

The Quarterly Journal of the Florida Native Plant Society

Palmetto



FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

2011 Landscape Awards

PART 1: RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPES



Photos: Clockwise from top: Oceanside Gem; Henkelhaus Lakeside; Wert/Stauffer Residence; Green Home

Photos: From top: Wert/Stauffer Residence; Green Home; Henkelhaus Lakeside; Birdgarden

Each year, FNPS honors the use of native plants in restorative and traditional landscapes through the “Design With Natives” program, which gives amateur and professional designers an opportunity to share their efforts and be honored for their achievements at the FNPS Annual Conference. We congratulate the residential winners of the 2011 “Design With Natives” Awards, showcased here.

**Residential Professional Landscape Award Winner
Award of Excellence: Oceanside Gem**

Owner: Dr. & Mrs. Joseph Sachs; Designer: Richard P. Brown;
Installation: Melrose Nursery

This lushly landscaped oceanside paradise of nearly an acre is located on Lower Matecumbe Key. Seeing it today would hardly lead one to believe that it was previously overrun with invasive exotics, including Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) and Australian pine (*Casuarina equisetifolia*).

Oceanside Gem’s owners requested that their landscape be restored with plants native to the Florida Keys, and required that the design be low maintenance, self sustaining, and able to survive in the dynamic oceanfront environment.

Despite the presence of invasive plants, some native vegetation remained – mature green buttonwood trees (*Conocarpus erectus*) and a berm of bay cedar (*Suriana maritima*), sea lavender (*Argusia gnaphalodes*), sea grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*) and wild dilly (*Manilkara jaimiqui*) were carefully preserved during the restoration. Canopy trees were integral in providing cover and shade for the new understory plants, sheltering them from intense sun and winds. The canopy also reduced moisture loss from soil, allowing the garden to conserve water and lessen the need for irrigation.

Sandy walkways meander through the site, and the design provides privacy for the owners as well as habitat for birds and butterflies.

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Photos: Above: Oceanside Gem; Right: Henkelhaus Lakeside

Consideration was given to the view, and glimpses of the ocean can be seen as one strolls through the garden.

No native vegetation was removed during the landscaping process, and all Category 1 and 2 invasive plants were eliminated. Today, nearly 80% of the plants in the garden are native to the Florida Keys.

2011 Residential Amateur Landscape Award Winner

Award of Excellence: Henkelhaus Lakeside

Owner/Designer/Installation: John and Nancy Henkelman

Maintenance: John, Nancy, Johnny, Daniel, and Andy Henkelman

The three acre Henkelhaus Lakeside property was carved out of a cattle farm and bordered by a borrow pit and a lake. Plant species in its existing habitat included saw palmetto thickets (*Serenoa repens*) under a pine canopy, and wet areas filled with dahoon holly (*Ilex cassine*) and loblolly bay (*Gordonia lasianthus*). The lakeside was eroded by years of use as a fishing access for motor vehicles and boats. Invasive plants found on site included Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) and small-leaf climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*).

Land clearing was limited to an area twice the size of the house footprint. Planting areas added to the landscape included a native garden near the entry, a canopy to shade the home's sunny



southern exposure, a wind block to protect the home from southeast winds, a native meadow in the open backyard, a wetlands bog, and a screened room for propagation activities.

To expand the native tree diversity, sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), water hickory (*Carya aquatica*), pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*), cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), elm species, cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*) and a variety of oak trees were added to the landscape. These trees and associated understory natives fit naturally in the transition zone between the sandy soil and the peaty wetlands soil.

Maintenance requires controlling invasive species with biannual 'search and destroy' sessions. Containing the overgrowth of grape and cat briar vines is another challenge. Trails were formed to provide access, and regular trimming of large stems helps to keep the vines in check. Small controlled burns,

when permitted, help keep invasive and aggressive species under control.

The yard is a Certified Florida Yard and a National Wildlife Federation Backyard Wildlife Habitat. The owners enjoy sharing their vision, and for more than 12 years have supported Boy Scout activities. Scouts use the yard as a place to work on First Class Emphasis Program requirements for identifying plants and animals, and on earning Environmental Science and Gardening merit badges.

2011 Residential Amateur Landscape Award Winner
Award of Honor: Residence of Julie Wert / Richard Stauffer
Owner/Designer: Julie Wert – Richard Stauffer

After designing a home to fit among the trees on this five acre property, roughly an acre and a half was cleared. The owners were horrified at how raw the site looked and immediately began the process of restoration.

