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Little Red Wagonful

Nurturing Nature One Wagon at a Time



August 2022

The change always comes about mid-August, and it always catches me by surprise. I mean the day when I know that summer is fraying at the edges, that September isn't far off and fall is just over the hill or up the valley. ~Hal Borland

August is "Back to School" month for children in our county which symbolizes that summer is coming to an end and leading us into the fall months. Stop by Little Red Wagon Native Nursery's Plant and Gift Shop. Get your garden ready for fall pollinators and some of the migrators that come through our area. Also visit our gift shop for nature-inspired fall decor to prepare for the seasonal change.

Butterfly of the Month

Dorantes Longtail Skipper & Long-tailed Skipper



Dorantes Longtail Skipper & Long-tailed Skipper

This month, we're focusing on two similar spreadwing skippers: the Dorantes Longtail (*Urbanus dorantes*) and the Long-tailed Skipper (*Urbanus proteus*). As their names imply, both have long tails that are about 1/2" in length when the butterflies are fresh. Both are fast flyers. Both nectar on a variety of flowers including [Lantana](#) (*Lantana* spp.), [Spanish Needles](#) (*Bidens alba*), and [Ironweeds](#) (*Vernonia* spp.) Both are similar in size. (The Dorantes Longtail is a tiny bit smaller with a wingspan of 1 7/16" - 2"; the Long-tailed Skipper's wingspan is typically 1 3/4" - 2 5/16".)

So, then, how does one distinguish between the two?

The easiest way to tell the difference is to get a glimpse of top of the butterfly with its wings open: the body of the Long-tailed Skipper is an iridescent turquoise (see Photo 1) while the body of the Dorantes Longtail is brown. (See Photo 2.) If the butterfly refuses to cooperate and you can only glimpse it with its wings closed, it's still possible to distinguish between the two species: the Dorantes Longtail has an interrupted small band along the outer edge of its upper wing; the band on the Long-tailed Skipper is continuous.

Learn more about these skippers with additional information below!



Dorantes Longtail Skippers

Female Dorantes Longtails lay pale greenish eggs singly on the stalks (see Photo 3) and leaves of host plants, which include various legumes including Ticktrefoils (*Desmodium* spp.), Hairypod Cowpea (*Vigna lutea*), and cultivated beans. The green (sometimes brown) caterpillars also use host plant leaves for shelter: they tie these leaves together with silk to form their shelter.

Dorantes Longtail Skippers, whose native range extends from Argentina north through Central America and Mexico, is thought to have first colonized the Florida Keys in the 1960s. Today, they are found throughout the state in uplands and disturbed areas with migrants extending their range to southern Georgia and beyond. There are at least three generations of Dorantes Longtail Skippers in Florida. (South Florida is known to have four generations.)

(Fun fact: Fresh Longtail Skippers have a lilac sheen on their bottom wings. This has given rise to some people calling them the “Lilac-banded Longtails.”)

Long-tailed Skippers

Female Long-tailed Skippers lay pale yellow eggs singly or in short stacks of up to 20 eggs on the underside of host plant leaves, which include herbs and vines in the Pea family. Native plants used as host plants include [Spurred Butterfly Pea](#) (*Centrosema virginianum*) and the critically imperiled Florida Ticktrefoil (*Desmodium floridanum*.) Young caterpillars cut, fold, and tie pieces of leaves from host plants together with silk to form shelters while older caterpillars tie entire leaves together. Caterpillars are greenish with a yellow stripe that runs along its body; they have a black face with yellow eye patches. (See Photo 4.) These caterpillars pupate in leaf litter packets, which is yet another reason to leave the leaves. (See Photo 5.)

Long-tailed Skippers will spread north as far as New England each summer, but cold weather sees them flee to the sub-tropics and tropics to overwinter as reproductively arrested adults. It's consequently incredibly important to have plenty of late summer and fall-blooming flowers to support these; not only do they fly south through our area, they will stay if the winter is mild enough. (Last year in late October, I visited St. Mark's River Preserve State Park in the Florida Panhandle. I was expecting to see migrating Monarchs. I wasn't expecting to see countless Gulf Fritillaries and Long-tailed Skippers. It was an incredible sight to see so many butterflies!)

(Fun fact: When Long-tailed Skipper caterpillars are provoked, they spit a bitter-tasting greenish fluid.)



