



Florida Native Plant Society

Sabal minor

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 5

October-November, 2004

Message from the President

Some of you may have seen the accompanying article, "Ill Winds Improve the View" in the *New York Times*. Just three days after that article appeared, Hurricane Jeanne visited the same area.

FNPS has a wonderful opportunity after these hurricanes to promote the use of natives in the home and public landscapes.

At the last FNPS conference, I heard about efforts by chapters to educate nurseries and the public in the use of natives. For example, the Pawpaw Chapter encouraged nurseries to stock natives and stop selling invasive exotics. In return, the Pawpaw Chapter recognized and promoted the specific nurseries that cooperated.

Another example is the "In Harmony with Nature Series", presented by the Pinellas Chapter and St. Petersburg Audubon. They make presentations to just about any group in their area that will listen on making environmentally positive landscape choices.

These two examples came from two conference sessions that I stumbled into. I'm sure there are other good examples of promoting natives that I'm not aware of. If your chapter is doing something that would help Florida responsibly re-landscape that you could share with others, please let the *Sabal minor* know about it. Let's not wait until next year's conference to cross-pollinate ideas.

We can also share what we've learned about native landscapes in these remarkable seven weeks. Please let the *Sabal minor* know about landscape surprises and disappointments in your area. Most FNPS members visit many of Florida's different ecosystems and are genuinely curious about what happened in your area. Newspapers naturally tend to deal with personal and property disasters. Many of us would like to know the rest of the story.

(*Sabal minor* email: peglantz@bellsouth.net.)

Ill Winds Improve the View

by Anne Raver

There's an old truth about hurricanes: they take out the trees that gardeners don't have the heart to cut down. Like wildfires, they clear the land of deadwood. They fell trees weakened by disease or stunted roots, leaving only the strongest – or the luckiest – when skies clear. Such ruthless pruning not only reveals which plants can stand up to a 100-mile-an-hour wind, but suddenly opens up a view long forgotten.

"When I saw the garden the day after Charley, my first thought was, 'Oh, the vistas,'" David Price, the director of horticulture at Historic Bok Sanctuary in Lake Wales, Fla., said, speaking about five weeks after Hurricane Charley crossed the state. The 250-acre garden sits on top of Iron Mountain – at 298 feet above sea level the highest point in the state [in the peninsula. There's a higher point in the panhandle. Ed.]. From there, Mr. Price looked south, through a grove of old live oaks that had held steady through the winds, toward 1,700 acres of orange groves in the valley below. To the west, Mountain Lake shimmered through a tree line, thinned by half in the storm. "Now I'm tempted to cut down a few more oaks blocking the view," he said.

Just before Hurricane Ivan smashed through Pensacola in mid-September, gardeners in central Florida and along the coast were beginning to lift their heads from clearing the wreckage of fallen trees and mangled shrubbery left by Charley, which roared by on Aug. 13, and Frances, which crawled through three weeks later.

In many places, Charley and Frances took 70 percent of the canopy, stripping live oaks of their leaves, felling weaker trees like laurel oaks, snapping branches off magnolias, and leaving camellias and other shade-loving shrubs to scalding sun. Gardeners who are still "picking up sticks," as they say, – big ones – are being forced to think anew about the sorts of plants that might best go in the bare spaces.

No hurricanes have swept through Lake Wales since Donna, in 1960. "But meteorologists studying rising temperatures and weather patterns think we may be seeing more hurricanes the next two decades," Mr. Price said.

No plant is hurricane-proof, as attested by all the native live oaks that went down, despite their reputation for being able to survive storms. Bok lost 23, including one 80-footer that crashed into the reflecting pool.

The McKee Botanical Garden in Vero Beach lost about a dozen live oaks, some 300 years old, in its jungle hammock. The trees were shallow-rooted, growing over limestone. Two tall slash pines, natives that usually just bend with the wind, were lifted out

Florida Native Plant Society, P.O. Box 278, Melbourne, FL 32902-0278
321-271-6702, www.fnps.org

of the soft, saturated soil and crashed into a pool at the entrance. "I'm going to miss those big old slash pines," said Janet Alford, the executive director.

At Mounts Botanical Garden, a 14-acre public garden in West Palm Beach, the director, Allen Sistrunk, mourned the downing of his tamarind and sapodilla trees, but saw the opportunity posed by the loss of three 70-foot eucalyptus trees. "They were planted too close together," he said. "Now we may only upright one of them, the white eucalyptus, which glows at night." And across the flattened trees, Mr. Sistrunk now enjoys a view of three regal queen palms on the south side of the garden.

