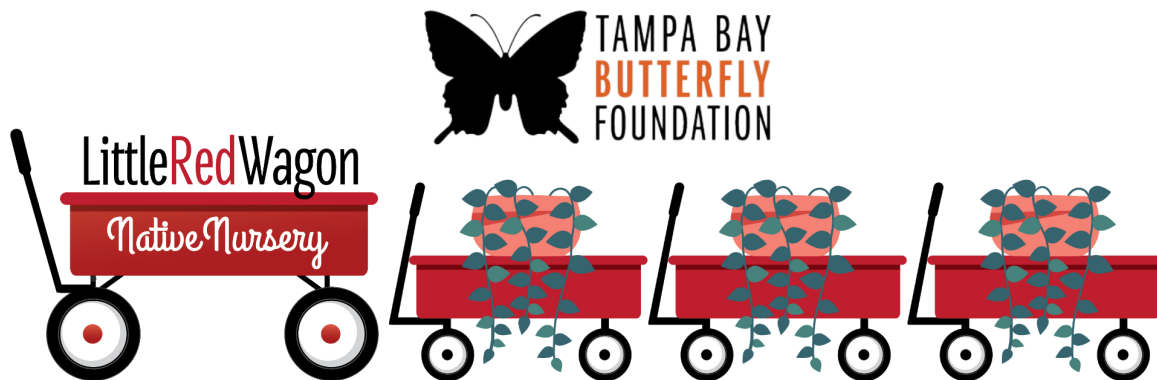


If you cannot see images, please [click here](#)

# LITTLE RED WAGONFUL

*Nurturing Nature One Wagon at a Time*

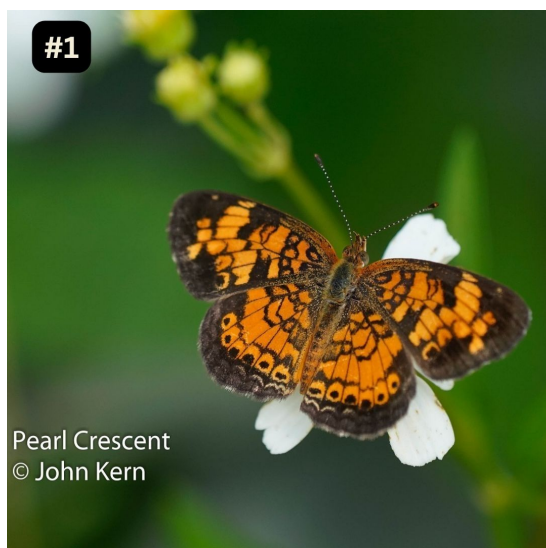


**February 2023**

"The garden is a love song, a duet between human being and Mother Nature." - Jeff Cox

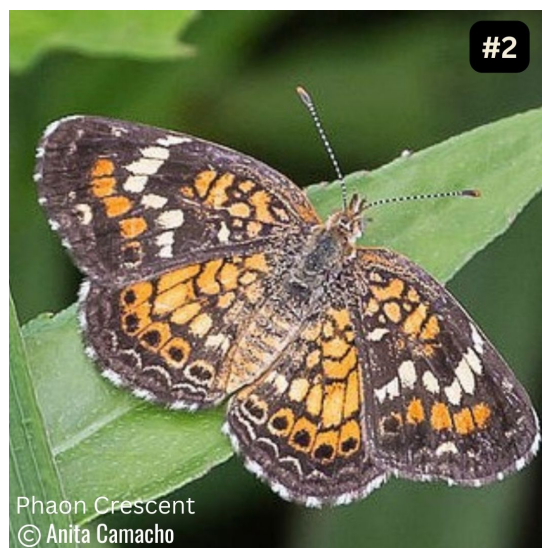
**B**efore you know it Spring will be here! Why not let us help you plan and prepare to bring butterflies and other pollinators to your garden. February is a good month to get native plants in the ground to give them time to start establishing their roots before the harsh summer heats. Bring a photo of the area you want to plant and our knowledgeable and helpful staff will help you with your plant selection and attract the pollinators!

