



Lake Beautyberry

FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

Neta Villalobos-Bell

The Mighty Dung Beetle

Even though I knew of dung beetles, it was quite a surprise to actually see one on the move in our yard. What a marvelous feat. They can move a dung ball weighing 50 - 200 times their body weight. And the strongest, the Horned Dung Beetle, can pull 1141 times its weight!

And why, what is this dung ball? In a few other words, manure, droppings, excrement, feces, scat. The dung beetle locates the dung through smell, like many other insects, from receptors in their antennae. The dung is used to feed their young after hatching. Even some Florida butterflies use the nutritious dung.

- Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*): Sip liquids from animal manure alongside roadside puddles.
- Brush-footed butterflies (Nymphalidae): Families like Red Admirals, Buckeyes, and Tortoiseshells frequently visit fresh or decomposing droppings.
- Swallowtails: Tiger swallowtails and zebra longwings are also recorded among various mixed groups on mineral rich waste.



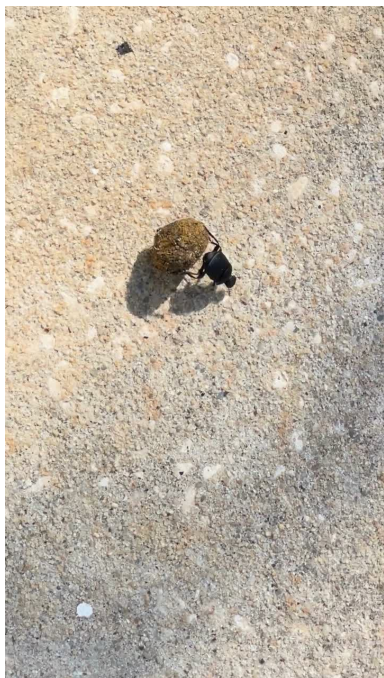
Image: Terminix Website

Is this just another insect to kill? Not at all. They provide valuable ecological and economic services. A study estimated the net value of dung beetles at about 1 million per year for US agriculture alone. Dung decomposition integrates the natural fertilizer into the soil and increases soil permeability through aeration. It minimizes the other parasites and pest flies that accumulate on dung. It provides secondary seed dispersal from dung. It increases forage for agroecosystems.

When it comes to the dung beetle, now scientists want to know if their interactions with E. coli-infested scat could reduce the chances of E. coli being transferred to the produce. Some new studies have shown that when dung beetles break down and take away manure, it can limit E. coli's contact with a plant. This can also potentially reduce the concentration of the bacteria found in the soil, decreasing exposure to this dangerous strain of bacteria.

Be on the look for the dung beetle in your yard on other resources, such as, carrion, decomposing fruits, fungi, flowers, and even live or dead millipedes. It's a beneficial insect.

**CLICK HERE TO VIEW
A DUNG BEETLE!**



Resources

Science Direct, Studies in Natural Products Chemistry, 2024, Volume 82,

Chapter 13 - The chemical ecology of dung beetles and the potential applications of their bioactive compound, pages 405-423, by Mario E. Favila, Published by Elsevier

Science, Science Shot: World's Strongest Insect, by Lauren Schenkman, March 23, 2010

Science Direct, Basic and Applied Ecology, September 2024, Volume 79, Research "Economic Value of dung removal by dung beetles in US sub-tropical pastures", pages 123-130, by Roison Stanbrook-Buyer, Mahadev Bhat, Joshua R. King, Published by Elsevier

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers are essential to the Lake Beautyberry Native Plant Chapter. Join in the fun while you help preserve the Florida's natural beauty for the future.

Can you spare a few hours a month to volunteer on a Chapter Committee?