Palm trees hold up beautifully in storms: their limber trunks bend with the wind, which blows right through their fronds. So savvy Floridians know they shouldn't believe any tree company that shows up just before hurricane season to prune their palms. "Hurricane pruning is a racket," Mr. Sistrunk said. "I've seen palm trees pruned to a Q-Tip." Take too many fronds off, and you deprive the palm of its ability to photosynthesize, actually hurting its chances in a hurricane. Unpruned sabal palms have done fine for centuries without help from the knife.

Paurotis palms, native to the Everglades, have also evolved with the high winds of seasonal storms, which do them the favor of cleaning out their dead brown fronds.

Ficus trees, on the other hand, develop massive trunks and dense canopies that catch the wind like sails, so they can topple over and do great damage during a storm. Such trees should be pruned judiciously. Some ficus trees put down aerial roots from their lateral branches as an anchor to the ground. Prune too many, and you destabilize the tree.

Live oaks, which grow slowly, generally do well, because they have dense wood and roots that can spread 150 feet – unless they are growing over limestone rock, as at coastal gardens like McKee and Mounts. The live oaks that went down at Bok had insufficient roots or weak points in their trunks where two branches had grown together but had not fused, Mr. Price said.

Old, weakened trees could well be growing in your yard, leaning over the house or car – and high winds aren't confined to hurricane zones. All such trees should be examined carefully, by a certified arborist if possible, to avoid damage in the next storm. Advice on finding a certified arborist is available from the International Society of Arboriculture, www.isa-arbor.com or 217-355-9411.

But left to their natural form, live oaks have dense interlocking wood that is nearly impossible to cut down. "You have to tear it," Mr. Price said. That is why the hulls of ships, like Old Ironsides, were built of it. So if you have the climate, the room, and the time to watch a live oak spread out in your yard, it's a magnificent shade tree well worth planting.

But customers are already appearing at nurseries like Rockledge Gardens, near Cocoa Beach, demanding fast-growing trees. "They say, 'I want my shade back,'" said Kevin Reilly, the owner. They ask for laurel oaks, sycamores, Chinese elms, all the fast growers that tend to have weak wood. Many want instant shade to protect their camellias, but no tree can grow fast enough to keep the sun from scalding the camellia's lustrous green leaves.

At Harry P. Leu Gardens overlooking Lake Rowena in Orlando, a collection of 2,500 camellias, all selected before

1940, are now frying in the sun. The garden lost 135 large trees, including laurel oaks, sweet gums, and pines. "So we will probably move things around a bit," said Robert Bowden, the executive director, and plant some sasanqua camellias, "which can take the sun." Many of the camellias look hopelessly mangled, with broken limbs and a few green leaves on stumps. But if the trunk has not been gouged too deeply, the branches can be pruned, and new growth will burgeon. "There were some little miracles," Mr. Bowden said, pointing to a great laurel oak still standing close to the house, built in 1888.

Laurel oaks grow fast and offer generous shade, so they were frequently planted in these parts. But with their weak, brittle wood, Mr. Bowden advises against using them. He pointed out one old laurel oak leaning across a walkway that perhaps should be cut down. The ground was soft around the trunk and slightly higher on one side: telling signs for the homeowner trying to secure the yard against the next storm. Mr. Bowden worries that people with felled trees will rush to plant fast-growing species like the camphor or the goldenrain tree for quick shade. But both are invasive, growing like weeds, and should be avoided. The garden's Web site (www.leugardens.org) lists storm-resistant trees like bald and palm cypress, palms, Southern magnolia, holly, live oak, river birch, yaupon holly, white cedar and trident maple. Susceptible trees include Chinese elm, laurel oak, silk floss, hickory, Southern red cedar, and sycamore.

"Some people are just planting palms," said Mr. Reilly of Rockledge Gardens. And though no landscape is stormproof, a yard planted with saw palmetto, coontie (an American cycad) and sabal palms could be not only striking and low-maintenance, but fairly secure in a hurricane. And tropical plants like calatheas, with their strikingly patterned leaves, and lily pad begonias grow so low that they can ride out a storm.

Mr. Bowden was amazed at how well his Southern magnolias had held up, despite the size of their big leaves and the density of their canopies. He stood by a lustrous specimen of D. D. Blanchard, a variety of *Magnolia grandiflora*, which has shiny green leaves with orange-brown, feltlike undersides, and declared that more people should plant them. The Southern magnolia is a native of the coastal plain. So is the live oak. But life is risky. Especially in a hurricane.

The Florida Native Plant Society promotes the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

Florida Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 278, Melbourne, FL 32902-0278
Web page: www.FNPS.org

President: Bob Egolf
Email: begolf@pcsonline.com

Editor: Peggy Lantz, 407-299-1472
Email: peglantz@bellsouth.net

The Sabal minor is published bi-monthly and is sent free to all members of the Florida Native Plant Society.