## Butterflies of the Month



**Pearl Crescent**

Pearl Crescents are beautifully patterned, orange and chocolate brown butterflies with a wingspan of



**Phaon Crescent**

Like Pearl Crescents, Phaon Crescents are beautifully patterned, orange and chocolate brown

only 1 ¼- 1 ¾ inches. Fairly common throughout much of Florida, [the Alabama Butterfly Atlas](#) notes that Pearl Crescents “are found wherever asters flourish, and there is an aster for almost any habitat.” Interestingly, Pearl Crescents ‘don’t wear pearls,’ unlike their close relative, the Phaon Crescent, which has a pale cream band (its pearls) in the center of its top forewing. (See Photos #1 and #2.)

Female Pearl Crescents lay clusters of pale greenish-yellow eggs on the undersides of host plant leaves. Host plants are a range of plants in the Aster family including Frost Aster (*Symphotrichum pilosum*) and Rice Button Aster (*Symphotrichum dumosum*). Young caterpillars live and feed communally in silken nests on the underside of host plant leaves.

Adults are considered generalists that will nectar from a variety of flowers including Shepherd’s Needle (*Bidens alba*), Milkweed (*Asclepias spp.*) and Asters (*Symphotrichum spp.*) Adult males usually have black antennal knobs.

butterflies. Slightly smaller in size (wingspan typically only 1- 1 ½ inches) and with a cream band on its top forewings, Phaon Crescents are most often found in areas with abundant Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*.)

Female Phaon Crescents lay clusters of pale greenish-yellow eggs on the undersides of host plant leaves. Host plants include Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*) and occasionally Looseflower Water-Willow (*Justicia ovata*.) Young caterpillars live and feed communally in silken nests on the underside of host plant leaves.

Adults are considered generalists that will nectar from a variety of flowers including Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*) and composites including Asters (*Symphotrichum spp.*) Sunflowers (*Helianthus spp.*) and Thistles (*Cirsium spp.*)

## Host Plants Of The Month

### Frost Aster

(*Symphotrichum pilosum*)

Frost Aster (*Symphotrichum pilosum*) is a stout herbaceous perennial that acts as an annual outside its normal range of Zones 4 to 8. Typically growing to a size of 3 ½ to 4 feet tall and wide, this wildflower has stiff, branching leafy stems with clusters of flowers found across the top half of the plant. Each ½ to ¾ inch daisy-like flower comprises 15-35 white rays surrounding a center disc of 20-40 tiny flowers that fade from pale yellow to reddish-purple as pollen is removed. (Details on floral color change and its impact on pollinating bees can be found in this [article](#).)

Frost Aster’s peak flowering time is typically August or September through November and its flowers are a favorite nectar source for many of our native bees and butterflies. The plant is also a host plant for Pearl Crescent caterpillars and its seeds are devoured by song birds during the winter.

Frost Aster is native to upland prairies, limestone glades, dry or mesic thickets, open woodlands, meadows and old fields from Quebec west to Ontario and south to northern Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. The plant requires moist but well-drained soils in semi-shaded areas. The plant will not tolerate full sun in our area.

Frost Aster has extremely hairy stems and leaves; this feature helps distinguish Frost Aster from other asters. Frost Aster is exceptionally stunning when planted en masse in a shaded woodland. For those with the appropriate setting, why not try some and let us know how many birds, butterflies, and bees you count?

(Fun Fact: Asters derive their common names from the Greek word for star because of their showy, radiated flowers. In this month’s newsletter, we’re focusing on three of these beautiful plants.)



[SHOP NOW](#)

## Frogfruit

(*Phyla nodiflora*)

Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*) is a charming groundcover with trailing foliage that grows to about 6 inches high. A member of the verbena family, Frogfruit's white and reddish-pink flowers look like miniature versions of its larger verbena cousins. The plant is listed as semi-evergreen: it will go dormant in harsh winters, but re-emerges with warmer temperatures. In our area, the plant will typically bloom from early spring through the fall with peak bloom occurring in May and fruit setting in October.



Frogfruit is native to much of the United States. It can be found as far north as Pennsylvania and Oregon and as far south as Florida and Texas and is naturally found in moist and wet habitats with well-drained to poorly drained sandy, limestone, clay or loam soils. In Florida, Frogfruit can be found along roadsides, hydric bogs, and exposed limerock. It tolerates mowing and makes a great turf alternative.

Frogfruit is the caterpillar host plant for Buckeyes, Phaon Crescents, and White Peacocks and a nectar source for Barred Yellows, Ceranus Blues, Gray Hairstreaks, Phaon Crescents, Checkered Skippers and numerous species of bees.

