

Sabal minor

A bi-monthly newsletter for the members of

THE FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



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December 2005 - January 2006

December

These are great times for watching waterfowl on wetlands, lakes, and prairies. The Christmas Bird Count runs December 14th, 2005 to January 5th, 2006; this is its 106th year! (Try www.audubon.org for more info.)

Great horned and barred owls are courting; listen for them.

Manatees congregate at natural springs and industrial warm water sites. Bears are still on the move, especially in Collier, Gulf, Hernando, Highlands, Jefferson, Lake, Marion, and Volusia counties. Along the east coast, right whales appear north of Sebastian Inlet in Brevard county.

Dune sunflowers, some coreopsis, wild petunia, and passionflower are blooming.

January

Nesting season begins for roseate spoonbills, Florida sandhill cranes, hawks and owls. Snail kites begin courtship in central Florida. Put your old Xmas tree out as a brush pile near your bird feeder. Cedar waxwings and robins are eating our holly berries; hopefully we've got some planted for them.

The black bears in north Florida should be sleeping by now. Wild hogs (*Sus scrofa*) are birthing, curse them.

Black crappie start a feeding binge in central Florida. Striped bass and sunshine bass move into open water to feed on shad.

Carolina yellow jessamine blooms in north and central Florida. You may still see some climbing aster.

The (Let's Get Rid of..?) Endangered Species Act

*By Rosalind Rowe, from notes by Emily B. Roberson, Ph.D.
Director, Native Plant Conservation Campaign*

The Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act of 2005 (H.R. 3824) was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives.

The bill removes most of the key protections for listed plants and wildlife under the Endangered Species Act and makes the listing of imperiled species much more difficult. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the bill are its restrictions on the types of science – and scientists – that would be considered eligible to participate in decisions about listing and conserving imperiled plants and other species. Congress is not qualified to legislate science, but HR 3824 will do just that. We must get the Senate to reject this legislation.

Here is how our “representatives” voted, listed by Congressional District Number:

Voted YES (GUT the Endangered

Species Act):

- 01 Jeff Miller (R)
- 02 Allen Boyd (D)
- 04 Ander Crenshaw (R)
- 05 Virginia Brown-Waite (R)
- 06 Cliff Stearns (R)
- 07 John Mica (R)
- 08 Rick Keller (R)
- 09 Michael Bilirakis (R)
- 10 Bill Young (R)
- 12 Adam Putnam (R)
- 13 Katherine Harris (R)
- 14 Connie Mack (R)
- 15 Dave Weldon (R)
- 18 Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R)
- 21 Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R)
- 24 Tom Feeney (R)
- 25 Mario Diaz-Balart (R)

Voted NO:

- 03 Corrine Brown (D)
- 16 Mark Foley (R)
- 17 Kendrick Meek (D)
- 19 Robert Wexler (D)
- 20 Debbie Wasserman (D)
- 22 Clay Shaw (R)
- 23 Alcee Hastings (D)

Did not vote:

- 11 Jim Davis (D)

The bill is 74 pages long; you can review it in detail at thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c109:H.R.3824. More information on HR 3824 is available at the Endangered Species Coalition website, www.stopextinction.org. A summary of the bill has been developed by Earthjustice, the Center for Biological Diversity, and the Endangered Species Coalition. On page 2 of this newsletter is an excerpt from testimony given by the Native Plant Conservation Campaign.