Chapter Events

All are invited to attend the events of other chapters of FNPS. Out-of-town visitors should call for directions and confirmation of times and places, which are subject to change. Check the FNPS webpage, www.fnps.org/chapter for more information on field trips and meetings, or *The Palmetto* for regularly scheduled chapter times and meeting places and other special events. If going on a field trip, remember hat, sunscreen, insect repellent, plenty of water to drink, and a snack.

Coccoloba Chapter

Our schedule of speakers is on the web at: www.fnps-coccolobachapter.org. I dunno if there's a point to putting our meetings in the *Sabal minor*. We've got a plant sale Oct. 23 and another April 23, but we are so far away from the other chapters (except Naples, of course, and I send them our *Coccoloba Jam* newsletter).

I kind of feel that people are lucky to get such a nice newsletter [as the *Sabal minor*], really. And I wonder if people even read the whole thing, you know. Because when I put in a request for responses, I usually get only one or two. Which is fine with me (I know that's how a society works) as long as they keep sending in dues to support FNPS projects and (I hope) plant natives in their yards. My theory is that if one plants even one native, there's a chance it'll spread into the neighborhood. I live in a former grove from the '20s – it may have been cleared back at the turn of the century for all I know – and there are no natives in the 'wild' areas. I've got the only natives in several blocks. It's weird, but of course it gives me the opportunity to feel extremely virtuous in an environmental way.

Celia Beamish (*Coccoloba Jam* editor)

[Thank you—Ed.]

Tarflower Chapter

On Oct. 5, the Tarflower Chapter held its regular meeting with a program titled, "Landscape Recovery After a Hurricane: Ask the Experts". A panel of local botanists, nurserymen, landscapers, and consultants answered questions such as How do I prune a tree with broken limbs? Can uprooted trees, palms, and shrubs be replanted? What can I plant to replace lost trees and shrubs? — just a few of the questions being asked by homeowners in the aftermath of recent hurricanes. The entire meeting was dedicated to this public service. Free informative handouts and plant lists were available, as well as books for purchase on Florida landscaping.

Mangrove Chapter (Charlotte and S. Sarasota)

Oct. 12, 7pm - Plantings for Beautiful Ponds, Russ Hoffman, M.A. Lemon Bay Park, Englewood. Bobbi Rodgers, 941-475-0769.

Oct. 30, 9am - Field Trip to Don Pedro Island State Park, Cape Haze, land side. Located off Placida Road, across from Jams Restaurant. Meet in parking lot at 9. \$2 entry fee per car; carpool from Cedar Point at 8:30. To confirm, Denny Girard, 941-474-1492.

Nov. 9, 7pm - The Trailwalker Program in Florida State Forests, Al Squires and Denny Girard. Lemon Bay Park, Englewood. Bobbi Rodgers, 941-475-0769.

Nov. 27, 9am - Field Trip to Jelks Preserve, Venice. Contact Denny Girard, 941-474-1492.

Dec. 14, 6pm - Holiday Potluck Supper. Lemon Bay Park, Englewood.

Jodi Larson

Dade Chapter (Miami-Dade County and the Keys)

Contact Patty Phares, 305-255-6404 or check www.fnps.org

chapters/dade. Meetings at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, 10901 Old Cutler Road, 4th Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m. Meetings will be held in the Keys on 3rd Wed., Nov.-April, at various locations. Details TBA.

Oct. 26 - "Natives for Your Neighborhood", a web-based resource for finding plants based on historical distribution, George Gann, The Institute for Regional Conservation.

Nov. 23 - **"Exotic animals in Everglades National Park"**, Skip Snow.

Nov. 20-21: The chapter will participate with an educational display and plant sale at The Ramble, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.

Patty Phares

Lakela's Mint Chapter

Oct. 12, 6 pm - "Fall Flowers of the Flatwoods" slide show, John Brohlmann. Those going on this month's field trip to the Indrio North Savannahs can use this opportunity to refresh our wildflower ID skills. Speaker at 7pm. Oxbow EcoCenter, located at 5400 NE St. James Drive, Pt. St. Lucie; for more information call 772- 785-5833.

Oct. 16 - Field trip to Indrio North Savannahs; guide, Mike Bush, St. Lucie County's Environmental Biologist. We'll be looking for Lakela's mint in bloom. Meet on site at 10am at the Stewart Sand Mine off North US1 and Tozour Road (west side of US1 a few miles south of Pineapple Joe's). Bring water, sunscreen, and bug spray. For more information call 772- 462-2526.

