



AUGUST 2026 NEWSLETTER

Neta Villalobos-Bell

Random Nature Sighting

While pruning branches from my flatwoods plum tree, *Prunus umbellata*, I noticed a movement, a tiny speck of....junk?

The **trash bug** uses special bristles on its back to hold bits of lichen, dirt, dead insects, and plant bits, as you may guess, to camouflage itself from predators, such as birds and ants. It is itself a predatory garden insect of aphids, thrips, mealybugs, and mites which they grab with hollow, sharp pincher jaws. After injecting digesting juices, they suck out the dissolved insides and often toss the empty husk onto their back. And, they only grow to about a half inch, so you may not notice them unless they move. Suprisingly, or not, they transform into the delicate green lacewing. As adults they are not aggressive but feed on nectar and pollen as pollinators.



Green Lacewing larvae (family Chrysopidae)



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

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/>

Updated Mission Statement



At the July 18 Annual Member meeting, an updated Mission Statement was approved in order to reflect more specifically Our motto, What we do, and How we do it.

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.

At the July 18 Annual Member meeting, an updated Mission Statement:

Our Motto (What we stand for!): to conserve, preserve, and restore Florida's native plants and their habitats.

What we do: Science-based Education, Research, Advocacy, Horticulture, and Landscaping.

How we do it: Through the engaged participation of our members and communities.

Mark your calendars now for next year's FNPS Annual Conference in Daytona Beach. Sharing Educational Opportunities and Fun. April 1-4 2027!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Mary Marvar, Mount Dora
Donn Kicklighter, Umatilla
Eric Nelson, Umatilla

Where leaves were cleaned up, research identified the loss of 24 percent less carbon in soils. Soil carbon is a key to plants' access to nutrition, and to the soil's moisture-holding capacity, which is beneficial to plants and can also help prevent runoff. Healthy plants need healthy soil with the right nutrients, and decomposing leaves are a critical part of the process. Leaf litter also protects plant roots, regulates soil moisture and temperature, and does it as well as mulch as store bought mulch. And, it's free.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers are essential to the Lake Beautyberry Native Plant Chapter. Join in the fun while you help preserve the Floirda'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

UPCOMING EVENTS

01 Grass to Meadow

Sunday, August 09, 2026, 10:00am

Lyonia Environmental Center, 2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona

Discover how to transform a traditional lawn into a low-maintenance wildflower meadow. Participants will learn practical landscaping techniques, tour the demonstration garden, and receive seeds and educational materials to begin their own meadow gardens. Free. However, reservations are required. Call 386 789-7207 ext. 21028.



02 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



UPCOMING EVENTS

03 *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

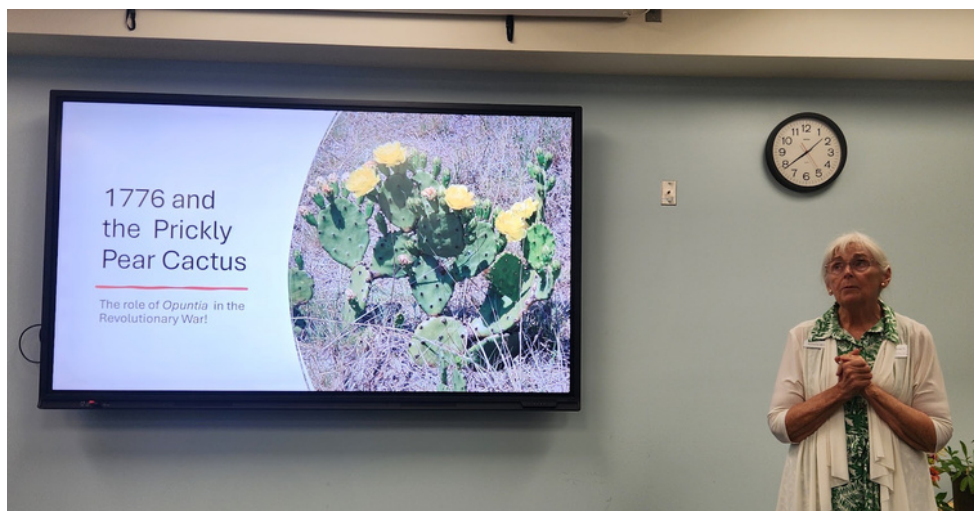
Several Nuisance and invasive plants are sold at garden centers. Learn to recognize these nuisance species and make a plan to replace them in your yard. Learn which native plants make good alternatives and why.

All attendees earn a chance to win a door prize.



PUBLIC WELCOME
FREE to ALL

INDEPENDENCE DAY TRIBUTE



“The Redcoats are coming, the redcoats are coming!” This famous historical warning from the American Revolutionary War refers to the approach of the British Army. British officers were distinctly dressed in red wool coats. How are red coats associated with the Prickly Pear Cactus?

