Happy New Year!

May it be filled with Good Health, Happiness, and Florida Native Plants.

Once again, Cuplet Fern Chapter members gathered to celebrate the end of year holidays with a potluck. As usual, the food offered a delicious variety to eat while Christmas music played in the background. Festive activities included a quiz and door prizes. Jack Stout was the winner in a fun quiz of questions recalling the year’s programs and field trips. And, there were enough door prizes so that everyone won something!

Photos by Susan Ghrist

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Holiday Party—continued from previous page

Choices from the large selection included a bottle of German Glugwein; a personal basket of wine, soaps and creams; nature T-shirts; books; native plants (of course), and much more. If you missed out this year, plan to join us December 2017.

Photos by Susan Ghrist
Although the Christmas gift giving season is over, there are plenty more gift giving opportunities in this coming year.

Birthdays – Valentine's Day – Earth Day – Anniversaries – Just because...

Unique and Thoughtful, consider giving the gift of a FNPS Membership which supports your local chapter.

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**Snack Before You Snip**

Cuplet Fern Chapter supports the only natural preserve in Lake Mary, Crystal Lake Preserve (CLP), and has helped in the past by pulling exotic invasive plants.

Your help is needed now to clear aggressive vines strangling young pine trees struggling to grow.

But, before tackling this outdoor project, fortify yourself. We’ll take time to breathe in the fresh air at this local natural area. Coffee and snacks will be provided.

Perks include an after work riding tour of the property guided by President of the CLP Board of Directors. This pristine property in the middle of development boasts over two miles of trails through a variety of habitats. The property borders Crystal Lake.

Bring your pruners, clippers, and gloves. Meet at 8:45 AM, Thursday, January 12, 2017, at the Timacuan Club parking lot, 550 Timacuan Blvd, Lake Mary. For more information call 407-323-4506.
Volunteer Bio—Jane Miller

While working as a Master Scheduler for Siemens (most of my career was cooped up inside without even a window to look out of), I spent my weekends fishing, golfing, race walking, and building homes with Habitat for Humanity.

After retiring, I continued to play outside with Habitat but then I found Seminole County Natural Lands. First as a hiking opportunity, then further expanded to volunteer opportunities via trail maintenance, air potato raids, sweep for hikes, and helping with special events. A wonderful way to meet new friends and to learn about the real Florida. An off shoot of this is bluebird nest box building and monitoring and scrub jay watch.

Sherry Williams invited me to the initial meeting of the Cuplet Fern chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society. My butterfly garden/yard slowly became a native plant garden/yard with more and more birds, bees, and butterflies coming every year! WOW!

As much fun as it is to watch my native garden grow, one gets an extra kick of sharing plants started from cuttings and seedlings with friends and via plant sales that Cuplet Fern holds to raise scholarship funds.
Coral Ardisia—A Beautiful but Invasive Plant

Please participate in a community event to remove coral ardisia, an exotic invasive plant at Spring Hammock Preserve, January 21. For details, see page 12 under “Upcoming Field Trips and Activities”.

Anyone who views up close a mass of coral ardisia would naturally want it for their landscape, for it is very attractive. Sometimes called coral berry, spice berry, hen’s eyes, and other descriptive names, this small upright shrub is a trickster of the meanest sort. It is a prime example of why gardeners should learn about the plants they invite into their gardens.

Coral ardisia (Ardisia crenata), a native of Japan and northern India, is a member of the Myrsinaceae family. Plants grow anywhere from 2 to 6 feet tall, usually in multi-stemmed clumps, and are hardy in Zones 8–10. Plants bear large (to 8.3 inches), glossy, evergreen leaves that are attractively serrated. In spring inconspicuous white to pinkish flowers bloom in axillary clusters that are largely hidden by the foliage. Showy berries follow the flowers, starting out green and gradually turning bright red. The berries hang on throughout the winter or until they are eaten by cedar waxwings, mockingbirds, raccoons, and other small mammals.

Already you may have gleaned what part of the problem is. Not only does ardisia reseed freely and form large colonies, the seeds are scattered wherever birds fly and germinate readily whenever they land on suitable ground.