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

321-272-6702 ● Fax: 815-361-9166 ● www.fnps.org

President: Bob Egolf, email: begolf@pcsonline.com ● Editor: Rosalind Rowe, email: rosrowe@comcast.net

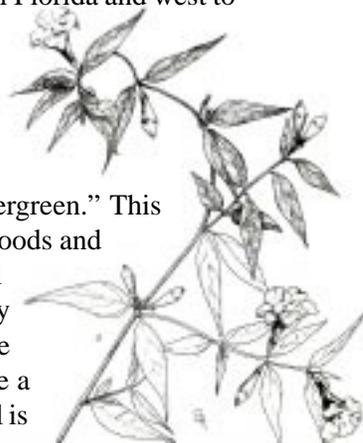
Species Spotlight

Gelsemium sempervirens, CAROLINA JESSAMINE and *Gelsemium rankinii* YELLOW JESSAMINE or RANKIN'S TRUMPETFLOWER

These plants are in the Loganiaceae family. They have showy (about 1.5 inches long), yellow, trumpet-shaped flowers on viny, reddish-brown stems 10-20' long. The leaves are opposite and lance-shaped to elliptic. Both of these lovelies are cold-hardy and will grow and bloom in sun or shade. They are native to southeastern U.S., ranging from Virginia to central Florida and west to Texas. They are not salt-tolerant.

Gelsemium (gel-SEM-ee-um) is from the Italian *gelsomino*, for true jasmine.

Sempervirens is for "evergreen." This species is common in the flatwoods and hammocks of north and central Florida. The flowers are usually solitary, bloom in winter and are highly fragrant. The seeds have a prominent wing. Hammock soil is best for planting.



G. sempervirens

G. rankinii prefers wetter conditions, such as bogs, acid swamps and floodplain forests. The flowers are usually in cymes of 3-5, bloom longer -- from fall through spring, but have a lighter to nonexistent fragrance. The seeds have no wing.

Both species attract hummingbirds, and provide dense foliage for cover and nesting sites for other birds. Although they are not overly aggressive, they can occasionally choke branches or a small tree. This plant is great for disguising a wire fence and also can be used for ground cover.

Note that all parts of this plant contain strychnine-related alkaloids, so eating it can be fatal and the sap may cause skin irritation in sensitive individuals. The nectar is also toxic to honeybees.

Both drawings by Grady W. Reinert from Godfrey & Wooten. 1981

Sabal minor Relies on Member Input

Please feel free to write up issues of interest to you. In fact, it would be great if someone else would do the *Species Spotlight* on occasion. All materials need to be to the editor by the 15th of the odd-numbered months -- January, March, May, July, September, November. Submit as email if you can, rosrowe@comcast.net; fax and snailmail are acceptable (941.360-8022).

H.R. 3824 (Pombo) FACT SHEET—An Analysis of Major Provisions

Reprinted from testimony given by the Native Plant Conservation Campaign and Plant Science and Conservation Organizations

H.R. 3824 substantively weakens the ESA and impedes our ability to conserve our natural heritage in several critical ways. Passage of the bill will:

- Reduce opportunities for species recovery through elimination of habitat protections
- Restrict both the type of science that can be used and which scientists may participate in species listing and conservation
- Introduce new bureaucratic hurdles to species listing and post-listing conservation
- Introduce unrealistic time limits for conservation measures to be developed before destructive projects can proceed

As scientific organizations we are concerned about the provisions that restrict protections for the habitat that supports endangered species. A primary principle of conservation biology is that habitat protection is fundamental to species conservation. We are also particularly disturbed by provisions restricting the types of science employed in endangered species conservation. Surely scientists with appropriate expertise, rather than Congress, are best qualified to determine what and how scientific information is used.

The Endangered Species Act currently requires that a destructive project cannot proceed until it is reviewed and approved by government scientists. HR 3824 would allow the majority of developers to proceed with environmentally harmful projects without carrying out any of the offsetting habitat conservation measures ordinarily required by the Endangered Species Act. Specifically, if the Fish and Wildlife Service cannot review permit applications within 90 days, it is deemed to have consented to the permit. Since the Services already cannot meet existing deadlines, the inevitable result is that the agencies would be completely overwhelmed, allowing myriad destructive projects to slip through unreviewed. (Section 13)

