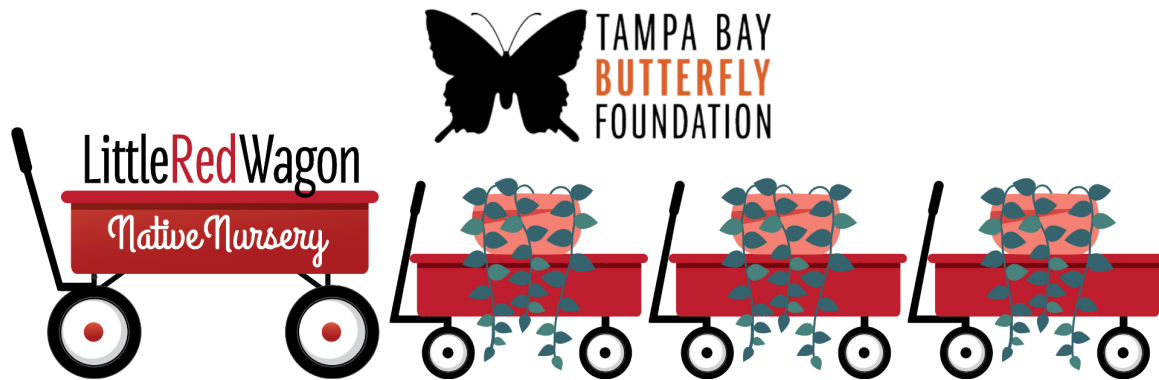


If you cannot see images, please [click here](#)

LITTLE RED WAGONFUL

Nurturing Nature One Wagon at a Time



December 2023

Learn to be an observer in all seasons.
Every single day your garden has something new and wonderful to show you.
~Unknown

As the holiday season unfolds, we look back over 2023 and want to extend our sincerest appreciation for your loyalty and support. Thank you for choosing Little Red Wagon Native Nursery. May your holidays be filled with happiness and cherished moments! We will be closed on Christmas Day and New Year's, but you can purchase last minute e-gift cards at ANY time and make online purchases which you can schedule for pickup when we resume normal business hours. If you have Kindergarten to Grade 5 kids, register early for our upcoming Nature Wonderland and MLK camps during school winter breaks in January...space is limited!

Butterfly of the Month



Great Purple Hair Streak

The Great Purple Hairstreak is one of my favorite hairstreaks. With stunning, iridescent blue upper wings that have black borders, a few splashes of iridescent greenish gold on the lower hindwings near its tails, and a bright orange abdomen, this distinctive butterfly is a show-stopper. It's also the largest of Florida's hairstreaks (its wing-span is 1 ¼ to 2 inches) and the only U.S. species of butterflies belonging to the tropical *Atides* genus.

Male Great Purple Hairstreaks have two scent patches on the upper forewing that female lack. While both species spend much of their time in treetops with their host plant mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*), spring-flying butterflies nectar on Sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*) and later broods nectar on mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*), goldenrods (*Solidago spp.*), and asters (*Symphyotrichum spp.*).

Females lay flat, whitish eggs on mistletoe leaves. The caterpillars that emerge are bright green, sluglike, and camouflaged by the mistletoe's green leaves. Early instar caterpillars stay close to the mistletoe; mature caterpillars pupate as coffee-bean shaped chrysalides under loose bark, crevices, or in leaf litter.

In Florida, Great Purple Hairstreaks produce at least three generations per year. In October, they were seen in Rainbow Springs State Park in Dunnellon and in Chassahowitzka Wildlife and Management Area in Hernando County. Please let us know if you see any here in Pinellas County. Email your photos to info@ButterflyTampa.com. We'd love to see what you find!

Host Plant Of The Month



American Mistletoe - (*Phoradendron leucarpum*)

American Mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*) is an evergreen hemiparasitic perennial shrub with leathery oblong leaves, inconspicuous white flowers, and white berries. It usually grows in the highest parts of a host tree where its leaves can get full sun (for effective photosynthesis). However, as a hemiparasite, American Mistletoe doesn't rely on photosynthesis: its roots burrow into its host from which it draws water, minerals, and nutrients. In Florida, American Mistletoe is most commonly found in Laurel Oaks (*Quercus laurifolia*) and less frequently, in our area, in Elms (*Ulmus spp.*), Hackberries (*Celtis spp.*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus spp.*).

While American Mistletoe is poisonous to humans and problematic for cats, dogs, and horses, its berries are an essential winter food source for birds – including silky flycatchers, grouse, mourning doves, bluebirds, evening grosbeaks, robins, and pigeons. American Mistletoe is also the sole food source for Great Purple Hairstreak caterpillars.