History
Like many other exotic invasive plants, coral ardisia was introduced as an ornamental. Royal Palm Nurseries in Florida sold it in the early 1900s. It was not until 1982 that it began to be a problem. Then by 1997 it had spread to Texas, where it dominated the understory of two nature preserves. It can now be found in natural areas in other southeastern states, including Louisiana, Alabama, and Georgia. The pernicious weed infests all of Hawaii’s major islands.

Why is Coral Ardisia Bad?
All those beautiful red berries help to explain the problem. Viable seeds remain on the plant year round, and they have a germination rate of 84 to 98%. Usually a carpet of seedlings surrounds the base of a mature plant. A one-meter square area can support as many as 100 plants. This thick cover prohibits sunlight from reaching the ground so that native groundcovers such as violets and trilliums are unable to compete. It takes only two years for a seedling to produce viable seed.

Most control methods are exercises in futility. It resprouts quickly after a fire, so burning will not control its spread. It resprouts quickly after cutting, and attempting to control it with herbicides puts other plants at risk. Pulling it up from the roots leaves a loose soil just right for thousands of seeds that are left behind to germinate. Plants are highly adaptable to a wide range of soil types from acidic to alkaline, so they come up almost anywhere.

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Coral Ardisia—A Beautiful but Invasive Plant—continued from previous page

Coral Ardisia is a Category I exotic invasive species on the Florida Exotic Pest Council’s (FLEPPC) list. According to the FLEPPC, “Invasive exotic plants are termed Category I invasives when they are altering native plant communities by displacing native species, changing community structures or ecological functions, or hybridizing with natives. This definition does not rely on the economic severity or geographic range of the problem, but on the documented ecological damage caused.” It is also listed as invasive by other sources.

Coral Ardisia is sold in most nurseries. Gardeners in most of the country do not need to worry, because it is hardy only in Zones 8B and higher. Those who live in areas where it is hardy are strongly discouraged from planting this plant in their landscapes, and furthermore, to remove any that is already growing. The length of time from its introduction to the time it was first noted as being invasive in Florida (1900-1982) points out a significant lag time. With populations already established in Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas, it seems only a matter of time before this plant is invasive in all parts of its hardiness range.

Written by Marie Harrison (can2grow) | March 15, 2013

A Passion for Public Lands

The Society fulfills its mission in many ways, including supporting conservation land acquisition and management of those lands that enhances the diversity of our native plants as well as the health of our native ecosystems. As Society members we have unique opportunities to use our knowledge and passion to help usher along the stewardship of our public lands. Aldo Leopold (1887–1949) championed environmental stewardship based on a land ethic “dealing with man’s relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it.”

As shareholders, would you like to know more about public land ecology and stewardship? Would you like to play a role in ensuring the health and beauty of ecosystems long into the future? If so, we invite you to attend a program “A Passion for Public Lands” which will be coming soon to your local chapter.

The steps to becoming an active participant in public lands stewardship aren’t difficult and we guarantee they will introduce you to interesting ecological concepts and the fascinating relationships between plants, the ecosystems in which they thrive and other species.

We hope that you are now curious enough to want to know more about the management of your local public lands and will take a step forward in getting to know them better... stay tuned for meeting program dates.
Natural Beauty: Native Plant and Wildlife-Friendly Landscaping

This guest post on the beauty and importance of nature-friendly landscaping is by Neta Villalobos-Bell, a certified Florida Master Naturalist and Florida Horticulture Professional. She does presentations about Florida Native plants, wildlife in yards, and nature-related subjects. She was featured in an Orange County Government TV series, Wildlife Matters, to help promote the benefits of gardening for wildlife.

Research supports that native wildlife prefer native plants as a food source when compared to non-native plants. Why is this? Well, before non-native plants were brought into Florida with the arrival of the Spanish in 1513, native plants and wildlife were already here and had developed and adapted to each other. They depended on each other for survival, and they still do today.

