Florida Native Plant Society
Pine Lily Chapter

News & Notes
February 2021

Next Chapter Online Meeting

February 25, 2021 - 6:30pm

Join by clicking the link below
at 6:30pm on Thursday, February 25:
https://youtu.be/2qc_zmxytdc

Speaker: Francine Prager with Tampa Bay Bats

Topic: "Bats of the World" This is a comprehensive program highlighting bats throughout the world and Florida and their habitat. After the presentation there will be a question-and-answer period.

Native Plant Nursery

Green Isle Gardens Native Plant Nursery
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Groveland, FL 34736
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Meet Our Speaker

A native New Yorker, Francine attended New York University and later in life moved to Florida. In Florida for fourteen years, she has been volunteering with The Florida Bat Conservancy for many years. Francine learned all about bats and their care and eventually became a board member of the organization.

When the organization moved to the east coast of Florida about ten years ago, Francine founded 'Tampa Bay Bats' (tampabaybats.net), which is a bat rescue, rehabilitation and educational organization. She now speaks about bats throughout six counties doing presentations for schools, libraries and other organizations. Showing people live bats has helped some overcome their fear of bats, while others simply fall in love with the adorable and interesting creatures.

Plant Profile: Cabbage Palm (Sabal palmetto)

by Irene Paino

Nothing says Florida like a palm tree, so it's fitting that the state tree is sabal palm. Oddly enough though, the sabal palm is not a true tree, and as a palm, is more closely related to grasses. The sabal palm, also known as the cabbage palm, was designated the state tree in 1953 and occurs on the Florida state seal. There were years of debate before the sabal palm was selected as the state tree. Other trees up for consideration were the royal palm, slash pine, and longleaf pine. Early Floridians had a variety of uses for the sabal palm. The bud of the tree is edible and is known as "heart of palm" and swamp cabbage, the trunk and fronds were used to build shelter, and various fibrous parts were used to make cordage.

The Northern yellow bat, one of the bats Francine Prager will be discussing, is known to roost in the dead palm fronds of the Sabal palmetto.

Cabbage palm (*Sabal* palmetto) is native to Florida, grows throughout the state, and continues to grow north along the coast to North Carolina. It happens to also be the state tree of South Carolina. Cabbage palm is found growing in pine woodlands, hammocks, and on riverbanks. These plants are fairly tolerant of salt spray on foliage but are intolerant of salt in the root zone. Cabbage palms have curved, fan-shaped palm leaves with blades that are 3 to 4 feet long and petioles (leaf-stalks) that are 3 to 6 feet long. A full, round canopy forms atop a trunk that is 10 to 16 inches in diameter and grows to 40 feet tall. Branched inflorescences are produced in late spring and usually grow beyond the leaves, containing thousands of tiny, creamy-white, fragrant flowers that attract bees. Black fruits are produced in late summer and are consumed by wildlife. The immature leaves—sometimes called the "heart"—are edible and have a cabbage-like flavor.

Source: Sabal Palm - Gardening Solutions - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (ufl.edu)

Growing a Moss Garden in Central Florida

By Marti Wolf

Leucobryum albidum

What if, in addition to aesthetic value, one offered a resting place and home for local wildlife and provided nesting material for birds, all while requiring little maintenance? That's possible with a moss garden. While rare in Florida, with some planning and the right conditions, a part of your own landscape could become an oasis for local animal species and provide a visual delight by installing a moss garden.

Moss are a type of plant called bryophytes that have no roots and produce no flowers or vegetation. Instead, they have rhizoids - hairlike structures - that allow them to grow on surfaces like rocks and trees. Because moss lacks a complex root system, they absorb nutrients from their rhizoids or from the surrounding air.

Growing moss requires indirect sunlight and moisture, with higher moisture level promoting faster growth. Most mosses are only a single leaf layer thick, meaning during dry periods it is easy for them to completely dry out. Luckily, moss is hardy and easily reconstitutes in the rain or with watering.

Mosses don't require much maintenance. They don't need to be treated with pesticides or fertilizers, require minimal watering, and don't inhibit the growth of grass because they are grown in shaded areas. Mosses also work well in areas of gardens that don't offer the sunlight necessary to grow many flowers or shrubs.

Since they do not have roots, it is necessary to make sure no weeds or debris cover the moss, preventing it from absorbing water and nutrients. Some moss cultivators suggest placing a net over the moss and occasionally shaking any leaves or detritus material off the net for easy upkeep.

The use of natural limestone and coquina rocks offer a great way to introduce mosses into your garden, as the porous nature of the rocks allows the moss to anchor on to the surface easily. Several species of moss are especially well adapted to this kind of surface: Entodon, Hedwigia, and Ceratodon.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, *Entodon seductrix* is native to New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. This moss attaches to most surfaces, ranging from soil to concrete, grows rapidly, and can endure both direct and indirect sunlight.

Another species of Entodon - *Entodon cladorrhizans* - also known as Flat Glaze Moss, can grow in a variety of environments. According to Illinois Wildflowers, it thrives in areas with dormant deciduous trees, but it can grow on limestone in more shaded areas as well.

Hedwigia ciliata is similarly capable of growing in bright and dry environments. It is a good candidate for limestone or coquina cultivation because it is tolerant of more acidic pH levels like those found in these types of stone.

Similar to Entodon, *Ceratodon purpureus* is native to New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut and prefers full light to light shade. It grows best in soil that is sandier or contains clay, but coquina and limestone are also ideal surfaces for this species, said Illinois Wildflowers. It grows well in above-average humidity, making it a great candidate for the Florida weather. These mosses can be mail ordered and delivered.

