

MINUTES
FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY—THE VILLAGES CHAPTER
Friday, February 24, 2016
Big Cypress Recreation Center, Periwinkle Room

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Steve Turnipseed at 1:30.

Present: 61 members and 36 guests.

Old Business:

- Steve welcomed guests and members, and gave information on the Florida Native Plant Society. All of our goals from last year have been met.
- Steve showed a slide of the new brochure—“Native Landscaping Restoring Beauty & Balance to Florida North Central”.

New Business:

- Steve reported on information from the Daily Sun: Native Plants, Linda Hunt’s landscape and new Guidelines for Florida Friendly Landscapes. The rouge plant was the native plant featured in the Master Gardener Journal.
- Steve reported on members’ landscapes: all the turf grass is gone in the yard of Julie Wheeler and Joe Buckovic and they were approved for a bat house 12 feet high. Carol and Jerry Taylor were approved for 100% conversion of turf to plants.
- Next month’s speaker will be Roger Hammer, and Kathy Porter is taking orders for his book, Central Florida Wildflowers. In April, John Moran will speak about the Springs Eternal Project.
- The last field trips were to Lake May, managed under Pear Park and Lake Griffin State Park. We help maintain the entrance to the Park, and soon there will be a replanting. On March 30, there will be a trip to silver Springs State Park and included will be a glass bottom boat ride. On April 4, there will be a trip to Green Isles.
- Students from of Dr. Gail Hansen from the U of F School of Landscape Design were in The Villages this week to see three typical homes. They will then make three landscape design plans with 75 % native plants and no turf. Their designs will then be taken to Architectural Review.
- Carol Spears, our chapter rep reported on her last meeting. Our state organization has several on-going projects: the use of social media, education to children in schools and those in special clubs like Scouts and outreach to local government for native plants on public lands. The next state conference is May 18 to 21 at Westgate River Ranch Acres; included will be a talk on how plants communicate.
- Members can order plants from Green Isles today through Wednesday; these will be brought to our next meeting.

Speakers:

Our guest speaker was Scott Davis, a biologist from St. Marks Wildlife Refuge. He is involved in the Federal Milkweed--Monarch Initiative. There are 21 native species of milkweed in Florida, and almost all have “cotton” seeds in pods. Insects pollinate them by traveling from one plant to another—there needs to be at least 2 plants for pollination to occur. The Initiative includes mowing of areas next to highways where milkweed plants are growing. If plants are found, the specific plant must be identified, because

although all make seed pods, some take months to do this. The DOT is notified to place “No Mowing” signs, and the length of time to keep them there depends on the type of milkweed.

Monarch butterflies lives begin and end on milkweed. They are larval obligates—they can only lay their eggs on milkweeds. Monarchs look like viceroys and like queen butterflies, but unlike their look-a-likes, they cannot survive in the cold, and the native milkweed plants decline in the winter. So each winter, the monarchs migrate to an area near Mexico City where they live in oyamel trees. In November, you might find them on their way at St. Marks, and they will return to our area in April or May.

Some problems with their lifecycle include artificial lights causing problems with metamorphosis. Another is that non-native milkweed plants do not always decline in the winter, so they might not migrate. Each November, non-native milkweeds should be cut to the ground. Another is that the non-natives milkweeds from the “big box stores” might be treated with nicotinoids, which can kill the butterflies.

Monarchs are considered federally threatened, and they are rapidly declining. Some of the reasons include illegal logging in Mexico of oyamel trees. Another is the development of OE, a parasite which causes a reduction in size of the butterfly which then cannot endure migration. Another reason in the U.S. since 1996 is the increased use of GMO crops, which are resistant to herbicides. Crops are now sprayed which kills the native “weeds” including milkweed. Another is the use of land for housing developments.

One of the solutions is finding plants and protecting them. Another is the use of controlled burns every three years. The plants need fire, but researchers have found that mowing mimics fire. Another is the Florida Milkweed Recovery Team which includes our FNPS. More species of milkweeds are now being commercially grown, though this is a difficult task. They all have different pH needs, they have a very long taproot and some take 4 to 5 years to flower. Various milkweed plants were then discussed including a milkweed vine.

Donations: Donated native plants including the only native pepper—a bird pepper--were awarded to members and friends.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:00.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be March 24 at 1:30 at the Big Cypress Recreation Center.

Jeanie Powell, Secretary