The most common and well-known of these relationships is the monarch butterfly and the milkweed plant (actually known as “butterfly plants”). Female monarchs lay eggs only on milkweed plants. She may nectar and feed on non-native plants, but she needs the milkweed to lay eggs on for the next generation. Conveniently, milkweed plants are beautiful, with native flowers ranging in color from pale greens and pinks to oranges. Although there are several native species, only three are available for purchase and therefore planting: Butterfly Milkweed (Asclepias tuberosa), Swamp Milkweed (Asclepias incarnata), and Aquatic Milkweed (Asclepias perennis). To purchase these native plant species, check Florida Association of Native Nurseries. If you prefer to sow native seeds, go to Florida Wildflowers Growers Cooperative.

In addition to the butterflies, many other animals and insects rely on native plants. Over many thousands of years, these native wildlife and native plants adapted pollination strategies for the mutual benefit and survival of both. These evolutionary strategies include specific flower structures, flower shape, color and scent, and extra nectaries (places on the plant for nectar outside the flower).

The most important insects are native bees, flies, beetles, and wasps (yes, even wasps). Florida has 300 species of native bees. Some collect pollen and not nectar, and others collect nectar on purpose, but pick up pollen by accident, therefore pollinating flowers. Bees go to one flower consistently, and some Florida tickseed (Coreopsis floridana), the state’s official wildflower, is a valuable nectar source for butterflies.

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Natural Beauty: Native Plant and Wildlife-Friendly Landscaping—continued from previous page

only go to one species of flower. Florida native bees are mostly singular, not aggressive, and do not make honey in hives. Alas, honeybees are not native to our state.

In addition to their important role in pollinating flowers, native insects are a direct food source for songbirds. Songbirds, bluebirds and chickadees, for example, feed insects exclusively to their young. Others, like the Cardinal, eat seeds during fall and winter but switch to insects during spring and summer when they need more protein for rearing their young. Natives like Mockingbirds and Brown Thrashers are omnivorous, feeding on beetles, grubs, ants, bees, wasps, grasshoppers, and berries.

But of course it’s about more than just flowers—seeds and berries provide food, too. Our native winged and Florida elms produce seeds for songbirds. Native firebush (Hamilia patens) and elderberry (Sambucus canadensis) provide both floral nectar and berries as food. And native hollies have different-sized berries to provide nutrition for different-sized birds.

Native plants also provide shelter for birds, insects, reptiles, and small mammals, all of which can benefit your yard. Even the often misunderstood opossum—Florida’s only native marsupial—is really a backyard wonder, eating literally thousands of deer ticks (a common parasite that can carry Lyme Disease) as well as other harmful backyard pests including snails, slugs, poisonous spiders, cockroaches, rats, mice, and snakes.

All of these animals add value to our yards by building and contributing to our native ecosystem. Your plant choices can support a healthy and diverse place to ensure the survival of our native wildlife.

Here are some terrific tips for beginners. So start planting!

Wildlife-Friendly Florida Native Plants:
- Tropical Sage (Salvinia coccinea): This perennial red flower provides nectar for hummingbirds and reseeds itself. It grows best in the sun, in well-drained soil.

- Tickseed (Coreopsis family, and Florida’s state flower!): Another perennial with bright yellow flowers that provide nectar for butterflies and pollen for native bees, this hearty plant does well in both sun and shade.

A native green anole (Anolis carolinensis) waits to feast on insects attracted by the wild coffee plant.
Natural Beauty: Native Plant and Wildlife-Friendly Landscaping—continued from previous page

- Firebush (*Haelia patens*): This shrub is showy and hearty, with bright red-orange blooms that provide food for native pollinators of all kinds. It can be cold-sensitive but resprouts every spring, and grows well in shade or sun, and many different kinds of soil.

- Wild Coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*): This shrub not only has possibly the best scientific name ever, but it’s also a shade-friendly, long-lived perennial with beautiful white blossoms that become bright red berries for the birds. It can be cold-sensitive, but it readily re-seeds itself.

- Winged Elm (*Ulmus alata*): Don’t be afraid to plant some trees! This one does well in sun or shade and is a fast-growing beauty with corky, winglike projections which appear on opposite sides of twigs and branches. It’s considered an ideal, adaptable tree for urban planting and provides seeds and shelter for native animals of all kinds.