Host Plant Of The Month



Desmodium (Tick trefoil, beggar's ticks)

Tick-trefoil, or Beggar's Ticks as it's also commonly known (*Desmodium* spp.), comprise dozens of species of hardy, woody trailing legumes in the Pea family. Typically growing 2 to 4 feet tall, *Desmodiums* have attractive purple, lavender, or white flowers that vary in size. Some are as small as 1/4 inch while other species have flowers that may be 3 inches wide.

While taxonomists disagree about the best way to define this genus, Florida has at least four native species. These are: Florida Ticktrefoil (*D. floridanum*); Sand Tricktrefoil (*D. lineatum*); Smooth Ticktrefoil (*D. marilandicum*); Panicleleaf Ticktrefoil (*D. paniculatum*).

Two other non-native *Desmodium* species found in Florida, Creeping beggarweed (*D. incanum*) and Beggar's-tick (*D. mauritianum*), were historically used by farmers as an intercrop to fix nitrogen and suppress weeds. These plants were also used as livestock fodder. (See resources at [University of Florida](#) and [Institute for Regional Conservation](#)) for more information.)

Tick-trefoils are attractive plants and a great nectar source for butterflies and hummingbirds. They also have very high wildlife value for animals: they are a host plant for Dorantes Longtail Skippers, Long-tailed Skippers, Silver-Spotted Skippers, Hoary Edges, Northern and Southern Cloudywings, Gray Hairstreaks and Eastern Tailed-Blues. They provide quality food for bobwhite, turkey, grouse, deer, and my chickens!

Native peoples used various parts of Tick-trefoils for medicinal purposes. As examples, Seminole used a decoction of *D. incanum* leaves as an analgesic to help with headaches; Houma infused roots of *D.*

paniculatum in whiskey to help with weakness or cramps; Alabama used Desmodium sp. to induce vomiting. (For more examples, please search this [database](#).)

Tick-trefoils require full sun and soils that receive regular water. Their hairy seed pods readily cling to anything that brush by it, hence the common name. The sticky seeds are what make them unpopular. (See photo 8). Yes – the seeds stick to everything, I even found one on my keyboard today! (See photo 9). Email info@ButterflyTampa.com an image or story about the most interesting or strangest place you have found Tick-trefoil seeds for the chance to win a \$25 gift card for Little Red Wagon Native Nursery and gift shoppe.

Garden Swag



SwagON - Butterfly Gloves

Show off your favorite pollinators as you restore their habitat. Palm and fingertips made from 100% split cow grain leather for increased dexterity and abrasion resistance.

Wing thumb for increased comfort and mobility. Blue butterflies make them stylish.

[Shop now](#)

Design with Vines



Scarlet morning glory (*Ipomoea hederifolia*)

Scarlet Morning Glory (*Ipomoea hederifolia*) is a gorgeous annual branching and twining vine that grows quickly and reaches its mature length (about 10' long) by late summer. With 1-inch long brilliant red trumpet-shaped flowers that have contrasting stamens, this morning glory's flowers bloom each morning from July through November. The showy flowers attracts butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. It's easily trained to grow on a trellis or other support. Left alone, it will grow over ground covers and form a thick mat that will overshadow them.

This plant is found throughout the state in disturbed uplands and shell mounds with loamy or sandy soil. The plant prefers well-drained, somewhat dry soil.

Interestingly, research from India indicates that the plant may have anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties. You can read that paper [here](#).

Note: Scarlet Morning Glory is toxic to dogs, cats, and horses. Please plant it where they won't be able to eat it.

SHOP NOW

Nectar Plant of the Month



Ironweeds

Ironweeds (Vernonia) are a genus of almost 350 species renown for having clusters of very showy purple-pink flowers. A great source of pollen and nectar for our native bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, Florida is lucky enough to have three native species: Narrow-leaf Ironweed (*Vernonia angustifolia*); Tall Ironweed (*Vernonia gigantea*); and New York Ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*). Narrow-leaf Ironweed and Tall Ironweed are native to our area; New York Ironweed is found in the northern-most part of the state.

Narrow-leaf Ironweed is a clump-forming, short-lived perennial with 6"-8" flower heads that comprise 9-30 magenta disc flowers. Found in the Southeastern United States from the Carolinas west to Louisiana and south to Central Florida, this plant is natively found in dry mesic to xeric pine flatwoods, open woods, mixed pine-hardwood forests, and sandhills; it is also found along roadsides and in disturbed woodlands.

With a bloom season that begins in June and lasts through early fall, Narrow-leaf Ironweed does best in full sun although it can tolerate some light shade. The plant prefers loamy or sandy, well-drained soil. Like so many of our native plants, it is drought tolerant once established.