Suzanne Hill’s presentation explained it all, and summarized in this [BLOG](#).

BOARD MEMBERS

OFFICE

President & Treasurer

Vice President

Secretary

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

ATTRACT MORE BIRDS TO YOUR YARD

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

*The following is the 4th 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*

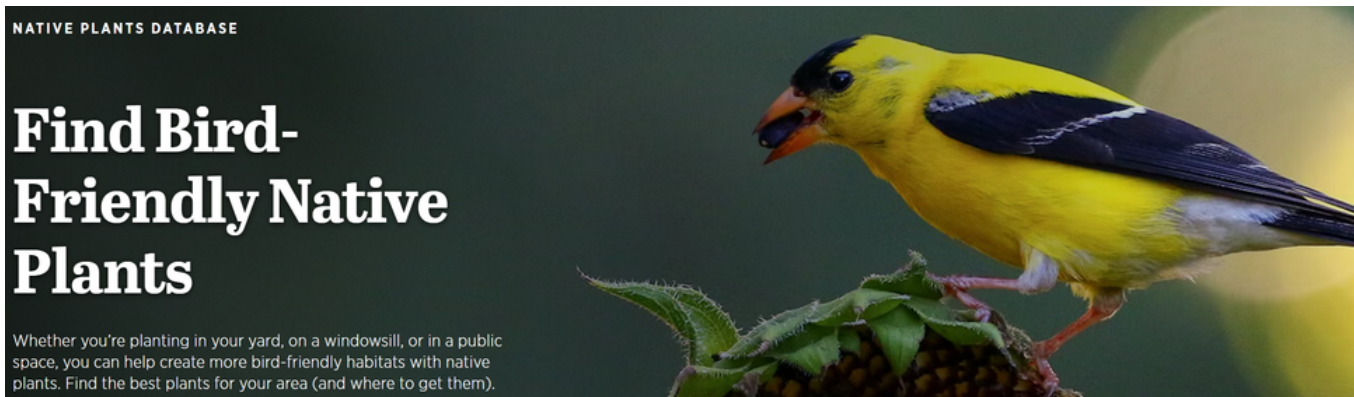
Insects: A Critical Bird Resource

*Series 4 of 5 = Food: **Insects***

Ninety-five percent (95%) of North American songbirds feed on insects. (Bird Conservation magazine, Winter 2018-2019, p.30)

Insects are a most critical resource for birds during migration and during breeding because they provide more nutrients than seeds and fruit at these times, and native plants attract more insects than non-native plants. Native plants evolved over thousands of years with our native wildlife, including insects, for the benefit of both.

The value of using native plants as an insect source has been studied by many organizations.



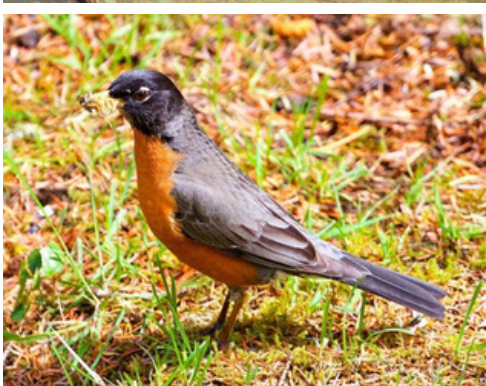
- [National Audubon website](#) (2017) stated... “Native plants are better for native birds than introduced flora. More specifically, because these trees and shrubs have evolved with the local wildlife, they harbor more insects or yield more berries and fruit than non-native plants, providing greater amounts of food.”
- [Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute](#) (2018), “Insect-eating birds that depend on the availability of high-calorie, high-protein cuisine—namely caterpillars and spiders—during breeding season to feed their young are finding the menu severely lacking in backyards landscaped with even a small proportion of non-native plants.”
- [Biological Conservations](#) (2017). Understanding how introduced plants reduce food web complexity is critical to effective conservation management within human-dominated systems. “In urban breeding birds, the paucity of dietary specialists suggests that a lack of food resources, such as [arthropod](#) (insects, spiders, earthworms, millipeds, lawn shrimp) prey essential for reproduction and survival, may contribute to bird declines.”



(Insects - continued)

Insects: Where do Birds Forage?

Although foraging overlaps, some techniques are unique to certain birds.