For more information on how to select the “right plant for the right place” and attract wildlife, see the following resources, visit the websites of The Florida Native Plant Society and The Florida Association of Native Nurseries. Books on the topic include *Florida’s Best Native Landscape Plants—200 Readily Available Species for Homeowners and Professionals* by Gil Nelson, and *Native Plant Landscaping for Florida Wildlife* by Craig N. Heugel.

Posted in Home and Garden | March 28, 2016

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**FNPS 2017 Endowment Grant Research Awards and Conservation Grant Awards**

The Florida Native Plant Society maintains an Endowment Research Grant program for the purpose of funding research on native plants. These are small grants ($1500 or less), awarded for a 1-year period, and intended to support research that forwards the mission of the Florida Native Plant Society which is “to promote the preservation, conservation, or restoration of rare or imperiled native plant taxa and rare or imperiled native plant communities. To qualify for a Conservation Grant, the proposed project must be sponsored by an FNPS Chapter.

Application guidelines and details are on the FNPS Website (www.fnps.org), click on ‘Participate/Grants and Awards’. Questions regarding the grant programs should be sent to info@fnps.org.

The application deadline for the 2017 Awards is March 3, 2017. Awards will be announced at the May 2017 Annual Conference at the Westgate River Ranch Resort, River Ranch, Florida. Awardees do not have to be present at the Conference to receive their award.
Save the Date—Mark Your Calendar

Please join us for this year’s “Florida Native Plant & Wildlife-Friendly Yard Tour” Saturday, April 8, 2017, 9AM–2PM.

Four homeowners will display their yards and offer a guided tour. This is a great opportunity to see different plant species and new landscape design ideas.

Locations are in eastern Orange County and within a reasonable driving distance of each other. Tickets are $5 per person and will be available in February along with more details. Before then, if you have any questions call Neta at 407-302-7616.
Upcoming Meetings—All meetings are free and open to the public. Florida Native Plants are available at all meetings for a donation.

FNPS+FLEPPC+FISP=CISMA — Making the Connection
January 9, 2017, 7PM  407-302-7616
If you were to poll members of the Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS), you would probably find that many FNPS members are also members of either the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC), the Florida Invasive Species Partnership (FISP) or a local Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA). Each of these organizations have their own missions, however, the ultimate goal of these groups is to restore native habitats on both public and private lands and provide outreach and education to the citizens of Florida. Ultimately, it is all about making that connection and creating long-term partnerships between these groups.

Ditch of Dreams
February 13, 2017, 7PM  407-302-7616
Steven Noll, along with David Tegeder, authored the book Ditch of Dreams which documents the struggle for the Cross Florida Barge Canal. The idea of such a canal was first proposed by Philip II of Spain in 1567 to connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. In the 1930s, regional politicians lobbied the federal government to fund canal construction but local opponents protested that the canal would deplete the aquifer. And, the struggle continued. This is a piece of Florida's history that is still not resolved.

Florida's Native Ferns
March 13, 2017, 7PM  407-302-7616
Join Sherry Williams and Neta Villalobos-Bell as they share information about the namesake of our native plant chapter, Cuplet Fern (Dennstaedtia bipinnata). It is listed as endangered by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Its name is derived from the tiny cup shaped coverings that hold the spores on the fern fronds. Each species of fern has characteristics that identify it and there are about 164 native ferns in Florida. Some of the most common ferns and clues to identification will be discussed.

Transitioning to a Florida Native Yard
April 10, 2017, 7PM  407-302-7616
If you want to add Florida native plants to your yard but have concerns, get some hints for a successful yard transition from Neta Villalobos-Bell. Learn how to blend in with your neighbors, accommodate your HOA, envision how the plants will look, and how to maintain the plants.

The Forest and the Trees: Florida's Natural Heritage
May 8, 2017, 7PM  407-302-7616
Dr. Bill Grey provides a review of some of Florida's common and interesting native trees, and offers a glimpse at their ecological relationships to the landscape. Dr. Grey is a senior scientist with the firm of Breedlove, Dennis and Associates, Inc., and has specialized in plant taxonomy, plant ecology, wetlands ecology, marine and estuarine ecology, and threatened and endangered plants.

