

Wildflower Gazette

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What's not to like about Florida's native wildflowers?

On Sept. 12, I emerged from Leu Garden's Camellia Room in Orlando to check on volunteers who were signing in members and guests for the first-ever annual meeting of the Florida Wildflower Foundation's membership. I was startled but pleased to see a line of people that crept halfway down the long hallway.

The long-ago image of Sally Field at the Oscars podium popped into my head. "You like me, you really like me!" she proclaimed as she accepted her award. Seeing so many people – 120! – eager to learn more about our state's native wildflowers was a little like that Sally moment. "They like them, they really *like* them!" I thought about wildflowers.

Indeed, our participants were hungry to learn as much as they could from the afternoon's three engaging speakers.

Thanks to the work of the Foundation and partners such as the Florida Native Plant Society, Association of Florida Native Nurseries, the Florida Wildflower Seed and Plant Growers Association, the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs and UF-IFAS' Master Gardener program, the advantages of using Florida's native wildflowers and plants in our landscapes are becoming a little more widely known each day. Take that building interest and toss in experts preaching the native gospel, and you have a winning recipe for Florida.

As interest grows and more residents "go native," they will begin to ask nurseries for Florida's own wildflowers, plants and trees (by their scientific names, of course). That demand helps build momentum in our native seed and plant industries.

There are many reasons to use natives in our landscapes. As we deal with the issues surrounding the overuse of pesticides and herbicides, the loss of the sense of place that is *La Florida*, dwindling wild habitat, and the devastation of ecosystem biodiversity, we are reminded to "put back" what has been taken from our land of flowers.

— *Lisa Roberts*
Executive Director

Gary Henry: A true friend for 3 decades

Gary Henry (right), a Foundation board member and retired FDOT landscape architect, was the first recipient of the Foundation's "Friend of Florida's Wildflowers" award. He accepted the honor from board Chair Jeff Caster, also an FDOT landscape architect, at the Sept. 12 annual meeting.



Henry has promoted Florida's native wildflowers for three decades and was instrumental in establish-

ing the State Wildflower license tag. He continues to devote himself tirelessly to the Foundation's work and has made generous gifts of support for the last three years.



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120 attend FWF's first members' meeting

By Dixie Tate

If you were among the 120 lucky folks in the audience at Orlando's Leu Gardens Sept. 12, you were treated to enlightening presentations by Florida native-wildflower royalty: Dr. Craig Huegel of Hawthorn Hill Wildflowers, Seminole; Brightman Logan of All Native LLC, San Antonio, and Dr. Walter Kingsley Taylor, author of several books and University of Central Florida professor emeritus.

The occasion was the first-ever annual meeting of the Florida Wildflower Foundation. Besides tending to business and updating members on the Foundation's latest efforts to conserve and preserve the state's native wildflowers, the meeting featured book sales and signings, a raffle, and goody bags to stuff with information on wildflowers and native plants.

As "the first speaker at the first meeting," Huegel regaled the audience with narrative and pictures illustrating the state's rich diversity – third richest in the nation, in fact, when it comes to wildflower diversity. "The state is absolutely loaded with wildflowers," Huegel said, noting that 3,500 native species have been identified.

Given such abundance, the challenge, said Huegel, is "to get more plants out there and available." To do that, growers need to make wildflowers significant to homeowners. "The solution isn't to tell people to do it because it's pretty or because it'll save water." Rather, the approach should be one of responding to the basic human need to be more connected to nature and fostering the idea that wildflowers are an integral part of that connection.



(From left) Meeting speakers Brightman Logan, Dr. Walter K. Taylor and Dr. Craig Huegel.

"One way to do it is to look at wildflowers and their value to wildlife," Huegel said. Wildflowers are more than just bright spots in the landscape – they provide nectar for pollinating insects and hummingbirds, food for larval butterflies and moths and for other insects in general. Wildflowers also provide seeds for seed-eaters and food for herbivores, such as rabbits and deer.

Once the wildflower-wildlife connection is made, it is helpful to know how to use native wildflowers and plants in the landscape – the subject of Logan's talk. And again, the opportunity to drive home the point that it is "important to pick plants that are endemic to our area" and that help lay the foundation for a

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Dr. Walter K. Taylor, whose new book is about identifying Florida's wild grasses, signs a book for a fan.



Chair Jeff Caster presents retiring board member Nancy Rodlun with a certificate of appreciation.

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“landscape that functions the way it should without all the additives.” Logan offered attendees a list of do’s and don’ts (see Page 4) for establishing a native-wildflower area, as well as some key maintenance tips, including a couple that often prove to be the “downfall of many a great native landscape”— don’t use too much water and fertilizer.

Taylor, the final speaker to take the podium, kicked off his presentation with the promise to tell the audience “a little bit about this flowery land we call Florida.” His “high-speed tour” of Florida habitats included animals and plants of interest, which he illustrated with photos from his statewide travels.

Taylor spoke passionately of Florida’s longstanding designation as a paradise. “The state has been raped and ripped and scraped,” he said. “It’s not so much a paradise these days.”

Thank you to our meeting volunteers!

Tina Drake, Dixie Tate, Carole Simmons and Nancy Tyree

If you would like to volunteer to help spread the word about Florida’s native wildflowers, please call Lisa Roberts at 407-353-6164 or email flawildflowers@gmail.com.