There are many uses for this plant in your landscape. This ground cover has been used by numerous customers as a lawn replacement for partial sun to full sun areas. It performs well in hell strip areas between sidewalks and roads. It also makes a nice spiller plant draping over the sides of potted plants or make a nice hanging plant. Keep in mind this plant does not typically survive in mostly shady to full shade conditions. Why not try planting it with *Bidens alba* for a combination that is sure to attract the pollinators?

[SHOP NOW](#)

## Garden Swag





### Get your SwagON!

Give the gift that keeps on growing and will attract butterflies to your loved one's garden all year round! Instead of cut flowers, give your Valentine a Butterfly Garden in a pot. Our butterfly mix pots are a combination of caterpillar host plants and butterfly nectar plants.

**SHOP NOW**





Not sure what to buy for your Valentine? Let them choose with a Gift Card! Available in denominations from \$10 and up, gift cards are always in stock, can be purchased online and emailed. Make their inbox flutter with love!

[SHOP NOW](#)

## Nectar Plant of the Month





### Stoke's Aster

Stoke's Aster (*Stokesia laevis*) is low-growing (1 to 2 feet) herbaceous, evergreen perennial with showy, 2 ½ inch-wide violet blue flowers with white feathery disk floret centers. This wildflower typically blooms from early to mid-summer and may rebloom again in the fall.

Stoke's Aster is native to wetlands, bottomlands, wet pinewoods, and savannas along the coastal plain from North Carolina to northern Florida and Louisiana. The plant prefers well-drained but moist soil and full sun. It will tolerate filtered sunlight and is somewhat drought resistant once established. In our area, Stoke's Aster is generally evergreen. It's a great nectar source for bees and butterflies and looks great in vases as a cut flower.

Plant Stoke's Aster with Smooth Oxeye (*Heliopsis helianthoides* var. *gracilis*) for a bright yellow-purple punch, or keep it in the same color palette and plant it with Corn Snakeroot (*Eryngium aquaticum*.) Expect to divide Stoke's Asters every three years or so to keep them healthy and looking their best.

(Fun Fact: According to UF | IFAS Stoke's Aster was named after the English botanist and doctor, Jonathan Stokes, who documented that Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) could treat heart failure.)

[SHOP NOW](#)

**Design With Vines**



### Climbing Aster

Climbing Aster (*Ampelaster carolinianus*) is long-lived sprawling vine about ten feet long that can easily be trained to crawl over fences, arbors, and pergolas. Its delicate, daisy-like flowers are lovely shades of pink, purple and lavender clustered at the ends of the vine's branches. Climbing Aster blooms from late summer through the fall (and into the winter when the weather is mild.) It's a great nectar source for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators and its seeds are a winter fuel source for songbirds. It is also the host plant for Pearl Crescent caterpillars.

Climbing Aster's native habitat includes the coastal plains and Piedmont from the Carolinas south to Georgia and Florida. It naturally grows along stream banks, moist thickets, wet woodlands, and marshy shores. It performs best in full sun and wet to dry sands with good drainage. It is an excellent candidate for the edges of retention basins and streambank stabilization projects. It pairs well with Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and Swamp Lily (*Crinum americanum*).

Deadhead this plant when flowers are spent, but reserve heavy trimming for the spring to encourage new growth and a profusion of flowers.

Climbing Aster has been recently spotted in Lettuce Lake Park. Let us know if you see any while you're out and about. Email your photos to [info@ButterflyTampa.com](mailto:info@ButterflyTampa.com). We'd love to know what you find!

**SHOP NOW**



**KIDS' CORNER**A colorful poster for 'Kids' Spring Break Nature Camp'. At the top, the title 'Kids' SPRING BREAK NATURE CAMP' is written in large, playful letters. Below the title, a smiling Earth globe is surrounded by a group of diverse children holding hands. To the right, a red wagon filled with various potted plants and flowers is shown. A blue cartoon bird stands next to the wagon, holding a sign that reads '\$250 EARLY BIRD SPECIAL ENDS FEBRUARY 13'. The text 'KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 5' and '8:00 AM - 3:00 PM' is displayed below the globe. At the bottom, the website 'BUTTERFLYTAMPA.COM' and the address '4111-A Henderson Blvd., Tampa, FL 33629' are listed. The background is a light blue sky with a few butterflies and bees.