- **Plant Sale:** One in spring and one in fall.
 - Chairperson Nancy LaPointe: laf4good@gmail.com
- **Budget:** Track monthly income & expense.
 - Treasurer Jane Bullock: lakebeautyberry@gmail.com
- **Newsletter:** Write articles on native plants & nature.
 - Neta Villalobos-Bell: netavb@gmail.com



Jane Bullock

More to Love about Partridge Pea

When my husband and I first came out to Lake County looking for a small parcel of land on which to build, I was intrigued by a delicate looking plant covered in yellow flowers that resembled the yellow butterflies I saw darting about. This began my love affair with *Chamaecrista fasciculata*, commonly known as Partridge-pea.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

George Marek, Sorrento
Rebecca Marek, Mount Dora
Rose M Shiner, Minneola

Partridge-pea, an annual flower that grows approximately 3 feet tall by 3 feet wide, has flourished in my sandy soil, readily reseeding when left to its own devices. Throughout Spring, the plants are covered with blooms which attract numerous bees, butterflies and pollinators of all kinds. For the first time, I saw a hummingbird visit the flowers, presumably to feed on its nectar! Additionally, Partridge-pea is the larval host plant for several species of butterflies including the cloudless sulfur (which I think look like the flowers themselves, dancing in the sky), orange sulphur, and gray hairstreak. Partridge-pea is a nitrogen-fixer, so it may improve and enrich soils. What is not to like about this Florida native?



Partridge Pea



Cloudless Sulphur Caterpillar



Mission Statement: To conserve, preserve, and restore Florida's native plants and their habitats through science-based education, research, advocacy, horticulture, landscaping, and engaged participation by our members and communities.

UPCOMING EVENTS

01 Native Plants that Grow by Rivers, Streams and Lakes

Chapter Meeting Program > Free to the PUBLIC

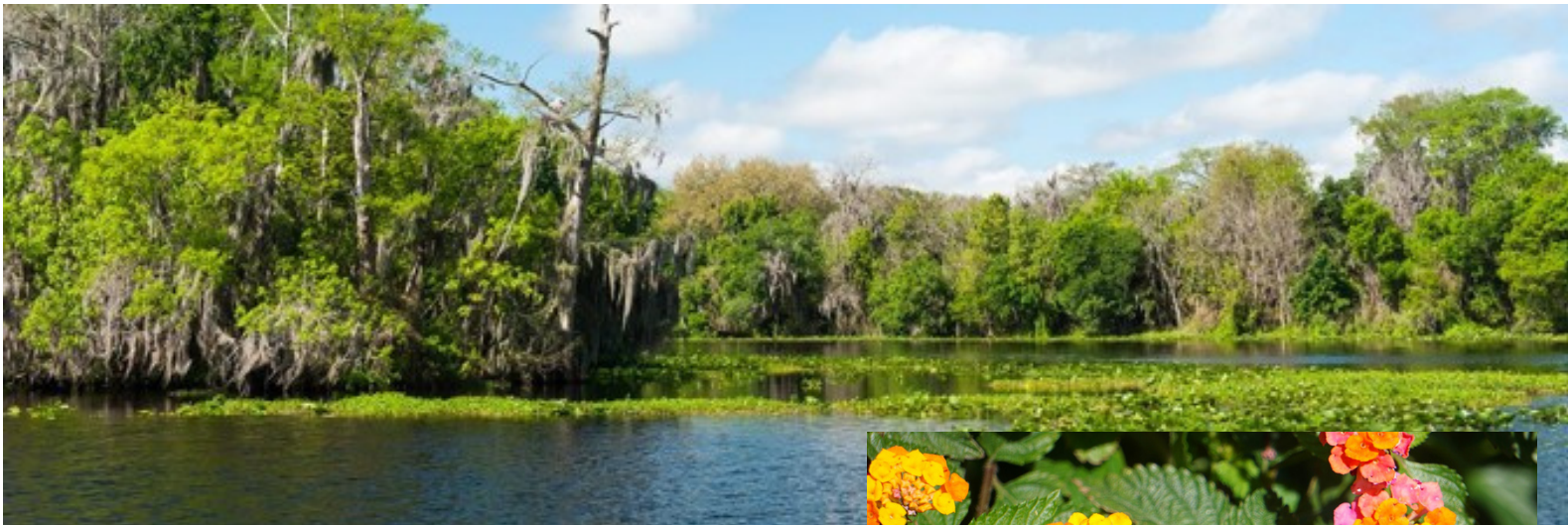
Sunday, September 20, 2026, 1:30pm

W.T. Bland Library, 1995 N Donnelly St, Mt Dora, FL



<QR to publication, or [**click HERE**](#).