The property slopes from sand pine scrub downward to hardwood forest and mesic hammocks. Sand pine (*Pinus clausa*) gives way to mature slash pines (*P. elliotii*), Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), hickory (*Carya glabra*) and water oaks (*Quercus nigra*).

During the clearing and restoration process, the owners discovered treasures such as pawpaw (*Asimina obovata*), sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*), wild olive (*Osmanthus americanus*), myrsine (*Myrsine floridana*), needle palms (*Rhapidophyllum hystrix*) and orchids (*Habenaria odontopetala*).

Paths were cleared in the woods around the house for strolling and to provide a fire break. Trees were added to the outer edges of the remaining islands of vegetation, and shrubs were used to fill in around the trees. Spaces in between were mulched to eliminate turf grass and expand the beds.

The owners' initial distress at the seeming lack of birds and other wildlife after clearing has been replaced with bird song. Marsh rabbits explore the space under the bird feeder and gopher tortoises browse on gourmet lettuce in the vegetable garden. A fox delicately nibbles the fruit of the shiny blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*), and the slash pine hit by lightning provides a perch for an osprey to dine on fish and a convenient spot for pileated woodpeckers to mine for insects.

2011 Residential Amateur Landscape Award Winner
Award of Merit: Birdgarden
Owner/Designer: John A. Almada

A pine flatwoods ecosystem was present on this lot, which is slightly smaller than one half acre. During construction, more than fifty mature trees were preserved, and the owner has supplemented them with shrubs including white indigoberry (*Randia aculeata*), marlberry (*Ardisia escallonioides*), tough bumelia (*Sideroxylon tenax*), Jamaica caper (*Capparis cynophallophora*), and fiddlewood (*Citharexylum spinosum*).

He states, "Shrubs are better able to feed migrating birds and their flowers attract pollinating insects. When the saw palmetto or fiddlewood is flowering, the entire area is abuzz with bees... native plants do not have showy blooms but attract wildlife and many leave a subtle perfume in the air..."

Gardening for birds is emphasized in this landscape design, and a wide variety of food plants on the property attract both resident and migrating birds. *Smilax* species create thorny and brushy areas where birds can nest and hide. Other vines such as Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) and native passionflower are also allowed to flourish.

Of his efforts to turn his property into a haven for birds, Birdgarden's owner says, "Chain saws buzzing and two cycle fuel floating everywhere and fast growing exotics that need constant pruning is not the way to go. I want to revise plant lists for the communities I work in to teach residents how to reduce problem insects while attracting pollinating insects. I network as much as possible, and my bird attracting garden is used to educate people about gardening wherever I go."

2011 Residential Amateur Landscape Award Winner
Honorable Mention: Green Home

Owner: Alex and Freda Green; Designer: Melissa Montilla;
Installation: David Pais; Maintenance: Bill Adams

Built in 1966 on a suburban half acre lot, this Gainesville, Florida home is nestled among large live oaks laden with Spanish moss. During construction, existing trees, including boxelder (*Acer negundo*), pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*), Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), hog plum (*Prunus umbellata*), sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*), water oak (*Quercus nigra*), cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*), and hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*) were preserved. Understory plants and shrubs were also protected, and today the site is graced with blue-stem palmetto (*Sabal minor*), tough bumelia (*Sideroxylon tenax*), American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), Hercules club (*Zanthoxylum clava-herculis*), and flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*).

Although a limited number of non-native plants were retained from the original landscape plan, all plants on the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council's list of Category 1 and 2 invasive species were removed, and the site is now composed of 75% native vegetation. New plants added to the landscape to replace non-native species include coontie (*Zamia pumila*), Walter's viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*), Simpson's stopper (*Myrcianthes fragrans*), Florida anise (*Illicium floridanum*), fringe tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), pipestem (*Agarista populifolia*), and coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*).

Over 50 native plant species make this suburban yard their home, and the diversity attracts a variety of birds and other wildlife. Adding native plants to the landscape has created a beckoning yard that is attractive, low maintenance, and wildlife friendly.



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Editorial Content

We welcome articles on native plant species and related conservation topics, as well as high-quality botanical illustrations and photographs. Contact the editor for guidelines, deadlines and other information.

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The purpose of the Florida Native Plant Society is to conserve, preserve, and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

Official definition of native plant:

For most purposes, the phrase Florida native plant refers to those species occurring within the state boundaries prior to European contact, according to the best available scientific and historical documentation. More specifically, it includes those species understood as indigenous, occurring in natural associations in habitats that existed prior to significant human impacts and alterations of the landscape.

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