

# January Newsletter (Copy 01)

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## Coccoloba Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society



## Workshops & discussion at Coccoloba's January 9th meeting

January 2014

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Join the Coccoloba chapter on Thursday, January 9th at 7pm at the Calusa Nature Center for an interactive, informal, and interesting discussion about Florida native plants!

To begin, the infamous John Sibley will lead a in-depth discussion about ten featured plants, to include Wild Cotton among nine other personal favorites. John will bring samples of each of the plants, and include information about how to grow the plant, its ethnobotany, wildlife value, and other interesting tidbits. The conversation is meant to be interactive, so feel free to ask

HOUSE

- New Meeting Location

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CONVERSATION IS MEANT TO BE INTERACTIVE, SO FEEL FREE TO ASK questions, chime in with growing secrets, and add to the discussion!

The second portion of the evening will include "What's bugging your natives?" The chapter is looking to compile information about wildlife and plant interactions. Which plants have the most wildlife activity this month? Which plants attract the greatest and least numbers of insects or birds? This lively discussion will include questions and answers about what's currently happening in your yard.

Come to the meeting with pictures, observations, insects for identification, and any other information about the fauna in your own backyard!

The discussion begins at 7pm with socializing beginning at 6:30pm. The Calusa Nature Center is located at 3450 Ortiz Avenue, Fort Myers; just north of the intersection of Colonial Boulevard and Ortiz Avenue. Guests and anyone interested in the FNPS is welcome to attend. See you there!

## President's Corner

**by John Sibley, Coccoloba Chapter President**

What a mess! Yes, those Tamarind, Oak, Strangler Fig trees, and even the Florida Privet, are shedding copious amounts of leaves now as we begin our winter season. The best part of this annual process is that they are producing new leaves almost simultaneously and will be good as new within a few weeks. And look at all those shrubs and trees producing fruits and berries! The Slash Pines are dropping cones everywhere! Don't tell anyone, but I gather them up on occasion and toss them on lawns that have lush dark green Floratam grass. Works great to ruin the sharp edge on any lawnmower blade. And the delightful fragrance of the Sweet Acacia is wafting in the breeze to top it all off.

Folks from "up north" are inclined to believe that we don't have seasons in Southwest Florida. It's always just green year 'round they say. Well, we know better and once we become aware of the true seasonal changes, we can take delight in the subtle changes they offer. As you may recall, I do enjoy the onset of winter, particularly because those beautiful Painted Buntings show up and make frequent visits during the day to feast on the seeds that we've provided. Can you guess where they nest at night? In "messy" brush piles covered with leaf litter! So let all of us Coccoloba folks get out

messy brush piles covered with real litter. So let all of us COCCOVIDA folks get out there and plant a shrub like Firebush that will provide fruit for our over-winter bird friends. Let's put away all of the herbicides, pesticides and all the rest of those insidious "icides" and instead, provide habitat for the birds to rest. LET'S MAKE A MESS!

## Conference News Flash

### by Marlene Rodak, Conference Chair

The Xavier Cortada Flor500 Native Plant Exhibit will be opening on Saturday, May 17th during the Growing Native Conference. The gallery opening, conveniently located between the FGCU Cohen Center and the Saturday Social at South Village, will feature 59 native plants from our region (region 7). Each of these 59 plants is recreated by an artist from our region. (Bill Hammond and Mike Workman are two of the artists.) These 59 pieces will be added to the other seven regions' offerings to create a bouquet of 500 Florida native plants. This gallery will offer a wine and cheese reception from 5-7 on Saturday, May 17th. For more information on the reception, go to:

[http://www.xaviercortada.com/events/event\\_details.asp?id=384589&group=](http://www.xaviercortada.com/events/event_details.asp?id=384589&group=)

For more information on the exhibit itself, go to: <http://www.xaviercortada.com/?page=FLOR500gardens7>

For up-to-the-moment information on the Growing Native Conference, keep checking at: <http://fnps.org/conference/>



## Plant ID trip to the Mound

U.S. Forest Service, Fort Myers District

# HOUSE, Fort Myers Beach

by Marlene Rodak

Several Coccoloba members met at the Mound House on Fort Myers Beach on Friday, December 6th for a plant ID exercise. We were joined by about a dozen Mound House volunteers wanting to learn more about their native vegetation around the property.