With a height of 2'-4', Narrow-leaf Ironweed works best in the middle or back of the garden. It pairs well with [Purple Coneflower](#) (*Echinacea purpurea*), [Muhly Grass](#) (*Muhlenberg capillaris*), [Blazing Stars](#) (*Liatris* spp.), and [Big Bluestem](#) (*Andropogon gerardii*).

Narrow-leaf Ironweed is very low maintenance and resistant to most pests. Deadhead for repeat bloom and to minimize unwanted self-seeding.

(Fun fact: The stems of Narrow-leaf Ironweed are actually located underground; the plant's above-ground branches are what people normally call the plant's stem.)

Tall Ironweed (*Vernonia gigantea*) is a long-lived, erect perennial and one of the tallest of Ironweeds; it can easily grow 10 feet in a single growing season although it typically reaches heights of 5 to 8 feet with a narrow habit that's only 2 to 3 feet wide. With a showy, flat-headed panicle of flower heads that comprise 10-30 magenta flowers that can be 6 to 16 inches across, this showstopper can be used as a specimen plant to draw human attention and conversation, or in a mass planting that will surely draw butterflies.

Found in the Eastern United States from New York west to Iowa and south to Florida and Texas, this plant occurs naturally along stream banks, floodplains, hydric to wet mesic pine flatwoods and forest edges; the plant is also found along roadsides and overgrazed pastures. The plant prefers full sun and moist (but not wet) soil. It can tolerate part sun.

With a bloom season that begins in July or August and extends through September, Tall Ironweed pairs well with many of our native [Asters](#) (*Symphyotrichum* spp.), [Joe Pye-Weed](#) (*Eutrochium fistulosum*), [Rattlesnakes](#) (*Eryngium* spp.) and is equally at home in the back of a formal native plant garden or a wildflower meadow.

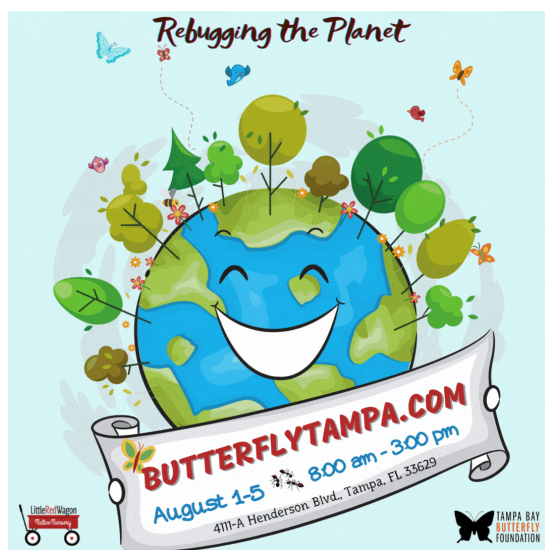
Tall Ironweed is very low maintenance and resistant to most pests. Cut it back in the spring to encourage fuller growth. Deadhead it throughout the season to encourage repeat blooms. Note: Tall Ironweed's seeds are airborne, which can increase the range they will travel. Deadheading also reduces the unwanted self-seeding.

(Fun fact: Ironweeds support the specialized bee *Melissodes* (*Eumelissodes*) *denticulatus*. There is also speculation that Ironweeds get their common name from the "iron-like" qualities associated with the plant, including its tough stems, and rusty-colored seeds and tint on fading leaves.)

From **\$8.00/Gallon**

SHOP NOW

KIDS' CORNER



REGISTER for Summer Camp



REGISTER for Fall Camp

We still have a few spots left in our August 1-5 and August 8-9 Summer Nature camps.

Where did the summer go? School is about to start, and you know that means that the holidays are right around the corner! Keep the kids entertained with our 3-day Thanksgiving Nature Camp and our Nature Wonderland Camp. Campers will be busy bees as they learn about the ecosystem in their very own backyards. There will be daily explorations of our backyard as we hunt for the creatures we learn about each day. Planting in the garden, games, and arts and crafts are just some of the fun activities we have planned. Our animal ambassadors will make guest appearances, too. Each camper will have an opportunity to release a butterfly.



REGISTER for January 2-6



REGISTER for January 9

“Diggin’ in to Restore Butterfly Habitat in Tampa Bay”

Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation regularly has a number of single-day and ongoing volunteering opportunities.



UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES: (All events are subject to change due to weather.)

