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June 2022 Issue

Happy Summer everyone! I want to thank retiring editor Ellen Mahany for her help for the past year. Ellen was a huge help. Now we welcome new editor Amy George! Thank you for all your support, Ellen and Amy.

Cypress Trees of Florida

By Linda Smock, Master Gardener Volunteer

Look at any freshwater area in Florida and you will see cypress trees. These deciduous conifers shed their leaves and cones each fall. There are two types – the bald cypress and the pond cypress. Both are known for their “knees” especially when they are in wet areas.

You will see bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) along streams when you visit state parks with rivers or running water. You can also find them in swamps with slow moving water. These trees grow to be hundreds of years old, with large, buttressed trunks. They are one of the few trees in Florida to show off a copper color each autumn before their leaves fall to the ground.



Bald Cypress Trees along the water, by Linda Smock

You may find pond cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) in Pinellas County retention ponds, growing as part of the landscape. Many condominiums use them in retention areas, and they make a beautiful addition to the landscape. They transition well from wet to dry seasons, and don't seem to mind if the soil is wet and swampy or sandy and dry. Pond cypress don't grow as tall as the bald cypress, although they can still get as high as 80 feet. Their "knees" are (generally) shorter than the bald cypress, and they are less likely to have as many knees. Like the bald cypress, the leaves change color each autumn, but they do not become as copper-colored and are more of a yellow gold.



Pond Cypress Trees in urban landscape, by Linda Smock

Both the bald and the pond cypress are relatively maintenance free, needing only an occasional trim of dead limbs. Both will drop male catkins in the spring; leaves and cones drop off each fall after they change color.

Cypress will grow in dry areas as well as wet. The dryer the landscape, the fewer knees they tend to produce. They make a beautiful addition to home landscapes and help create a native Florida environment.

The Highline Track – NYC

By Agnes Touris, Master Gardener Volunteer. All photo credits: Agnes Touris

The **High Line** is a public park built on a historic freight rail line elevated above the streets on Manhattan's West Side. Community residents formed a coalition, Friends of the High Line, and fought for its preservation at a time when it was under the threat of demolition.



It is now a wonderful public space for all to enjoy -- free of charge. You can walk it alone (it is less than 2 miles long) or join a free docent-led tour.



You can see the Statue of Liberty and the Chrysler Building, among many other landmarks along the way.

You will find perennials, grasses, shrubs, and trees with colors in all four seasons. There is composting on site and the gardens follow pollinator friendly practices. With over a dozen different zones, you discover how this evolving landscape changes from one block to the next.

Hundreds of volunteers help to cut back the plants in March by hand. You can sign up to do just that yourself if you are interested.

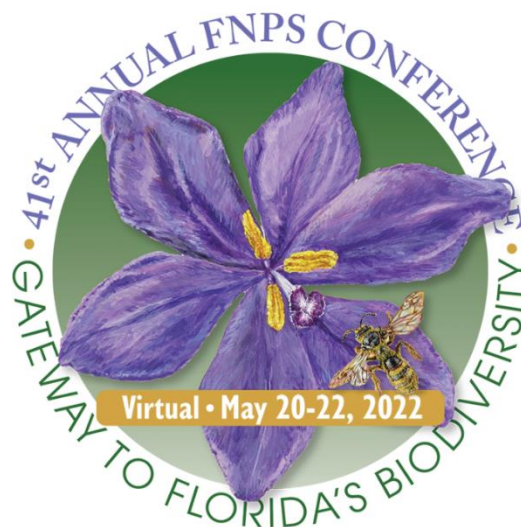
I have walked the High Line several times and plan on returning this summer. Put this on your “to do” list and you will not be disappointed.



Highlights from the Florida Native Plant Society's 41st Annual Conference

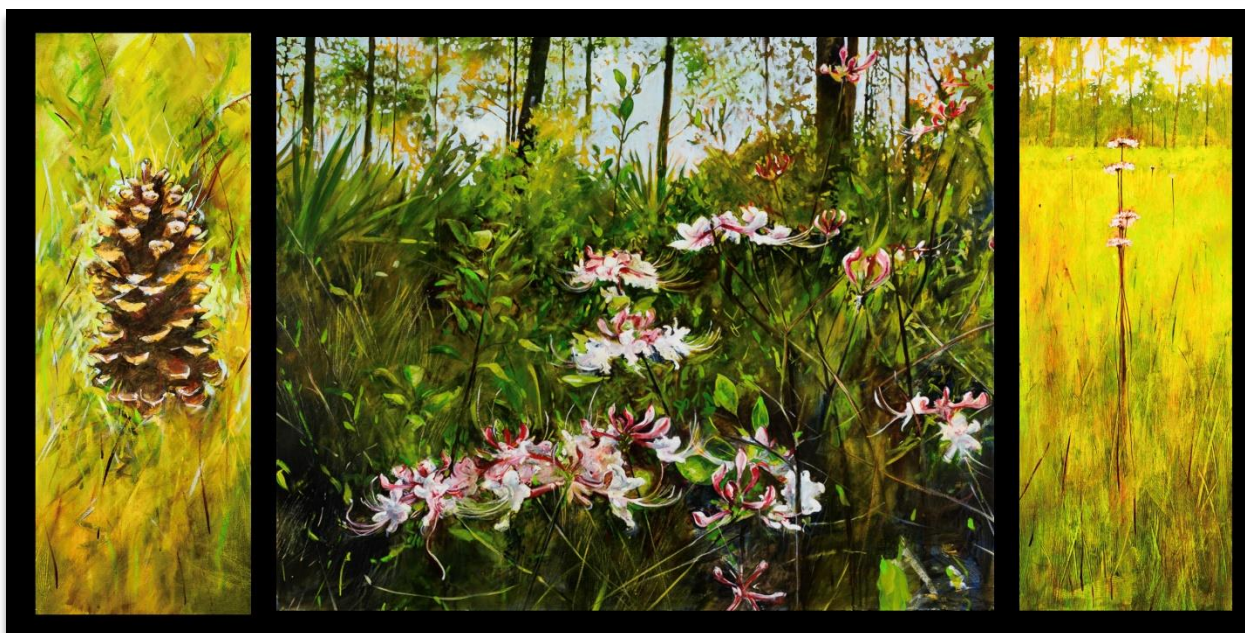
By Rebekah Heppner, Master Gardener Volunteer

The Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) held its conference virtually May 14 - 22. Although I, like most of you, am tired of watching lectures on Zoom, I have to admit there are advantages, primarily no travel expenses. FNPS did a valiant job of providing opportunities to engage and network online using the conference platform WHOVA, but what I liked most was being able to tune in only for the sessions that interested me. I "attended" nine sessions, less than half of the conference, which was plenty for me and, at only \$50, still a bargain. Plus, everything was recorded so I can watch the things I missed. All my sessions had merit, but two stood out.





The title "Defining Radical Naturalism" immediately had me hooked. The speaker was Jim Draper who is a visual artist and a writer who draws his inspiration from the natural world. He presented some of his paintings that are done in the style of triptychs, three hinged panels used as altarpieces in the Middle Ages. Since triptychs were used to teach religion before reading was common, he believes they can be used to teach people to love the natural world. Anyone, like me, who loves both art and nature, can appreciate this idea. Mr. Draper is a true lover of nature and wants to see it protected. He gave me permission to share one of his paintings here and you can see more of them on his website www.jimdraperart.com.



Artwork by Jim Draper

As a personal example of radical naturalism, Mr. Draper shared that when he worked in the landscape business he hated *Smilax* vines, always getting cut up while tearing them out. Now



he considers them beautiful and has a painting to prove it. He even finds them tasty! *Smilax* also provides forage material for many insects. He believes we should demand 100% native plants on municipal sites and suggests that we change the language we use by redefining things like landscape design (ecosystem restoration) and lawn (urban meadow). He recommended a new book by [Paul Hawken](#) titled “[Regeneration: Ending the Climate Crisis in One Generation.](#)”

My second highlight had a less intriguing title: “Growing, Planting and Maintaining Native Plants: Turning a Challenge into an Opportunity,” but the speaker, Larry Weaner, a landscape architect, wrote a book titled: “Garden Revolution: How our landscapes can be a source of environmental change.” Now that gets my attention. His approach is what he called an “ecological process,” in which landscape design takes into account how nature operates. To introduce this, he gave an example of something he planted in his yard that disappeared and turned up later in a different place—where the conditions were better for it to survive. He considers his method “garden design in reverse” because he asks first what will happen to the site if he does nothing. Then he creates a plan that takes advantage of the parts of that he wants (e.g., let native volunteers stay where they choose) and changes those he does not (e.g., pull out the invasives). He also recommends that we design with plant communities in mind, finding out which plants grow together naturally in our area, either in layers or in succession as the seasons change.

Overall, I learned some things, got new and interesting perspectives, and added to both my reading and research lists. But I didn’t make any new gardener friends; virtual just does not lend itself to that. I’m so glad [the Florida Master Gardener’s Conference in October](#) is going to be in person. I hope to see you all there!

A Cool Place to Visit in California

By Susan Ladwig, Master Gardener Volunteer. All photo credits Susan Ladwig

I have just returned from a trip to San Francisco, where I got to wear a jacket! For that alone, it was worthwhile. But one of my favorite highlights of the trip was a visit to the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park. The tea garden was originally built for the 1894 California Midwinter International Exposition. At that time, the garden was just an acre. After the fair closed, the superintendent of Golden Gate Park, John McLaren, allowed Japanese landscape architect Makoto Hagiwara to create a permanent Japanese style garden. The garden is now 5 acres, thanks to the personal passion and resources of Mr. Hagiwara. Sadly, the Hagiwara family was forced from their home in the tea garden during the Japanese internment and they were not allowed to return.

Today, the tea garden is very popular among tourists, and conveniently located near the De Young art museum and the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Golden Gate Park. It is a cool, lush, green oasis, surrounded by an extensive botanical garden. You can see how many features have been packed into five acres in the map below.



The garden winds over bridges and past water features and includes a tea house where you can rest and enjoy a variety of teas and other refreshments. The admission rate for non-residents is currently \$12 per adult (March to September), and \$7 for seniors (age 65+).





Tell us About your Project!

We the editors of The Dirt want to spotlight Master Gardener projects so everyone can hear about them. If you are working on a project you would like to share, please let us know. We can help write an article through an interview process. The goal is to highlight the great work our volunteers are doing in the community. Reach out to us using the email below. Thank you!

Submit Your Articles and Pictures to The Dirt

The Dirt is published January, April, June, and October for Master Gardeners by Master Gardeners. The deadline for the next issue is **October 6, 2022**. If you would like to submit an article or photo feature, see the following guidelines:

- Articles should be 250 to 300 words.
- The topic can be anything you would like to share to educate your fellow gardeners.
- You may send pictures, poetry, or garden-related articles.
- Submit only Word documents, not PDF, so that edits are possible.
- Send tips or information about a community or Master Gardener project for a potential article.
- Send photos as attachments and include proper attribution.
- Send submissions to Susan Ladwig at ladwig.susan@gmail.com

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