**Kids' SPRING BREAK NATURE CAMP**

KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 5  
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM

**BUTTERFLYTAMPA.COM**

4111-A Henderson Blvd., Tampa, FL 33629

Next month Spring Break will be here and we're ready to meet new nature explorers and welcome returning campers! Join us for a fun-filled week learning about nature. Every camper will get to release a butterfly (weather permitting). Hurry and save with our Early Bird Special rate which ends soon! Click the link below for details and to register.

**REGISTER NOW**





**TAMPA BAY BUTTERFLY FOUNDATION**

- Animal Encounters
- Bug Hunts
- Games
- Arts & Crafts
- Butterfly Release (weather permitting)

**Kids' NATURE Camps**

**8:00 AM TO 3:00 PM**

**KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 5**

**EVERY CAMPER WILL RELEASE A BUTTERFLY (weather permitting)**

**4111-A Henderson Blvd. Tampa, FL 33629**

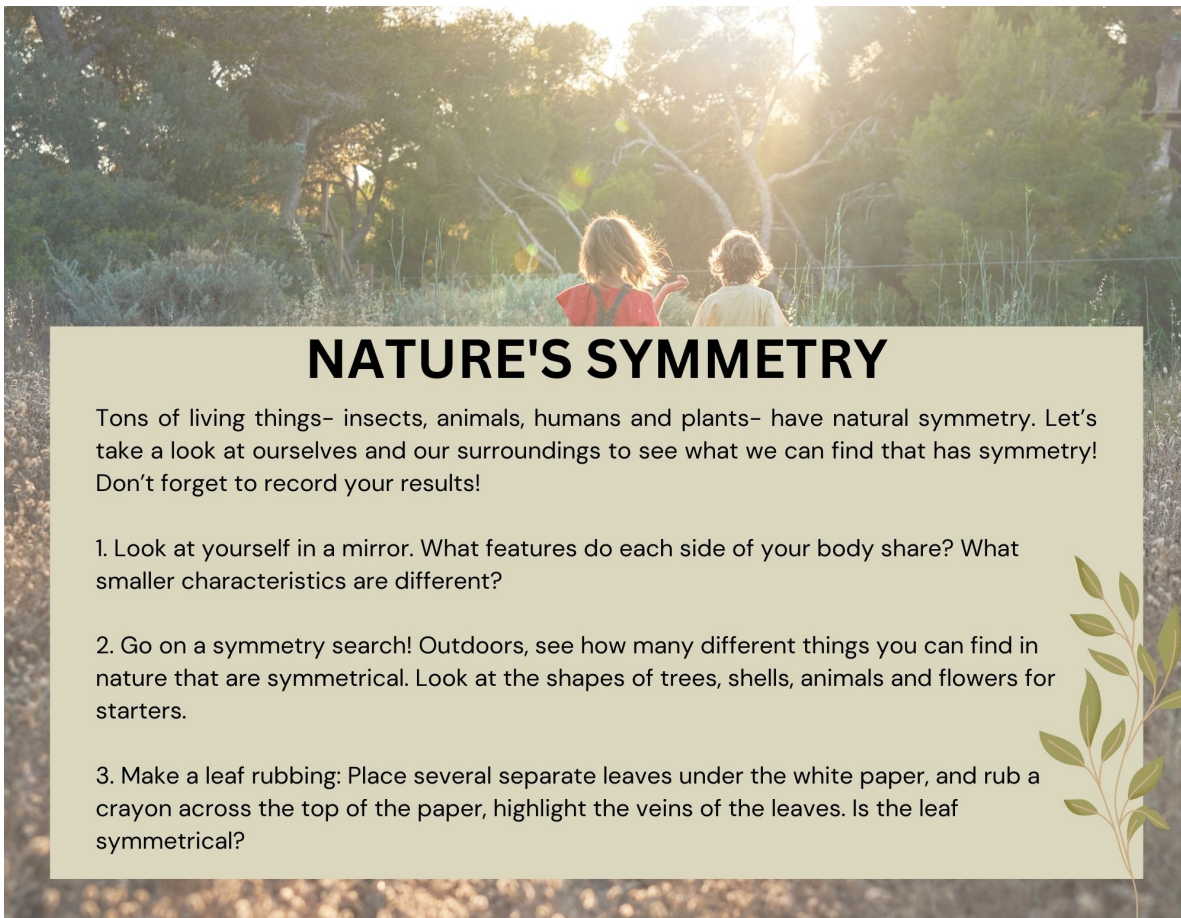
**Discovering Nature Through Fun & Creative Activities**

**For details and to register, visit:**

**BUTTERFLYTAMPA.COM**

We're BAAAACK, and we've been voted the Best of Summer Camps in 2022 by the Guide to Florida! Registration is now open for our summer nature camps for children entering Kindergarten to Grade 5. Take advantage of our Early Bird special which is \$25 off the registration fee, if you register for the entire camp period, one month in advance. Day Passes are available (but not applicable for the Early Bird discount).