- **Birds forage on the ground and under leaf litter. Use deciduous trees and semi-deciduous plants. Red Maple, Oaks, Walter's viburnum, Simpson stopper. Don't rake the leaves, but use as free mulch.**
 - Brown thrashers find them by scratching at leaf litter. Sparrows, towhees, crows, and wrens eat big caterpillars, beetles, grubs, and other medium and large insects and spiders. Robins visually notice where the worms are in the ground. (Disclaimer. Spiders and worms are not insects, but important bird food).
- **Birds find insects crawling on and under leaves of low growing grasses and perennials. Love grass, muhly grass, wildflowers, such as tickseed.**
 - Chickadees find aphids, whitefly, scale, caterpillars, ants, leafhoppers, beetles on and under leaves.
- **Higher up, birds pick insects off twigs and branches. Oaks. Pines. Sweetgum leaves are eaten by many insects, thus become bird food.**
 - Tufted Titmouse pick up tiny aphids and other chewing insects.
- **Birds search for insects hidden under rough tree bark. Oaks. Pines.**
 - Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers can hear chewing insects inside the outer layers of tree trunks. Woodpeckers feed on larvae, beetles, weevils, borers. Chickadees, nuthatches, creepers, black and white warblers eat many tiny insects that they find in tree bark as do the titmice.
- **Birds eat flying insects.**
 - Hummingbirds snap up very tiny flying insects like gnats out of midair in addition to tiny aphids and chewing insects. Swallows and swifts feed on the wing. Yellow-rumped warblers can eat little caterpillars on treetop leaves and then can flutter out to snap up insects in midair.

About 12,500 species of insects are found in FL, not all native, some are invasive and some are pests. They fly, crawl, jump, bite and sting, suck juices from plants, eat other insects and invertebrates. They're everywhere even if you don't see them, under tree bark, on plants under leaves and on stems, and inside flowers.

(continued)

We complain and wish they weren't around us, but we're lucky they are. Insects are an integral part of the food web. And, birds are a natural predators in your yard keeping pests at a reasonable level so there's no need to use pesticides. In fact it could be harmful if a bird picks up an insect that is sprayed with chemicals. Please minimize your use of pesticides and spot treat only.



WILDFLOWERS

Insects that feed on nectar are attracted to wildflowers which in turn attract predatory insects. It's a frenzy of insect activity and an inviting buffet for birds.

- **Florida paintbrush.** *Carphephorus corymbosus*
 - Height: 3' Spread: 2-3' Soil: sandy, well-drained Light: sun
 - Bloom: large cluster pink flower heads in late summer or autumn
- **Florida greeneyes.** *Berlandiera subacaulis*
 - Height: 1 – 1 ½' Spread: 1' Soil: sandy, well-drained Light: sun to light shade
 - Bloom: yellow flower disk with prominent green disk in spring to fall
- **Spotted beebalm/Dotted horsemint.** *Monarda punctata*
 - Height: 1 ½' to 3' Spread: forms clumps from self-sown seeds Soil: well-drained
 - Light: sun Bloom: shades of white, pink and rose in late spring to early fall
- **Rose-mallow.** *Hibiscus moscheutos*
 - Height: 5-6' Spread: 3' Soil: wet Light: sun to partial shade
 - Bloom: white to pale yellow with a dark maroon center spot in summer. Prune annually to the ground in autumn





OAKS

Caterpillars are especially nutritious for baby birds. Research by Doug Tallamy, entomologist and author, “found that oaks support an astounding 543 species of Lepidoptera, including Polyphemus and Imperial moths, Banded Hairstreak, Striped Hairstreak, White M Hairstreak, Juvenal’s Duskywing, and Horace’s Duskywing.”

- **Southern red oak/Spanish oak.** *Quercus falcata*
 - Height: up to 90’ Spread: 10-20’ Soil: sandy, acid Light: Sun to part shade
- **Shumard oak.** *Quercus shumardii*
 - Height: 60-110’ Spread: 40-60’ Soil: Moist, well-drained Light: Full sun
- **Post oak.** *Quercus stellata*
 - Height: 45 to 55’ Spread: 35-50’ Soil: all soils Light: Full sun
- **Bluejack oak.** *Quercus incana*
 - Height: 15-40’ Spread: 20’ to 30’ Soil: sandy Light: Full sun



PINES

Pine bark is flaky and deeply fissured – a perfect hiding place for beetles and other insects.

Longleaf pine. *Pinus palustris*

Height: 60-120' Spread: 30-50' Soil: sandy Light: Sun

Slash pine. *Pinus elliottii*

Height: 60-100' Spread: 20'- 60' Soil: moist, well-drained
Light: Sun

Loblolly pine. *Pinus taeda*

Height: 60-100' Spread: 30-60' Soil: adaptable, well-drained Light: sun

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

So, as you peruse through the resources suggested below, remember “Right Plant in the Right Place”. As you know by now, choose plants that match their needs with what exists in your yard, such as, soil type, light, mature size, space, and more.



Resources for additional research on these plants.

- www.fnps.org
- www.plantrealflorida.org
- www.flawildflowers.org
- Native Plant Landscaping for Florida Wildlife, Craig N. Huegel
- Forest Plants of the Southeast and Their Wildlife Uses, James H. Miller & Karl V. Miller
- A Gardener's Guide to Florida's Native Plants, Rufino Osario
- Florida's Best Native Landscape Plants, Gil Nelson