Parke Lewis, the Cultural Resources Environmental Coordinator, gave a brief overview of the current plans which included an explanation of the three facets of the property's plantings: 1) scientific and medicinal; 2) coastal dune hammock; and 3) a 1921 garden, since the house is being restored to its 1921 condition. The property is 3 acres and is still being restored.

Jim Rodwell led the tour, starting near the parking lot, describing each native plant. Gayle Edwards discussed the butterfly properties, if applicable, and Dick Workman discussed the history and uses of the plant. Then, if there were specific questions about a plant, the group provided feedback, such as pruning techniques, lifespan, etc. It was a lively bunch with a lot of interaction – particularly when critters joined the party. There were crabs climbing a tree along the water and an invasive iguana that popped out for a closer look.

After the plant tour, the group, under Dick's leadership, measured the massive strangler fig on the property for "champion" status. Then, they headed to the underground exhibit to see the new presentation being developed.

We found the exhibit tremendously interesting as we sat beside the cutout of the shell mound while the film explained what we saw. The underground area also provided a damp, cool, cave-like environment on the warm, sunny day. There were color-coded lights to "point out" the various areas of the mound being discussed in the film. Theresa Schober narrated the presentation which provided a fabulous and educational archaeological view of the mound.

We finished the day with a stop at the meadow planting areas in the back. We discussed options for plant diversity and ways to reduce the weeds as the wildflowers got established.

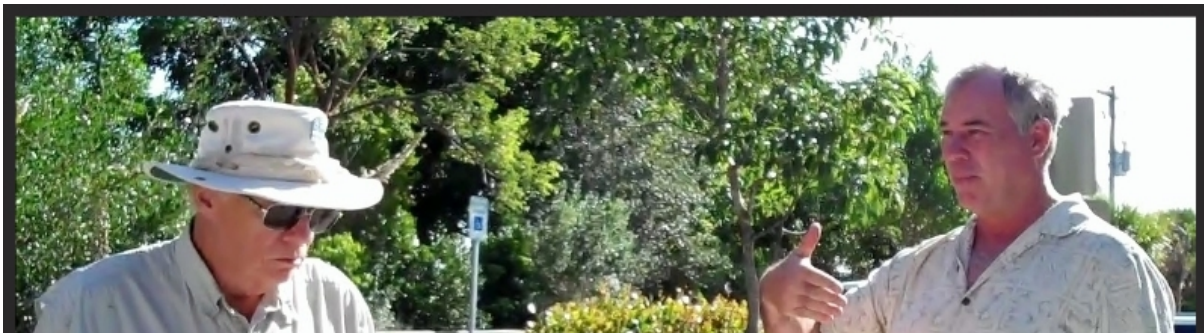
Everybody enjoyed the event and agreed it would be a worthwhile addition to the "Growing Native" Conference as a low-impact field trip. The Mound House is located at 451 Connecticut Street, Fort Myers Beach, FL, 33931. More information can be obtained online at: [www.moundhouse.org](http://www.moundhouse.org)

Photo (*above*): Attendees at the Mound House field trip.

Photo (*below, top*): Jim Rodwell & Parke Lewis beginning the tour.

Photo (*below, bottom left*): Gayle Edwards, Jim Rodwell, & a participant discussing native plants.

Photo (*below, bottom right*): Jim Rodwell & an attendee during the tour.





## **Please note our new meeting location!**

**In case you missed the announcement, Coccoloba monthly meetings are now being held at the Calusa Nature Center. The Nature Center is located at 3450 Ortiz Avenue, Fort Myers; just north of the intersection of Colonial Boulevard and Ortiz Avenue).**

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