In those cases where the Fish and Wildlife Service does review a project within 90 days and request modifications or mitigation, the Service would then become obligated to pay the developer for any foregone profits. Thus, for example, if the Service allows a subdivision to be built on all of a 2,000-acre tract except a 10-acre riparian habitat area used by an endangered toad, the developer would be entitled to a federal government check for any profits not earned on the last 10 acres - even if the overall project is highly profitable. (Section 14)

Additional contacts regarding HR3824::

Susan Holmes, Earthjustice: (202) 667-4500

John Kostyack, National Wildlife Federation:
(202) 797-6879

Brian Nowicki, Center for Biological Diversity:
(520) 623-5252 x311

Andrew Wetzler, Natural Resources Defense
Council: (614) 840-0891

WANTED

FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT BLOOM CALENDAR

Anyone with information leading to our having a basic, month-to-month, year-round bloom calendar for Florida native plants -- please report to this editor!

Chapter Tips

The FNPS was at 2962 members recently, thanks in no small part to the outstanding work of our **Paynes Prairie Chapter** in Alachua County. Paynes Prairie recruits many new members, and gets lapsed members to rejoin, at their big spring and fall plant sales at Morningside Nature Center. Way to go, Paynes Prairie!

Habitat for Humanity applied to the **Serenoa Chapter** for recommendations for a native plant landscape for one of their homes. The chapter not only got them a plant list, but then provided the plants to the home..

Insurance Coverage

Every once in a while Administration gets questions about insurance, usually from chapters who want to know whether one event or another is covered by the society's liability insurance. Vice President Joan Bausch has been working diligently on this issue and has the answer (yes, chapters are covered). She also is pursuing increasing our coverage and finding out what to do when an event host requires you to provide a certificate of insurance for them.

Our insurance policy covers all chapters' activities except water based events. The meetings, field trips, plant sales or other events of an educational nature are covered.

Keep sign-in sheets for meetings and have a waiver form signed for field trips. FNPS will soon have sample wording for waiver forms. For water-based activities, PLEASE be sure your waiver notes that such activities are not covered.

To obtain a certificate of insurance, get a form and faxing instructions from Cammie, through info@fnps.org. If you need to add a named insured such as your meeting place or a homeowner who volunteers a garden, follow the same procedure; allow 15 days for records to be updated.

Book Review, *continued from page 4*

issue. Our state has spent well over \$13 million since 1995 on invasives control, and we aren't exactly winning. There is no way to put a dollar amount on the devastation to our heritage species and systems.

All in all, I applaud the effort in this revision. In addition to knowing how your garden should look throughout the year, there is now a list in the back of the book cataloging 44 non-native exotics, which is a good beginning reference for what *not* to plant (or for what to now remove). I would recommend this book as a supplemental reference on your gardening guides bookshelf, though again, always with the exhortation that you keep checking the FLEPPC and the noxious weeds information.

Applied Native Plant Conservation Grants Available

Endowment fund grants are available for research. Detailed information on the program is on www.fnps.org, under Programs, then under Conservation.

Other grants info: www.nfwf.org/grant_apply.cfm

A Hairy Moment Under the Lens

Here you are: you've actually remembered to bring your hand lens along on a walk *and* to pull it out for use to examine more closely this delicate little plant. But you now notice these hairy things on it that weren't so obvious before... Impress your walking mates with some fancy vocabulary, "Ah, this is most definitely ____ ____, because the leaf's upper surface is clearly glandular-pubescent, not glabrate to ciliate as it would be if it were ____ ____."

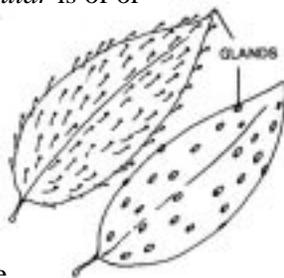
Ciliate: with a marginal fringe of hairs.