**REGISTER NOW**



## NATURE'S SYMMETRY

Tons of living things– insects, animals, humans and plants– have natural symmetry. Let's take a look at ourselves and our surroundings to see what we can find that has symmetry! Don't forget to record your results!

1. Look at yourself in a mirror. What features do each side of your body share? What smaller characteristics are different?
2. Go on a symmetry search! Outdoors, see how many different things you can find in nature that are symmetrical. Look at the shapes of trees, shells, animals and flowers for starters.
3. Make a leaf rubbing: Place several separate leaves under the white paper, and rub a crayon across the top of the paper, highlight the veins of the leaves. Is the leaf symmetrical?



### Beetle and Bee Kids Garden Gloves

Get ready for Spring by planting plants the pollinators will love! Use these amazing kids gloves to play in the dirt and make your garden Spring ready!

**SHOP NOW**

### Did You Know?

Caterpillars have eyes! It's a general misconception that caterpillars don't have eyes because their eyes don't look like ours. Caterpillars have six eyes called ocelli that help them to see light.





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

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



### 2023 Nature Camp Assistants

We need adults and/or high school students to help with Kids' Nature Camps from 7:45 am to 3:15 pm during Spring Break. All Nature Camps will be held at 4111-A Henderson Blvd. in South Tampa.

**VOLUNTEER - March 13-17**



### Butterfly Alley Maintenance

Volunteers are needed to perform cleanup and maintenance of Butterfly Alley habitat (4110 W. Estrella St., behind Little Red Wagon Native Nursery) this month.

**VOLUNTEER - February 25**



Center for Conservation Maintenance

### CFC Habitat Maintenance

The Florida Aquarium, Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation and FWC's Suncoast Youth Conservation Center need 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.

**VOLUNTEER - February 23**



### ENCORE! Park

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

**VOLUNTEER - February 18**



### Fred Ball Park

Volunteers are needed to help maintain the Rose Circle Garden Circle and Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation-sponsored butterfly garden at 2851 Rubideaux St., Tampa, FL 33629 (next to Tampa Garden Club).

**VOLUNTEER - February 4**



### 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.

**VOLUNTEER**

#### **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.

**Pardon Our Metamorphosis**





Visit our temporary butterfly education exhibit inside Little Red Wagon Native Nursery during our normal business hours while the Butterfly Conservatory is in permitting to be built. 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 our website for updates regarding our Grand Opening.

[BUTTERFLYTAMPA.COM](https://www.butterflytampa.com)

## Monthly Calendar of Events



# Butterfly Walk



**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26**  
**9:30 AM - 11:00 AM**



**BUTTERFLYTAMPA.COM**

6901 S MacDill Ave in South Tampa

Let's find some Viceroy's at Gadsden Park! Join Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation and NABA Tampa Bay on a butterfly walk at 6901 S MacDill Ave in South Tampa. We will meet under the trees North of the softball field at the back of the park.

This will be free for NABA members; non-NABA members fee: \$5 (payment required morning of event).

**Registration Required.**

**REGISTER NOW**

FEBRUARY 1	<i>National Serpent Day</i>
FEBRUARY 2	<i>Groundhog Day</i>
FEBRUARY 7	<i>National Green Week begins</i>
FEBRUARY 13-19	<i>Invasive Species week</i>
FEBRUARY 14	<i>Valentine's Day--LRW gift cards always in stock!</i>
FEBRUARY 20	<i>Presidents' Day</i>
FEBRUARY 27	<i>National Invasive Species Awareness (NISA) begins</i>

**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](http://LittleRedWagonNativeNursery.com)

Email: [Info@ButterflyTampa.com](mailto:Info@ButterflyTampa.com)

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

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 **omnisend**