Historically, Cherokee, Creek, Houma, Mendocino, and Seminole used American Mistletoe to treat a range of maladies. (For details, please see [Native American Ethnobotany Database](#).) Europeans brought a holiday tradition of kissing under the mistletoe, [alternatively described](#) as having its origins in Norse mythology or with druids, that still exists today.

What do you think? Is kissing under the mistletoe a tradition we should continue, or in the age of #MeToo should it be abandoned? Stop by and cast your vote--- we're truly curious.

Garden Swag



Get Your SwagON!

We've got you covered with indoor and outdoor accessories to deck your halls this holiday season! Stop by Little Red Wagon Native Nursery's Gift Shop to see our selection of holiday merchandise or pick up a gift card.



Skip the lines and purchase gift cards online!

When in doubt, gift cards are always a good choice! From teachers to service employees to loved ones, with denominations starting at \$10, it's easy to give the gift of nature.

SHOP GIFT CARDS

Nectar Plant of the Month



Wild Poinsettia - (*Euphorbia cyathophora*)

With holidays around the corner, you had to guess we would find a way to include another plant traditionally associated with this time of year. We found it with Wild Poinsettia (*Euphorbia cyathophora*), an herbaceous annual in the spurge family that typically grows 2 to 3 feet tall by 1 to 2 feet wide. With bright red leafy bracts that surround tiny yellow flowers, this plant isn't as showy as its cousin, Christmas Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*), but it still adds a nice pop of color to the native wildflower garden. And equally as nice are the bees, butterflies and flies that Wild Poinsettia's nectar attracts.

Wild Poinsettia is native to pinelands and hammocks throughout peninsular Florida and parts of the Panhandle in zones 8A to 11. It can also be found in disturbed areas and along roadsides. Wild Poinsettia grows best in full sun and moist to dry, well-drained, sandy soils.

Note: All parts of the plant are poisonous when ingested, and like other members of Euphorbia, the plant's milky sap irritates the membranes of the eyes and mouth. Additionally, the plant can spread aggressively, so please consider these factors when planning where to place these plants.

[SHOP NOW](#)

Design With Edimentals

Everglades Tomatoes & Wild Sweet Basil

What better edible red and green combination to complete our holiday themed newsletter than tomatoes and basil?

EVERGLADES TOMATOES

(*Solanum pimpinellifolium*)



Florida climate can be harsh on tomato plants, but the state's native Everglades Tomato (*Solanum pimpinellifolium*) is up to the challenge. This indeterminate plant (vines can grow to 15 feet) is heat resistant with cherry-type tomatoes that pack a punch likened to beefsteaks.

Everglades Tomatoes require full sun and well-drained, fertile soil. They also require 1 to 2 inches of water per week. In our area, it's usually safe to plant them outdoors in early spring. (If you're starting them from seed, germination will take a full two weeks and the plant won't produce its first fruit for at least 80 days.) Given how tall Everglades Tomatoes can grow, consider staking the plant or tying it to a trellis. Prepare to pick fruit on an almost daily basis at its peak – the plant is a prolific producer and you won't want any to go to waste!

[SHOP NOW](#)

WILD SWEET BASIL

(*Clinopodium vulgare*)

Wild Sweet Basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*) is an herbaceous perennial wildflower that grows 8 to 25 inches. With whorls of charming bell-shaped pink flowers that top the square stem during the summer, the plant is a great nectar source. Humans can eat its leaves, and to entice you to try it, below is a great recipe to try.

[SHOP NOW](#)



CAPRESE SALAD APPETIZERS

These fancy caprese salad appetizers are easy to make and will be a hit at your holiday gathering!

Ripe Everglades Tomatoes



Wild Sweet Basil leaves
 1 pinch Black Pepper
 1 pinch Salt
 1 tablespoon Extra Virgin Olive Oil
 1 tablespoon Italian Seasoning
 Bocconcini (or a large mozzarella ball chopped)
 Balsamic glaze (optional)

Marinate mozzarella in salt, pepper, Italian seasoning and olive oil for a few minutes. Thread basil, tomatoes and mozzarella on skewers/toothpicks in any order you like. Drizzle balsamic glaze immediately before serving.