Lake County Parks and Water Resources team members will introduce the different types of plants and their adaptations to wetland ecosystems. They will also explain their special Healthy Shorelines Program offer for residents who are located on waterways. If you do not live on any type of wetland, you'll certainly enjoy learning more about Lake County's wetland environments. If you know someone who might benefit from this program, invite them to attend with you. Free and open to the public. Speakers: Luke Vallentine, Program Manager, and William Blanco, Park Ranger



02 Plant This, Not That!

Sunday, September 20, 2026, 4:00pm

W.T. Bland Library, 1995 N Donnelly St, Mt Dora, FL

Speaker: Neta Villalobos-Bell

Several Nuisance and invasive plants are sold at garden centers. Learn to recognize these nuisance species and make a plan to replace them in your yard. Learn which native plants make good alternatives and why.

All attendees earn a chance to win a door prize.



PUBLIC WELCOME
FREE to ALL

UPCOMING EVENTS

03 Fall Native Plant Sale!

Saturday, October 03, 2026, 10:00am - 12:00noon

W.T. Bland Library, 1995 N Donnelly St, Mt Dora, FL



Fall Native Plant Sale presented by the Lake Beautyberry Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society



- Buy Florida Native Plants, especially selected for your Central Florida home. Advisors on site for guidance & growing specs.
- Cash & Credit Cards accepted.
- Bring your wagon or tote bag. You'll love the offerings.

Come early ... we've sold out quickly at our Spring Native Plant Sale

UPCOMING EVENTS



Florida Scrub Jay

🌀 Early Announcement 🌀

Warning > Limited Space

04 FIELD TRIP: Lyonia Preserve
Saturday, October 24, 2026 @
9:30 am

Lyonia Environmental Center
2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona, FL
32725 ([Location Map](#))

RESERVE Your Spot by emailing:
lakebeautyberry@gmail.com

BOARD MEMBERS

OFFICE

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FNPS Chapter Representative

Membership & Plant Sale

Field Trip

Discovery Gardens

Communications

NAME

Jane Bullock

Neta Villalobos-Bell

Suzanne Hill (Nancy LaPointe)

Tina Mertz

Nancy LaPointe

Caryn Desinor

Lavon Silvernell

Clayton Yuen

EMAIL

jgb4203@gmail.com

netavb@gmail.com

hill.susie.m@gmail.com

gmer98@yahoo.com

laf4good@yahoo.com

carynantoinette@gmail.com

lavonsilvernell@gmail.com

hapagraphics@gmail.com



OCTOBER 24TH

LYONIA PRESERVE

Florida Native Plant Society

Lake Beautyberry Chapter Field Trip

Lyonia Preserve

October 24 • 9:30 AM

\$3 per person • Maximum 15 participants

Join us for a guided experience featuring an animal encounter, pollinator garden tour, and guided hike through the preserve. The guided tour lasts approximately 1.5 hours.

We'll also have access to the pavilion for anyone who would like to mingle, enjoy lunch, or have a picnic. After the guided tour, those with a little wanderlust are welcome to explore the preserve trails on their own.

Payment: Caryn Desinor will collect payment for the group.

Cash preferred.

RSVP: lakebeautyberry@gmail.com



ATTRACT MORE BIRDS TO YOUR YARD

Original Publication 2020: Seminole Audubon Newsletter and Friends of Wekiva River Newsletter.

*The following is the 5th in a series of 5 articles that will enhance your garden as bird habitat. **Series 1:** Fruit, **Series 2:** Seeds, **Series 3:** Nuts, **Series 4:** Insects, **Series 5:** Shelter and Nests*

In this series of articles to create an inviting habitat using suggested Florida native plants to attract birds, we'll cover their habitat needs, that is, food, shelter and nesting. For resident birds, it's more than just providing a buffet to stop by and fly away. Hopefully, they will want to stay to reproduce. For migrants, providing a safe stopover to refresh and feed is increasingly important considering we are still losing ground to development in Florida. The plant choices you make are important for the survival of our bird populations.

