



Conservation Notes

March 2020

Upcoming area events:

Now-March 30 - Registration open for the 2nd Annual West Pasco Audubon Nature and Wildlife of Tampa Bay Photography Competition. Visit the West Pasco Audubon webpage for more info

March 1 - Music in the Woods. The Meriggiare String Quartet performing at Brooker Creek Auditorium. 2-4pm. \$5 per person suggested donation.

March 14 - Stargazing at Starkey. 8-10pm Jay B. Starkey Park.

March 14, 21, and 28 - UF/IFAS Advanced Plant Identification. Three-part series from 10-2 at Brooker Creek Preserve. Contact them to register - fee required.

March 17 - Sunset Paddling Trip. 6:30-9:30 at SunWest Park.

March Monthly Gardening:

Annuals: Replace declining winter annuals with varieties such as angelonia, gazania, and salvia that will provide color now and into the summer months.

Bulbs: Plant caladium for a showy tropical display all summer.

Herbs: In addition to their culinary value, many herbs are ornamental and attract butterflies to the garden.

Azaleas: Prune azaleas just after plants finish blooming to shape or produce a fuller plant.

Shrubs and trees: Prune when new growth begins after the end of the dormant season. To guard next season's blooms, begin pruning after the last flowers fade but before the new buds set.

Palms and shrubs: Fertilize palms, azaleas, camellias, and other ornamental shrubs if needed.

Irrigation: Check sprinkler systems for efficient water use.

Florida Native Plant Spotlight: by Mary Ellen Gotto

Up until now, all the plants I have written about need to be planted directly into the garden soil. The two plants in this article, Cardinal Flower and Scarlet Hibiscus, need to be planted in moist, wet soil conditions such as a wetland, along a creek or just a very wet area of your yard. Since I have no such area in my yard, I planted the Cardinal flower in a pot without holes to keep the soil very moist. In my first moderate size pot, I planted one small plant, but in a year or so, they multiplied easily so now I have four moderate to large pots filled with these beautiful red flowers. In hot, dry weather, I had to add water to the pots daily or they wilted. To solve this problem, I had Frank drill holes in the bottom of the pots and the pots are sitting in tubs of water sunk in my gardens -- no more adding water! I then purchased a gorgeous, red Scarlet Hibiscus that also needed to be continuously kept wet. A couple of years later, I added a white, Scarlet Hibiscus to my garden, again in a large pot. The white color is so intense that it is just spectacular. I do add water to these pots frequently but maybe some day, I will talk Frank into digging a small pond in my garden where I can sink my large pots of Hibiscus. The other main difference with these plants versus plants grown in my garden soil is that, since I use commercial potting soil, these plants need to be fertilized. I use a slow-acting fertilizer twice a year.

Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

Best Feature: most brilliant scarlet red flowers of any species in North America.

Soil: Rich, acid, poorly drained. Prefers moist to wet conditions.

Light: Full sun to partial shade.

Blooms: Summer to Fall/early Winter.

Bloom Color: Bright red, showy.

Height: 2-4 ft. Width: 1 ft.

Comments: attracts hummingbirds and butterflies.



Scarlet Hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*)

Best Feature: large, red flowers, easy to grow, pest free, fast growth rate.

Soil: Organic, fertile, moist, wet conditions.

Light: Full sun to partial shade.

Blooms: Spring through Summer.

Bloom color: Bright Red, large and showy. Also, species has a white, scarlet Hibiscus

Height: 4-6 ft Width: 2-5 ft.

Comments: Easy to grow. Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds.



Florida Friendly Landscape Suggestions from UF IFAS:

- Mow grass at the right height to encourage a deeper, more drought- and pest-resistant root system.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn to recycle nutrients back into the soil.
- Prevent grass clippings, fertilizer, and other debris from going into storm drains and water bodies.
- Reduce mowing and raking by removing grass beneath tree canopies and creating large, "self-mulching" areas.
- Improve your soil by adding organic matter.
- Create swales, berms, terracing, and/or a rain garden to capture and filter stormwater runoff.

Nature Coast Chapter
Florida Native Plant Society

**Native
Plant
Sale** 

*Land O'Lakes
Heritage Park*
5401 Land O Lakes Blvd (Rt 41)
Land O Lakes, FL 34639

Sat. - March 28
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

- ❖ Large selection of nursery grown plants
- ❖ Free literature and nursery information
- ❖ Native plant books for sale
- ❖ Members available to answer questions
- ❖ Plant profile for each plant purchased
- ❖ Carts available for plant transportation
- ❖ Master Gardner information table

Web Sites:
Florida Native Plant Society: fnps.org
Nature Coast Chapter:
PascoNativePlants.org
Facebook.com/PascoNativePlants/