system until we're confident we can "switch" over. Our reports to you will change in content and format, and we ask for your feedback and patience during this time. Eventually, once we've had it running a while and our new Executive Director, Kellie Westervelt, has had a chance to use it for a while, the system should help us do a better job of leveraging the considerable energy, passion and talent of our membership.

Old Tarpapers are needed! We are looking for PDF files of the Dec 08 and Jan–Sep 09 issues of the Tarpaper. If you have any of these files, please contact Stacey at stacey@impactpress.com.

My Yard *by Chuck Roux*

I wrote this initially for my own benefit, but have decided to present my yard, as I see it, to anyone interested. Maybe this information can persuade any future owner to maintain or expand the yard value to nature and maybe I can expand the concept into more yards as many environmentalists are suggesting. It is a work in progress and is not in conformity with typical public perceptions. It does require much personal attention and expertise beyond what a yard maintenance company can provide. The area is about half an acre on Lake Margaret. One of my friendly neighbors described the place as "Old Florida," and I agree.

What's Blooming

My *Sacoilas*, terrestrial orchids, bloom in early May and go dormant (no leaves) in mid-winter. They are volunteers that appeared in the lawn at least 30 years ago as green leaves and I let them grow to find out what they were. There were once as many as 100 bloom stems but they have declined to about 50. The blossom stems appear (and die) before leaves and resemble asparagus plants until they reach about 18 inches high and bloom. Leaves are 3 x 8 inches in a rosette pattern at ground level.

The scene changes often and the next event is scarlet hibiscus, starting in June and continuing through summer. These plants grew on dry lake bed about 25 years ago from seeds obtained on a field trip near Lake Jessup. About a dozen plants have developed multiple stems (maybe 100) which die back in winter, but come back in spring — even in one foot of water. The dead stems need to be trimmed back, but they do offer some support for the new stems in wind.

The Southern blue flag irises had 50 blossoms in one day in April. They usually set a few seed pods, decline during summer, die back in winter and grow back in early spring.

Bumelia, *Clematis*, buttonbush, Stokes aster, pickerelweed, spiderwort, tropical sage, beautyberry, coralbean, tulip poplar, magnolia, and Walters viburnum bloom at various times.

The Lakefront

I think my lake shore is an excellent example of how a lake should be maintained and I put much work into it, but I did not always do that. It was bare, except for torpedo grass, when I moved here in 1965 and I cleared it and kept it clear while the family was young. It was decent for swimming and the six (maybe five at first) storm drains had not polluted it to any extent. There are many more oak leaves in the streets now from maturing trees and the lake bottom is noticeably higher near the drain from the street because of sand and other road debris. Also, the water level now varies from the normal stable high level of the 1960s and 70s (most likely due to pumping from wells into nearby Lake Conway during that time, but that ceased around 1978); variability makes plant stability more difficult although more natural. (One comment I make often is that trees and shrubs that are in standing water did not grow from seed under water.)

Maybe I have over done it, but the individual parts are good examples according to me and the literature available. I have pond and bald cypress, sweetgum, tupelo, buttonbush, duck potato, pickerelweed, green arum, *Sabal minor*, needle palm, royal fern, chain fern, spiderwort, canna, iris, lizard tail, maidencane, scarlet hibiscus, coastal spikerush, and nearby red cedar, magnolia, coralbean, and tulip poplar.



Chuck Roux stands under his magnolia tree surrounded by scarlet hibiscus, as viewed from the lake (Photo by Pete Dunkelberg)



Tulip poplar (Photo by Pete Dunkelberg)



Stokes aster (Photo by Pete Dunkelberg)

Native vines include volunteer Virginia creeper, grape, and introduced groundnut that I don't normally recommend but are fine with me. Lizard tail is the hardest to control excessive growth, as it was in our Leu Gardens native garden of around 1990. Occasionally, *Habenaria*, spider orchids, grow in the muddy shore when the water is low.

The Yard Remainder

Considering mostly the dry area, there are exotic relics of the previous owner: hibiscus, *Camellia*, azalea, Brazilian jasmine, *podocarpus*, *Philodendron*, walking iris, *Begonia*, and rose. Three *Tabebuia* trees have succeeded from seed over my too-late disapproval. Native relics are *Sabal palmetto* (now too many), magnolia, spider lily, swamp fern, *Stokesia* (disappeared and reintroduced), yellow star grass, *Smilax*, and coralbean. Two live oaks are volunteers and many other plants are introduced by me or allowed to volunteer. Previous owner relics that are no longer here for various reasons are persimmon, camphor, *Jacaranda*, laurel oak, wax myrtle, *Pittosporum*, grapefruit, orange, St Augustine grass, giant bamboo, orchid tree, East Palatka holly, coral ardesia, croton, English ivy, asparagus fern, oyster plant, dogwood, golden rain tree, and maybe others. As relatively new natives (since I joined FNPS in '84), I have beautyberry, tropical sage, rabbit bells, *Sabal etonia*, *Sabal minor*, *Sideroxylon (Bumelia)*, *Tillandsia utriculata*, *Clematis*, butterfly pea, partridge berry, wild onions, chain fern, shiny lyonia, royal fern, mimosa, sweetgum, and coontie. My exotics, other than the relics, include several bromeliads, a boxwood hedge, bottlebrush, crepe myrtle, guava, leatherleaf fern, and Amazon lily. My grapefruit and introduced poncan were taken away by the state agriculture department.

Problems

It will probably never be on a FNPS sponsored yard tour since much of the site is not appropriate for public viewing because of probable non-conformity to public notions. I could do better in this respect, but I blame my failure on excess intrusion on my time from things that should not happen. Examples are floating cattail islands removal, catclaw vine (neighbor's backyard ground cover) growth removal, and distress over another neighbor's spraying herbicide on my grass and blowing leaves into the street that end up in the drain to my lakefront. My neighbors are responsible for only a very few exotic plants invading my yard, but they won't communicate. These plants are catclaw vine, alligatorweed, and torpedo grass by growth and crab grass by seed (visible at the fence). I am an excellent neighbor because the only reverse transfer from me to them is my centipede grass (Doesn't everyone have a grass interface?) and my maidencane in the lake (a native normal lake plant). It is amazing that both lakefront neighbors think they have a relatively clean area, but they ignore the very worst invasives, the roots of the torpedo grass and the alligatorweed, that recover rapidly. However, beyond these neighbors (to give them some credit), lake conditions are mostly worse.

I extend my invitation to the FNPS members and neighbors to visit individually or as groups at your convenience. Others are welcome if you want to bring them or suggest them to me. Since blooming occurs at random times, interested persons can contact me at 407-851-8889 for directions and time. I think that FNPS people will like most of my yard, but criticism or comments will be welcome.

SOCIETY NEWS

Chapter Meetings — Chapter meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month at **HARRY P. LEU GARDENS** (1920 N. Forest Ave., Orlando). For directions, call 407-246-2620, option 1). The next meeting is **Tuesday, July 3 at 7pm**. See you there!

Executive Committee — The next board meeting will be **Tuesday, July 10, 2012 at 6pm**. For more information, contact Catherine Bowman. Members are welcome to attend.

The Tarpaper Online! — Current and past issues of *The Tarpaper* can be viewed online by accessing the chapter website at www.fnps.org. Click on Chapters -> Tarflower and follow the instructions to *The Tarpaper!*

Contribute to The Tarpaper! — Send your articles, event listings, photos and suggestions to Stacey Matrazzo, Editor, at stacey@impactpress.com. (Please do not reduce or compress photos before sending; a size of 3x4 at 300dpi is preferred.) **The submission deadline for the August 2012 issue is July 23.**

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