Oct. 23, 10am-3pm - Volunteer Planting Day at the Oxbow EcoCenter, 5400 NE St. James Drive, Pt. St. Lucie, to install new native landscaping around the building. 772-785-5833.

Amy Mott

Magnolia Chapter

Nov. 3 - Coastal Ecosystems, Anne Rudloe of Gulf Specimen Marine Lab.

Nov. 6 - Field trip led by Anne Rudloe.

Dec. 4 - Native garden workday at Maclay State Park.

Nia Wellendorf

Serenoa Chapter

Oct. 18 - Oscar Scherer State Park, John Roach, new park superintendent, will discuss the park and its scrub jays.

Oct. 23, 7:00am - Zaleski Property East Manatee County; joint field trip with Manatee County Audubon to a 130-acre ranch that straddles the Myakka River at its headwaters.

Oct. 30, 9 - 2 pm. Plant sale at Longwood Run Park, 6050 Longwood Run Blvd. off University Parkway. Co-sponsored by the Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program.

Nov.15 - Plants and Wildlife typical of Lake Wales Ridge State Forest, Keith Clanton, Plant Ecologist.

Nov. 20, 9am - Lake Wales Ridge State Forest, Frostproof. Bring a lunch to enjoy after the hike. Carpool: Sarasota, 7:30, Bradenton, 8:45.

Dec. 20, 7pm - Annual Holiday Dinner. Bring a nature gift to exchange and a dish to share. The main course will be provided.

Message from the Vice President

FNPS has grown greatly over the years and so have our expenses. The Finance Committee is currently discussing various ways to reduce these expenses to a much lower percentage of our overall budget to help us reach our goals as laid out in our mission statement. The following is a viable option, presented here for our members' serious consideration.

The Palmetto expenses were \$15,209 in 2002; \$10,312 in 2003; and the actual budget for 2004 is \$21,300. The *Sabal minor* expenses were \$5,311 in 2002; \$5,978 in 2003; and the actual budget for 2004 is \$5,200. The expenses for these two publications ate up a whopping 21%+ of our annual budget last year! These publications are essential to our society and must continue to be produced.

The Palmetto and *Sabal minor* publications should be delivered by way of electronic mailings with the total elimination of 'snail' mailings by the parent organization. This would be accomplished by electronically mailing the current issues out to the chapter representatives (or to whom the chapter designates), and they would distribute these mailings to their chapter members in the electronic form or a printed form as the individual chapter members will determine.

These publications do not directly support FNPS goals outside of our membership, as we are usually the only ones that see them. The money we save from shifting to this new system will leave us with the money needed to fight the good fight, as our goals are becoming harder to fulfill each day because of encroaching developments.

There is also a very good way to raise much needed additional funds. We all should look at what level our membership is currently and seriously consider taking it to at least the next level of support. It always surprises me that most of our members ask me, "What does that mean on your card: 'donor member' "? It has several meanings, including an additional contribution to the society above and beyond the annual individual membership dues. The

levels of annual dues and costs are as follows: student (full-time): \$15; individual: \$25; family/household: \$30; contributing: \$40; not-for-profit: \$50; business: \$100; supporting: \$100; donor: \$250. If we all could move up to just the next level, our society could benefit greatly! Please think about your personal situation and consider moving up to the next annual dues level today. Why wait until the next time the annual amount is due? Please always pay your dues on time, and help us keep a healthy balanced budget on a yearly basis.

Thank you very much.

David Lei - FNPS VP of Finance

Natural History Workshop

[Your editor hopes that those interested in this workshop receive this message in time.]

The North Region group of the League of Environmental Educators in Florida (LEEF) has scheduled a fabulous weekend workshop on Florida Natural History for Friday evening through Sunday afternoon, Oct. 22 - Oct. 24 at Camp Crystal Lake near Gainesville. There will be both evening programs and field sessions.

You'll find that all leaders are extremely knowledgeable and eager to help you understand the wonders of Florida's outdoors. They include: Pat Ashton, Upland Plants; Ray Ashton, Gopher Tortoises; Tony Davanzo, Wildlife Ecology; Mark Deyrup, Insects; Nancy Deyrup, Saw Palmettos; Susan Marynowski, Florida Fire Ecology; Bob Simons, Sandhill and Hardwood Hammock Community Ecology; Michael Stevens, Wetlands Ecology.

All this for only \$65! The fee, guaranteed until 9/1/04, includes food, lodging, and all workshops. Non-members only pay \$80 which includes a six-month membership in LEEF. So, you can see, it's a bargain for everyone, so please spread the word.

For more information and registration form, go to LEEF's website at leeflet.brinkster.net or email me at

Non-profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #0076
Mid-Florida, FL

Florida Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 278
Melbourne, FL 32902-0278