

## Magnolia Chapter FNPS Monthly Update: June 2012

“Down there we have a plant that grows out in the woods,  
And in the field ... looks somethin like a turnip green,  
And everybody calls it poke salad...poke salad” (Jerry Reed)

### Chapter Happenings:

June 2012, and the heat was on. Tropical Storm Debby blew by and filled North Florida's lakes and rivers. After a few good days, the weather turned hot and muggy and rain lilies and chanterelles made an appearance. Winds turned to the southwest, the afternoon rain pattern turned on and a summer dormancy settled in on the Magnolia Chapter. No chapter meetings are held in the summer, yet chapter members continued flying the flag.

### National Trail Day

Saturday June 2<sup>nd</sup>, a most beautiful North Florida day, Magnolia Chapter members joined the Apalachee Chapter of the Florida Trail Association, Trail & Ski and others for the “world's largest trail-gating party.” The FTA folks hosted a 2.5 mile loop hike, refreshments and a wagon ride for a good time at the City of Tallahassee's Elinor Knapps Park. The park, which includes water management district lands and over 700 plant species according to Dr. Loran Anderson's plant survey, is located on the north side of Tallahassee off Miller Landing Road and next to the Forest Meadows sports fields. The Magnolia Chapter's colorful plant booth and exotic plant removal information attracted a lot of attention and a nice wad of cash for the blooming brown eyed susan donated by Trillium Gardens. Karen Berkeley, a recent Chapter member and active FTA volunteer is organizing a Phipps Park coral ardisia exotic plant removal for the trail club and has been “downloading” the experience of expert exotic removal hands such as Mike Jenkins and Leigh Brooks. See the “Help Wanted” section below for more information on this project.

### June Plant of the Month – Pokeweed:

With no chapter meeting to show and tell a beautiful garden native plant, Fritz Wettstein picked pokeweed as the June plant of the month. It's a All-American plant champion that deserves some respect.

Pokeweed or Pokeberry (*Phytolacca americana*), Florida's sole member of the *Phytolaccaceae* plant family, is a “coarse, glabrous perennial herb” (A.F. Clewell) that vies with giant ragweed (*Ambrosia trifida*) for the title of the South's Champion Gigantic Weed, growing over ten feet tall with an equal spread. Pokeweed is not only edible (poke salad is collected from the first spring flush), it has dye-worthy purple berries and a beautiful form. The long, simple green leaves are held up in an umbrella of foliage by smooth, symmetrical branches supported by a stout (if hollow) trunk. Summer's purple berries follow spring's clusters of small white flowers above the green canopy. A ruderal (weedy) plant, Pokeweed is found in floodplains, forested areas, dune slacks and backyards. A sunny exposure paints a red sunburn on the foliage, branches and trunk. Along with Brer Rabbit's briar brambles, Pokeweed is a fitting backdrop for a hot humid Song of the South.

### Roadside Wildflowers

Leon County is in the process of amending its roadside mowing resolution to include the county portion of SR 267. The change has FDOT's and county staff's support and is on the consent agenda for the July 10th county commission meeting. Eleanor Dietrich has been leading this effort and is very excited about its support from partner organizations such as the Big Bend Scenic Byway, and coordination underway by the FNPS Sarracenia Chapter to include Wakulla County in a roadside mowing schedule for Bloxham Cutoff that promotes Florida's native wildflowers.

### Grants

The Northwest Florida Water Management District headquarters office will soon be graced with a publically accessible demonstration garden using Florida natives, partly funded by the Florida Wildflower Foundation “La Florida, Land of Flowers” Community Grant Program. They have selected a sunny, high visibility area near the front entrance of District headquarters in Gadsden County where visitors arrive to attend meetings, apply for permits, or get water-related information. Here, signs will announce the Florida Wildflower grant program and identify plant varieties. They plan to remove a buried stormwater drain pipe that discharges directly to the parking lot, leaving surrounding sod dead and dry. The pipe discharge will be replaced below-grade rain garden that absorbs rain and roof runoff. We also want to place a rain barrel under a nearby downspout, so that stormwater doesn't erode top soil

and water can be stored to irrigate the wildflowers during dry spells. Wildflowers like black eyed susan, purple cone flower, sunflower, gallardia, coreopsis, and blanket flower will be purchased as bedding plants, watered and mulched appropriately to ensure survival. They will in turn reseed the area and keep the garden growing. Additionally, trial release plants have been offered by NRCS, including purple bluestem, two blue foliage eastern gamagrass (fakahatcheegrass), a blue lopsided indiagrass, the new Purple Haze muhlygrass that is a joint release with UF/IFAS, and a maidencane and blue maidencane that will add structure to the garden. These plants will also be irrigated by rain and roof runoff.

### **News on the Conservation Front**

The Magnolia Chapter Executive Committee, with enthusiastic support from Board of Directors members, has voted to assist The Nature Conservancy's efforts in hiring a position to lead the attack on exotic species in the Apalachicola National Forest. In addition to cogongrass spreading along Forest Road 13, *Lygodium* and other invasive species are threatening the diverse forest flora. The small \$500 conservation grant from the chapter is intended to assist TNC with the administrative costs of the position, funded by the U.S. Forest Service, and to leverage additional funding by other conservation partners.

### **Help Wanted**

#### **Elinor Phipps Park Invasive Plant Removal**

Karen Berkley, member of the Apalachee Chapter of the Florida Trail Association, and new member to the Magnolia Chapter of FNPS envisions: "... which may be pie-in-the-sky, is, using the massive, horrifying invasion of Coral Ardisia (and others) in Phipps Park as an "example project" for volunteers that would involve a continuing mutual effort between FNPS and FTA in consultation with COT (aka Chuck) and FWMD (aka Tyler/John/Coakley), (and maybe the forest service) to help eradication efforts. The idea would be to make this project of interest to FI National Scenic Trail hikers, other hikers, as well as the already-interested native plant people. Part of this effort would be educational, mainly for hikers, who could learn from this project the most effective way to do a little bit each time they hike wherever they are hiking. Everyone's expertise will be valuable." If you can help, Karen can be contacted at: [kjberkley@gmail.com](mailto:kjberkley@gmail.com).

#### **Gholson Nature Park, Chattahoochee.**

Leigh Brooks is seeking people with good eyes to locate and protect two species of rare lilies in the park, *Lilium superbum*, and *Lilium michauxii*. If you are up for a summer weekend morning treasure hunt before the sun gets too high in the sky, contact Leigh Brooks: [lbrooks2wd@nettally.com](mailto:lbrooks2wd@nettally.com).

#### **Big Bend Environmental Forum, July 26, 2012**

Fritz Wettstein is recruiting volunteers for the plant booth at the July 26th candidate forum at Tallahassee City Hall. Help is needed to set up the both at 4:45 pm and talk to folks about issues important to native plant conservation. Volunteers will be able to attend the candidate forum immediately following the meet and greet time. Contact Fritz at [fwettstein@comast.net](mailto:fwettstein@comast.net) if you have an hour or two available on a Thursday night to assist.