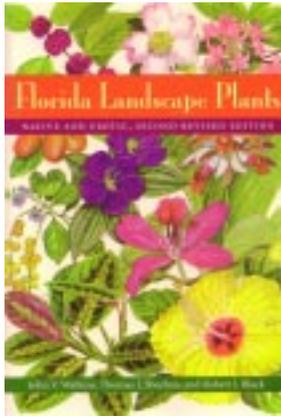
Glabrate: almost hairless; becoming smooth.

Glandular-pubescent: *glandular* is of or pertaining to a gland, gland-like, or bearing glands; *pubescent* can refer to short soft hairs, or to bearing any kind of hairs.

Trichome: a hair or hair-like outgrowth of the epidermis; it can be single- or multi-celled. All plant hairs are essentially some form of trichome.

Hungry for more? Include Harris and Harris' book, **Plant Identification Terminology** (Spring Lake Publishing 1994), with your breakfast reading....





Book Review

Florida Landscape Plants, Native and Exotic. 2nd Revised Edition.

John V. Watkins, Thomas J. Sheehan, Robert Black; Revised by John V. Watkins, Thomas J. Sheehan.

(c)2005 University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

Ah, the joys of building a garden! In my world, however, that joy turns to horror if I learn that the lovely shrub or fern that I've nurtured so carefully is the same species that is now responsible for choking to a monocultural death hundreds or thousands of acres of native habitat. When I saw that someone had taken the time to revise a Florida gardening book to reflect new knowledge about invasive plants, and tell us more about Florida native plants, I wanted to read it. In it, I have found some useful information as well as a surprising omission.

Florida Landscape Plants, Native and Exotic is designed as a reference book and is organized in alphabetical order, by genus. (A pronunciation key is included for those pesky scientific names.) There is a single index for both common and scientific names, so it is easy to find a plant listing. Each page is dedicated to one species, or generic type if there several similar varieties or subspecies. Each has a line drawing showing the more dominant or identifying characteristics. Each page lists family, closest relatives (common names), type of plant, height, growth zones, how to identify, habit of growth, foliage, flowers, fruits, season of maximum color, landscape uses, habitat, light and soil requirements, salt tolerance, availability, culture, propagation, pests, and miscellaneous notes.

I greatly appreciate that they include the season of maximum color. The timing of the color is an important part of my garden plan (as is the timing for maximum nutrition to wildlife, actually, but that information is not part of the purpose of this book). Be alert to the few inconsistencies in this, however. For instance, for Aloe, the season of maximum color is given as "Spring, when the blossoms unfurl," but the flowers are said to be "produced during the warm months;" I normally would have interpreted "the warm months" as summer. For the most part, though, this section is straightforward and useful.

The habitat description usually includes the geographic origin of the plant. This is vital information and it is wonderful that they include this. If the plant (or its variety) you are considering is not from your Florida zone, please - PLEASE - take the time to check for any recent reports on its behavior. Considering the purported reason behind this book's revision, it seems a little odd that this point is not made. Here are three sources to browse before you plant: the USDA and Florida noxious weed lists, and the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council information. The Noxious Weed lists include plants that are showing some invasive tendencies and that are pesky for economic reasons, but that have not yet reached the stage where they are considered invasive. The Federal list can be found through www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/weeds; the Florida list is at www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/enpp/botany/images/noxiousweedtable1.pdf -- but you can stop at the "botany" page and browse from there, too. The Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (www.fleppc.org) maintains a list of established non-native invasives by and for scientists and land managers, and updates it every two years.

We don't always know right away that we are introducing an invasive or pest exotic. It frequently can take a few years, or some slight shift in weather patterns or pollinators, to discover how badly behaved a plant can be. Even though the authors of this book had to denounce 44 species that they once encouraged Florida gardeners to use, plants that now are part of the havoc we gardeners have helped to create, there is nothing in their book to acknowledge that the same problem could ever occur again. It can. *Please* make checking these sources as important -- if not more -- to your gardening chores than watering or fertilizing. Do it frequently!! The encroachment of non-native exotics is a deeply serious

Continued on page 3

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