Shelter and Nests

Series 5 of 5

When a bird is in your yard feeding and suddenly a predator appears or a heavy rain falls, what does the bird do? Seek shelter. And, if you have an appropriate landscape, they might stay to nest. What Florida native plants do you have that fill these two habitat requirements?

Not all birds are alike. They may have different needs from one another so the goal is not to service all birds but as many as possible with dense vegetation at different levels in height and size. Then, consider leaving a dead or dying tree if it's safe to do so, leaf litter for ground nesters, and branch piles for nesting. So many possibilities.



Lake Beautyberry Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

Our Mission is to Champion Florida's Native Plants and Their Habitats!

520 E CR 44, Eustis, FL 32736-2518

e: lakebeautyberry@gmail.com, w: <https://lakebeautyberry.fnpschapters.org/>

Shelter

Open space can be a dangerous place with predators hunting birds. For their safety, place a mixture of tall and short shrubs and trees, and vines in close proximity to the open space which will facilitate a speedy bird escape. Plants that have dense foliage help hide the bird, even better is if they have thorns and prickles to deter predator entrance.



Marlberry



Cherokee Bean



White Stopper



Saw Palmetto

SHRUBS

1. **Marlberry** (*Ardisa escallonioides*)
 - a. Height: 3 – 8', Spread: 3 – 8', Soil: adaptable
 - b. Light: sun to part shade. Evergreen, no thorns
2. **Cherokee/Coral bean** (*Erythrina herbacea*)
 - a. Height: 3 – 20', Spread: 5 – 10', Soil: adaptable
 - b. Light: sun to part shade. Deciduous, prickles and toxic seeds so keep away from pets and small children
3. **White Stopper** (*Eugenia axillaris*)
 - a. Height: to 20', Spread: to 10', Soil: adaptable, well-drained
 - b. Light: sun to shade. Evergreen, no thorns
4. **Saw palmetto** (*Serenia repens*)
 - a. Height: 3 – 20', Spread: 3-8', Soil: adaptable
 - b. Light: sun to part shade. Evergreen, stalk margins have sharp teeth

VINES

Although vines can make very good cover, most of them are deciduous, not providing shelter year round, plus most can be very aggressive, clambering over and smothering other plants, climbing up trees into the canopy, and showing unwanted in other parts of the yard. If you are willing to maintain them, I encourage you to plant some vines, or...a vine.



Twinevine (*Funistrum clausum*)

NESTS – WHERE DO BIRDS NEST?

Because of the wide variety of birds, there are a wide variety, not only of the type of nest, but where they place them. Examples are: on tree and shrub branches, hanging from tree branches, in tree trunk cavities, on and in the ground, on rocky ledges (not in Florida), in the nests of other bird species, in Spanish moss, in vines, brush piles, in native grasses, and directly on top of the water. This list is narrowed down to plants only. Dense shrubs that provide shelter can be a good protected place for a nest too. See shrub suggestions under SHELTER above.



Carolina Wren
in tree cavity

CAVITIES

First, if safe to do so, leave any dead or dying tree for the cavity nesters: owls, woodpeckers, nuthatches, kestrels, some finches, chickadees, flycatcher.