FWF receives \$5,000 grant

The Florida Wildflower Foundation recently was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Elizabeth Ordway Dunn Foundation in South Florida. The gift offset almost half the cost of our strategic planning session.

FWF is deeply grateful for the assistance of the Dunn Foundation, which is committed to environmental grant-making in Florida. To learn more, visit www.eodunn.org.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter!



Now you can follow the Florida Wildflower Foundation on Facebook. After logging in, become a fan of the “Florida Wildflower Foundation” page. While you’re at it, befriend Lisa Roberts to keep up with our news. You can also follow our “tweets” at twitter.com/flawildflowers.



Chair of the Board Jeff Caster recognizes Immediate Past Chair Anne Mackay (right) for her leadership, as Executive Director Lisa Roberts looks on.

On a brighter note, though, Taylor said that while the “state is losing ground quickly, there is still a lot to see” – including such diverse places as Florida Caverns State Park in the Panhandle and rural counties that sport tremendously showy wildflowers due to minimal development.

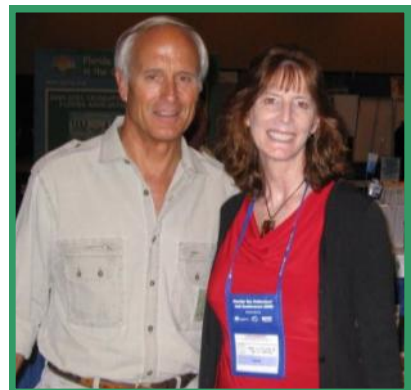
FWF members elect new officers

New officers were elected to the board by FWF members during the Sept. 12 meeting. These board members will serve on the Executive Committee:

Jeff Caster, Chair; Terry Zinn, Vice Chair; Gary Henry, Secretary; Carolyn Schaag, Treasurer; and Anne Mackay, Immediate Past Chair.

Jack Hanna promotes flower power

Jack Hanna, star of *Animal Adventures*, told Florida tax collectors at a conference in September about the important work being done with donations made with the purchase of the State Wildflower license plate and 17 other conservation tags. Afterward, he stopped by to see FWF’s Lisa Roberts.



A bit of trivia: Jack began his career at Florida’s Sanford Zoo (now Central Florida Zoo).



Grower Terry Zinn's driveway is lined with Dye Flower (*Coreopsis basalis*).

It's fall — time to plant your wildflower seeds!

By Dixie Tate

You know the old saying: There's no time like the present. That rings particularly true when it comes to Florida's native wildflowers this time of year. Fall has arrived, and for those who would like to be able to enjoy a touch of native beauty in the spring, this is the perfect time to plant.

Fall presents just the right growing conditions. "You can plant almost everything in the fall," says Terry Zinn, president of Wildflowers of Florida, Alachua. "And when the right weather comes along in the spring, they start to stretch up."

Though fall is the preferred time to start, planting can begin as early as September in the Panhandle and as late as January in the southern tip of the state.

Zinn's wildflower spread began in 1996 as a desire to improve the looks of a long driveway on his property. That eventually grew into a quest to find out how to take a species from the wild "and grow it so other people can enjoy it." Now his 40-acre farm includes 3½ acres covered with landscape fabric for growing wildflowers and collecting seed.

Whether you have a 5- by 5-foot space, a 2-foot-wide area along a sidewalk or an entire backyard, there's nothing like a few wildflowers to add some color to your landscape. Those who live in apartments or condos will be happy to know that no space is too small. Porch? Balcony? All that is needed is a pot, some sand and some organic soil and gravel in the bottom to hold moisture.

Step-by-step planting

1. Choose a sunny location that is free of weeds.
2. Determine suitable species, using such sources as the Association of Florida Native Nurseries' Web site, www.afnn.org.
3. Determine when to sow seed in your area.
4. Start site prep a month prior to seeding.
5. Mow site one day before seeding.
6. Scratch or firm up soil. Don't till.
7. Sow seed.
8. Work seed into soil.
9. Irrigate.
10. Keep weeds out.
11. Do not fertilize the first year.



Tropical Sage (*Salvia coccinea*)

For more information on planting your garden, go to YouTube.com and enter "Florida Wildflowers" to view a two-part video.

Where to buy native seeds

Native wildflower seeds are available from the Florida Wildflower Seed and Plant Growers Association in Crescent City. Call 352-988-8117 or visit www.floridawildflowers.com. Florida Wildflower Foundation members receive a free packet of seeds when they buy five packets.

FWF Calendar

We hope to see you at these upcoming events. If you would like to volunteer to host the FWF booth, please contact Lisa Roberts at 407-353-6164.

8 a.m.-5 p.m., Oct. 17, Bok Tower Gardens, Lake Wales: Executive Director Lisa Roberts and board Vice Chair Terry Zinn will host the Foundation's booth at the Boktoberfest festival.

10 a.m.-4 p.m. Nov. 14, Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens: Come on by and say hello to Terry as he hosts a booth and sells wildflower seeds.

9 a.m.-4 p.m. March 6, Wekiva Riverfest, Wekiwa Springs State Park, Apopka: Visit our booth to pick up *Coreopsis* seeds and information!