Sandhill Restoration at Mead Gardens
June 12, 2017, 7PM  407-302-7616
The Tarflower Chapter, a partner with Mead Botanical Gardens, has been involved with design, restoration, development, and management of the natural habitats and native planted areas of the Gardens. Our speaker, Catherine Bowman will describe the addition of native grasses, wildflowers, shrubs, and trees under the existing longleaf pine forest area.
Upcoming Field Trips and Activities

Invasive Species Blitz at Spring Hammock

January 21, 2017, 9 AM  407-302-7616
2985 Osprey Trail, Longwood
Everyone can help. Meet at Spring Hammock to pull out the exotic invasive plant, coral ardisia, which can outcompete our natives there. Coral ardisia, although beautiful, reseeds prolifically, forms large colonies, and birds eat and drop seeds everywhere. Free.

Lake Harney Wilderness Area

February 18, 2017, 9 AM  407-302-7616
Trip Leader: Sherry Williams
2395 Osceola Fish Camp Road, Geneva
The Lake Harney Wilderness Area is an approximately 300 acre property that is located along the St. Johns River at the northwest shore of Lake Harney. This site is home to a historic crossing of the Florida East Coast Railway, Native American shell middens, several bald eagle nests, oak hammocks, and mixed hardwood swamps. Sherry Williams, biologist with Seminole County, will lead this trip to the river and explain the natural history of the area. Free, but reservations required.

Annual Plant Sale

March 11–12, 2017, 9 AM–5 PM  407-302-7616
Harry P. Leu Botanical Gardens, 1920 N. Forest Avenue, Orlando
Florida Native Plants will be for sale.

Spring Hammock Preserve

March 18, 2017, 9 AM  407-302-7616
Trip Leader: Sherry Williams
2985 Osprey Trail, Longwood
Spring Hammock Preserve is an approximately 1,500 acre property that includes a portion of the Cross Seminole Trail and the Florida National Scenic Trail. Most of the property remains in a natural state. Sherry Williams, Seminole County biologist, will lead us through a unique assemblage of floodplain forest, hydric hammock, upland mixed hardwoods and pine flatwoods. There are many rare and listed species including the bipinnate cuplet fern (Dennstaedtia bipinnata), Okeechobee gourd (Cucurbita okeechobeensis), and the gopher tortoise (Gopherus polyphemus). Free, but reservations required.

Seminole County Gardening EXPO

April 4, 2017  407-302-7616
The Cuplet Fern Chapter will have Native Plants available.

Florida Native Plant & Wildlife-Friendly Yard Tour

April 8, 2017, 9 AM–2 PM  407-302-7616
Self-driving tour of yards in Seminole County. Each yard is unique in design and selection of Florida native plants, all with the purpose of attracting our native wildlife. Each homeowner will share information about their own yard on a walkabout. This is the 3rd annual tour sponsored by Cuplet Fern and Tarflower Native Plant Chapters and Orange Audubon Society. $5/person fee.

Native Trees Up Close

May 13, 2017, 9 AM  407-302-7616
Trip Leader: Dr Bill Grey
598 Guise Road, Osteen
We will venture to Hickory Bluff Preserve located just east of Osteen. The 150 acre preserve overlooks the St Johns River and contains a variety of natural communities including mesic and scrubby flatwoods, oak hammock, cypress domes, floodplain swamp, and wet prairie. This preserve is home to many vegetative communities, hence lots of tree species. Free, but reservations required.

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Upcoming Field Trips and Activities—continued from previous page

Mead Botanical Gardens

June 17, 2017, 9AM  407-302-7616
Trip Leader: Beth Jackson
1500 South Denning Drive, Winter Park
We will visit the Sandhill Restoration
Demonstration Landscape area managed by
Tarflower members and volunteers. Volunteers
installed about 160 plants including turkey oaks,
plums, palmetto, lopsided Indiangrass, green eyes,
blazing star, yucca, bluestem grass, and a lot of
gopher apple in the southwest part of the Garden
(south of the large picnic pavilion). Free, but
reservations required.