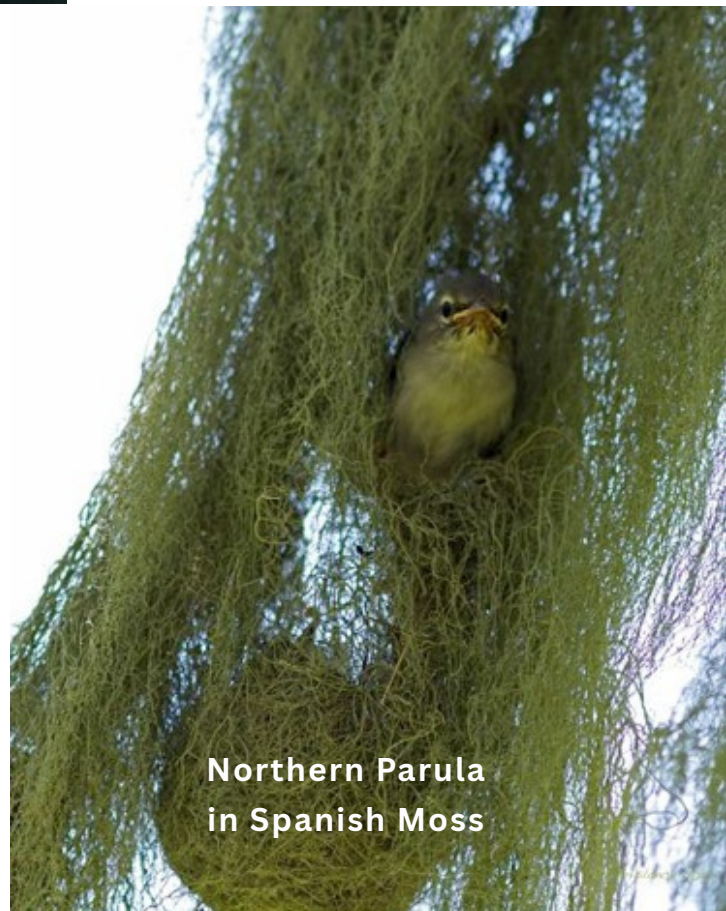
Second, instead of removing the whole dead or dying tree, remove the top portion leaving about 10' to 15' of the remaining bottom. This reduces the danger for you but still provides for cavity nesters.

SPANISH MOSS

Spanish moss is iconic of Florida, and indeed, the South. Most often seen on oak, it can use other plants for support. It does not directly kill the support plants but tends to seek out trees in decline for other reasons resulting in an infestation when the thinned canopy lets in more light for it to continue growing. Then, the increased growth can weigh down branches which will break off.

Two birds that hide their nest within Spanish moss:

1. **Northern Parula.** The nest is usually placed in a hollow excavated in hanging Spanish moss, 40-50' above the ground. It is a small hanging pouch of lichen and twigs, unlined or lined sparsely with soft shreds of moss, grass, pine needles, and hair.
2. **Yellow-throated warbler.** The nest is high in trees where a cup is made in the Spanish moss and lined with down and feathers.



Northern Parula
in Spanish Moss

(Shelter and Nests - continued)

VINES

A mockingbird was spotted nesting in coral honeysuckle, *Lonicera sempervirens*. See picture below.



Mockingbird in Coral Honeysuckle



Hummingbirds use lichen for nest camouflage



Chuck-will's-widow on the ground

TREES

Both tall and short trees are used for nests. A selection of differing heights, layered elevation in the landscape, will attract more variety of species. Both evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs are used. Most birds nest in the summer so even if a plant is deciduous with no winter cover it will be used. The important part is to have evergreen trees and shrubs available then. Look for strong, with different angles, shrub branches to support the nests.

1. **Sweet Acacia** (*Acacia farnesiana*)

- a. Height: 8-20', Spread: 6-10', Soil: Well-drained
- b. Light: sun Deciduous, dense, multi-stem, thorns

2. **Pop ash** (*Fraxinus caroliniana*)

- a. Height: 30'- 50', Spread: 20'-35', Soil: moist to wet
- b. Light: shade to part sun. Deciduous

3. **Red Cedar** (*Juniperus virginiana*)

- a. Height: 20'- 60', Spread: 10' – 30', Soil: adaptable
- b. Light: sun. Evergreen