Fred Ball Park: August 10 @ 8:00 – 10:00 am

Volunteers are needed to help maintain the Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation-sponsored butterfly garden at 2621 Bayshore Blvd Tampa, FL 33629 (next to the Rose Circle Garden Club). To volunteer, click or copy and paste into a browser: <https://volunteersignup.org/3Y8AY>

CFC Butterfly Garden Maintenance: August 11 @ 9:00 – 11:00 am

The Florida Aquarium, Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation and FWC's Suncoast Youth Conservation Center are looking for volunteers to assist with habitat maintenance at Center for Conservation site of the Florida Conservation and Technology Center in Apollo Beach (529

Estuary Shore Lane) as well as their Adopt a Road site along Dickman Road.

To volunteer, click or copy and paste into a browser: <https://volunteersignup.org/BAJWP>

TBBF Hell Strip Habitat Maintenance: August 20 @ 8:30 – 10:30 am

Volunteers are needed to perform Hell Strip Habitat maintenance (4110 W. Estrella St.).

To volunteer, click or copy and paste into a browser: <https://volunteersignup.org/39EC3>

Encore! Technology Park: August 27 @ 8:30 – 10:30 am

Volunteers are needed to help maintain the Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation-sponsored butterfly garden at Encore! Park located at 1210 E. Harrison St. (Corner of Harrison Street and Hank Ballard St.)

To volunteer, click or copy and paste into a browser: <https://volunteersignup.org/HJHWJ>

Kids' Camp Assistants: November 21-23 @ 7:45 am - 3:15 pm

High School and adult volunteers are needed to assist with our Thankful for Nature camp this fall. A commitment for the three days of camp is preferred; we will have a meeting the week prior to provide information.

To volunteer, click or copy and paste into a browser: <https://volunteersignup.org/ARX4F>



Little Red Wagon Native Nursery:

We currently need garden enthusiasts to help us support the efforts of Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation's conservation, restoration, research, and education efforts. To join our awesome volunteer team, click or copy and paste into a

browser: <https://volunteersignup.org/9BQTJ>

ABOUT THE TAMPA BAY BUTTERFLY FOUNDATION:

With a focus on Florida butterfly species and native plants, environmental education and local awareness in the Tampa Bay area, Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation was established to support the conservation of butterflies and pollinators and the restoration of their natural wildlife habitats. By working globally with university research partners, providing educational and research opportunities and community outreach programs, and through multi-faceted fundraising efforts, the Foundation aims to elevate public awareness of the importance of butterflies.

The Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation Inc., a 501(c)(3), is an affiliate of the Butterfly Conservatory of Tampa Bay.

VOLUNTEER WITH US!

Pardon Our Metamorphosis

Visit our temporary butterfly education exhibit during Little Red Wagon Native Nursery's normal business hours while the Butterfly Conservatory is being constructed. Enjoy live butterflies, their caterpillars and



chrysalis as well as a few native reptiles Tuesdays through Sundays. While the education exhibit is currently free, we do accept donations for Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation for education, research, habitat restoration and conservation for butterflies and native plants in our area. Please keep visiting Butterfly Conservatory of Tampa Bay website for updates regarding our Grand Opening. For updates, visit:

www.ButterflyTampa.com

Monthly Calendar of Events

August 1: US Air Force Day

August 10: Hillsborough County School Year Begins

AUGUST 13 @ 10 AM - NABA Tampa Bay Meeting: New potential members welcome!



North American Butterfly Association



This will be our first in-person meeting since the COVID pandemic started. We will be meeting at Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation's Gallery venue at 4111 Henderson Blvd in South Tampa. If you are new to butterflying, come join us and see if you would like to become an official member. We do butterfly walks, official annual butterfly counts, have speakers during the year at our meetings and enjoy butterflies! NABA-Tampa Bay works to increase enjoyment and conservation of butterflies including Florida native host and nectar plants in landscapes and provide resources for their life cycles. Chemical free gardens, facilitate conservation and help the environment. Note: This is not a group for rearing captive butterflies.

For additional information, email Anita@ButterflyTampa.com or call/text 813-748-7098.

Visit Little Red Wagon Native Nursery

Little Red Wagon Native Nursery is Hillsborough County's only native nursery. Supporting Florida's native plant & wildlife ecosystem and our natural world, we are located at 4113 Henderson Blvd. in South Tampa.

You can also visit us at LittleRedWagonNativeNursery.com

Email: Info@ButterflyTampa.com

Hours: Tuesdays - Fridays 11-5:30, Saturdays 10-5:30 and Sundays 12-4. Closed Mondays.

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