KIDS' CORNER

TAMPA BAY BUTTERFLY FOUNDATION
 Early Release Mondays
 1:30 - 3:00 pm
 September to May
 4111-A Henderson Blvd,
 in South Tampa

BUG CLUB

Kindergarten - Gr. 5

BUTTERFLYTAMPA.COM

SCAN ME

Our monthly Bug Club will be held during the school year on Early Release Mondays for Hillsborough County Public Schools. From 1:30 to 3:00 pm, Kindergarten to Grade 5 children will participate in various activities exploring nature and will meet animal ambassadors too! There will be no Bug Club activities on non-student days.

Each month, we will have a different theme and focus for kids to continue learning and discovering nature.



DECEMBER BUG CLUB:

Discover the wonders of winter in Florida! Kids will discover where the butterflies disappear to in winter, uncover the science behind evergreen trees, and learn about reindeers (Santa's favorite winter animal). This month will be filled with fun experiments, crafts and nature activities!

REGISTER NOW

WINTER NATURE CAMPS

BUTTERFLYTAMPA.COM

- ❄ Kindergarten - Grade 5
- ❄ 8:30 am - 2:30 pm
- ❄ Meet animal ambassadors
- ❄ Butterfly release
- ❄ Bug hunts, arts and crafts, games, and more

Nature doesn't take a break in winter and neither do we! Winter time is full of mysteries! Campers will get to learn about Florida's year-round birds and bugs, try to match herbivores, omnivores and carnivores to their teeth shape, and solve nature mysteries themselves! Campers will be able to attract their favorite birds and bugs to their own yard! In the spirit of the holidays, campers will be able to make snow and play other holiday-themed games. Register Kindergarten to Grade 5 kids for our four-day Nature Wonderland and our one-day MLK Jr. camps during school breaks this month.



REGISTER: JANUARY 2-5



REGISTER: JANUARY 15



PINE CONE ACTIVITY!

1. Go on a nature walk somewhere with pine trees.
2. Collect pinecones as you see them. Try to find pinecones of all different shapes and sizes.
3. When you home, put the pinecones in ice cold water.
4. Observe and write down/draw what happens to the pinecone.
5. With parent help- research why the pinecones do what you observe.



Snake Snap Bracelets

Check out these colorful snake snap bracelets. Take a cute and fun snake with you anywhere you go!

SHOP NOW



WACKY FACT!

In Florida coyotes, black bears, and armadillos will build dens to hunker down in during winter. Other animals choose to deal with colder weather in other ways.

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

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



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). We will not be performing maintenance this month but hope you will join us in the future.

VOLUNTEER: January 19



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: December 14



Encore Park! Maintenance

Volunteers will be helping to maintain a Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation-sponsored butterfly garden at Encore Park located at 1210 E. Harrison St. (Corner of Harrison St. and Hank Ballard St.).

VOLUNTEER: January 12



Nature Camp Volunteers

Sign up for a rewarding experience mentoring Kindergarten to Grade 5 children during our Nature Camps in January. Click the button below to select the date(s) you are available to volunteer. This is a great opportunity for High School students to earn hours for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship program and college environmental science students.

VOLUNTEER: Winter Break Camps



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 - December

VOLUNTEER - 2024

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.

Education Exhibit



Visit our butterfly education exhibit inside Little Red Wagon Native Nursery during our normal business hours. Enjoy seeing live butterflies, their caterpillars and chrysalis as well as a few native reptiles every day of the week!

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.

BUTTERFLYTAMPA.COM

Monthly Calendar of Events

- DECEMBER 4** Wildlife Conservation Day
- DECEMBER 5** World Soil Day, International Volunteer Day
- DECEMBER 7** Hanukkah begins
- DECEMBER 12** National Poinsettia Day
- DECEMBER 13** 12 Days of Native Plants begins



Purchase raffle tickets to win a \$15 Little Red Wagon Native Nursery Gift Card. Daily Winners will be announced December 13 - 24.

[PURCHASE TICKETS](#)

DECEMBER 24 Christmas Eve

DECEMBER 25 Little Red Wagon Native Nursery will be closed



Your support and loyalty have been the pillars of our success and we cherish the relationships we've built with outstanding customers like you. Happy holidays from all of us at Little Red Wagon Native Nursery. Best wishes for a successful and fulfilling year ahead and we look forward to continue serving you in the New Year.

Little Red Wagon Native Nursery is Tampa'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](https://www.LittleRedWagonNativeNursery.com)

Email: Info@ButterflyTampa.com

Hours: Mondays: 11-3, Tuesdays - Fridays 11-5:30, Saturdays 10-5:30, Sundays 12-4

[Visit Little Red Wagon Native Nursery](https://www.LittleRedWagonNativeNursery.com)

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