There are (77) species of moss recorded in the Central Florida with vastly different vegetative and reproductive structures and a close look is very rewarding.[1]

The most abundant of these species is *Leucobryum albidum* (Dicranaceae family), which forms a large conspicuous mats on the dry ground of shady Pine Flatwoods and Oak Hammocks. Like most mosses, *Leucobryum* soaks up water from rainstorms and dries out in between. The leaves of this specie are unusually thick and there are several layers of cells, with only the single central layer being green. Above and below are essentially empty cells that fill up with water during a rainstorm.[1] In most mosses, as mention above, leaves are just one cell thick, and dry up rather quickly during dry weather. Mosses in general can tolerate desiccation for long periods of time, and spring back to life quickly when wet.

The distinctive succulent leaves of *Leucobryum* are short, stiff and folded lengthwise, creating a distinct upper groove. The leaves are crowded at the ends of upright stems, and the sporangia emerge from the tips of the stems.[1] (photos to the left and below are a magnetized view).

Leucobryum glaucum

Another species, *Leucobryum glaucum* has longer leaves, but is not as common and grows in somewhat moister areas.

Wildlife Benefits of Moss

Beyond the ease of growing moss, Cathy Burk of the Habitat Network describes the incredible benefits moss provides for local wildlife.

Fireflies seek moisture to lay their eggs, and mosses that you grow can offer the perfect home for young firefly larvae. Once they mature, you will be treated to the twinkling dancing of lightning bugs on summer evenings which are a rare treat since these insects have been extirpated from many areas in Florida.

Insects commonly live in mosses, and these plants teeming with life offer food for Florida native birds. Some birds also use pieces of the moss as soft construction material for their nests.

Mosses are environmentally beneficial as well. Like any photosynthesizing plant, they "fix" carbon dioxide, reducing the amount of the greenhouse gas present in the atmosphere.

If your moss can anchor itself in soil, it helps prevent erosion. The rhizoids hold the soil in place and can limit the amount of dirt washed away during rainfall. If your soil is nutrient-deficient due to continued erosion or just the regional soil quality, moss can most likely grow in these patches and prevent further damage since it doesn't require a high level of nutrients from its substrate.

Another type of moss that may come to mind is Spanish moss, often seen hanging from the trees throughout Florida. Spanish moss is not a moss, but it does have some of the ecological benefits of the mosses discussed. Spanish moss, *Tillandsia usneoides*, an epiphytic flowering plant, is a bromeliad, a category of plant that grows on other plants and absorbs water and nutrients from the air like bryophytes.

Because Spanish moss only uses the plants it grows on for structural support, it does not deprive the housing plant of any water or nutrients. Already healthy trees do not suffer any adverse effects from the presence of the stringy plant, and it provides nesting spaces for butterflies. Insects use Spanish moss for cover and birds commonly use the plant in the building of their nests. Some amphibians, reptiles, and bats can also use the moss as a form of shelter.

Tillandsia usneoides is native to Florida and has many of the attributes of moss, including its ability to survive during dry periods due to water retention and benefits to wildlife. The Seminole bat, which will be discussed by Francine Prager, frequently roosts in Spanish moss.

Whatever moss or epiphyte you choose to grow in your garden, it will provide a wealth of ecological benefits and interesting viewing.

[1] Frederick B. Essig, Associate Professor Emeritus, Department of Inegrative Biology, University of South Florida

Tillandsia usneoides – Spanish Moss

Tillandsia recurvata – Ball Moss

Pleopeltis polypodioides – Resurrection Fern
(Epiphyte example)

Message from the President

Valerie Anderson is working on a Pine Lily Chapter "welcome video". It will be posted to our Pine Lily Chapter YouTube Channel at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQRcy4-xdCGibBd_70uw9UA and also used by the Board of Directors and members to share so that others can learn who we are, what we do and our mission in order to expand the membership. Membership Chair and Intern Marti Wolf are working on scripts. Our second intern, Blake Osman, is from Rollins College and is working on fundraising opportunities and grants to fund our Osceola County Native Plant Demonstration Garden. In the February Board of Directors meeting, it was decided to reinstate in person monthly field trips tentatively starting in March with distancing, mask wearing and limited numbers of participants. More information coming soon! If you have questions, comments or ideas to share, please contact me.

Karina Veaudry, President
Pine Lily Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society
(321) 388-4781

Pine Lily Chapter Board of Directors

- Karina Veaudry – President
- VACANT – President Elect
- Tayler Figueroa – Chapter Representative
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- Sandy Webb – Conservation Committee Chair
- Jennifer Adams – Membership Committee Chair
- Irene Paino – Newsletter Editor
- Mark Gaspar – Website Manager
- VACANT – Publicity & Social Media Coordinator

Upcoming Meetings / Presentations

Links to online meeting presentations are sent via email to members.

- **Thursday, February 25:** Francine Prager
  - Bats of the World
- **Thursday, March 25:** Mark Robinson
  - Enriching Your Soil Using Amendments and Plants
- **Thursday, April 22:** Scott Davis
  - Milkweeds of Florida

NOTE: Monthly Field Trips will tentatively commence again in March with social distancing and masks required. Information will be sent via email and the next newsletter.

Support Pine Lily Through AmazonSmile

Please consider choosing **Florida Native Plant Society Pine Lily Chapter Inc** as your charity when placing Amazon orders through AmazonSmile. Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the Pine Lily Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society.

Thank You!

Let's keep in touch!

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