Red Cedar



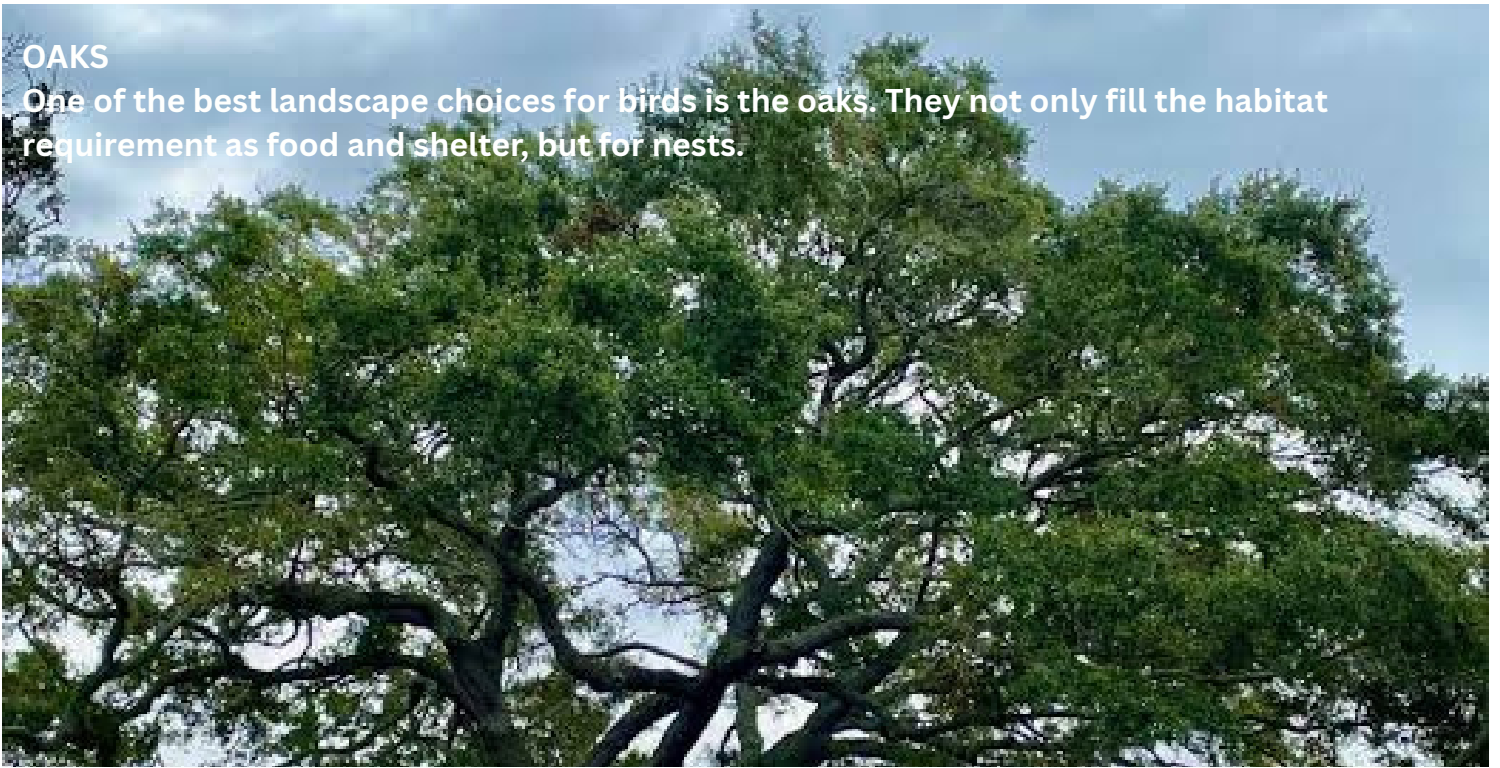
Sweet Acacia



Pop Ash

OAKS

One of the best landscape choices for birds is the oaks. They not only fill the habitat requirement as food and shelter, but for nests.



PINES

Of the seven native pines in Florida, five are found in Central Florida. Most can grow up to 100' while the two other are bit shorter, sand pine up to 40' and pond pine up to 80'. Pines as well fill more than one habitat requirement, food, shelter, and nesting places.



**Bald Eagle in Pine
(they build nests in live trees)**

Resources for additional research

- Native Plant Landscaping for Florida Wildlife by Craig N. Heugel
- Forest Plants of the Southeast and Their Wildlife Uses by James H. Miller & Karl V. Miller
- Birds of Florida by Bill Pranty, Kurt A. Radamaker, Gregory Kennedy
- www.fnps.org
- www.plantrealflorida.org

**Author: Neta
Villalobos-Bell.
Certified Advanced
Florida Master Naturalist,
Certified Horticulture
Professional, Certified
National Association
Interpreter. Member of
Florida Native Plant
Society.**