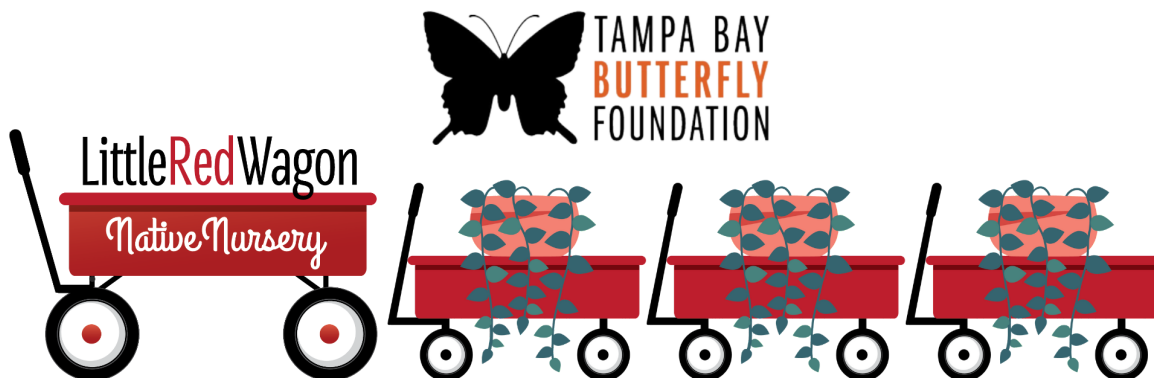


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# LITTLE RED WAGONFUL

*Nurturing Nature One Wagon at a Time*



**February 2024**

"Flowers are the Romeos and Juliets of nature." ~Mehmet Murat Ildan

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**F**ebruary is a month focused on love. Part of expressing love is to take care of what we love...our family, our pets, our friends, our gardens, ourselves, our community and wildlife. Come volunteer with us this month and show love to our Tampa Bay community butterfly gardens as part of our ongoing monthly maintenance. It's a great way to get outside and enjoy the cooler weather while doing what we love....gardening! Have you started planning your garden? Now's the time – in Florida it is always a good time but fall and winter are the best times! Spring is around the corner and often the rains slow down or stop until late summer. Get the plants in the ground now to help them establish before the heat comes. Stop by Little Red Wagon and we'll give you advice on which native plants are suitable for your outdoor space. We are now selling Privet Cassia and Aquatic Milkweed seeds, along with a planting guide to help you get started indoors..

**Butterfly of the Month**



### Zabulon skipper

Zabulon Skippers are medium-sized grass skippers (wingspan 1 3/8 - 1 5/8 inches) that tend to fly a bit higher than other grass skippers. Females (sometimes confused with Clouded Skippers) are a beautiful purply-brown with a very distinctive white edge along the costal edge of the hindwing and a smear of silvery-grey along the outer wing margins of both the hindwing and forewing (see photo 1). Males are a bright yellow-orange with rust-colored spots, a yellow "shoulder" and two brown bands: one encircles the golden shoulder and the other is along the outer border of the hindwing (see photo 2). (See this [resource](#) for ID help.)

Females lay single, pale greenish-whitish eggs on the underside blades of certain grasses which include Purpletop Grass (*Tridens flava*), Lovegrasses (*Eragrostis spp.*), Bentgrasses (*Agrostis spp.*), and possibly Slender Woodoats (*Chasmanthium laxum*). Caterpillars are small – they have a dark brown head and a whitish-greenish body with very faint stripes. Like many other grass skippers, caterpillars form shelters of silk-tied leaves. Immature caterpillars overwinter.

In Florida, Zabulon Skippers are very local, somewhat uncommon and typically found to our north. Indeed, the closest we've seen them is at Goethe State Forest in Alachua and Levy Counties. Have you seen any on your travels? Please let us know. Email your photos to [info@ButterflyTampa.com](mailto:info@ButterflyTampa.com). We'd love to see what you find!

## Host Plant Of The Month





### Purpletop Grass - (*Tridens flavus*) & Lovegrasses

Purpletop Grass (*Tridens flavus*) is a warm-season ornamental bunchgrass that grows 3 to 5 feet tall and about 3 feet wide. As its name implies, it has very pretty purple seed heads that appear in the late summer and usually persist through November. When planted en masse, the fall show is nothing short of spectacular. In addition to its aesthetic qualities, in Florida, this grass is the caterpillar host plant for Zabulon Skippers, Broad-winged Skippers, Clouded Skippers, Crossline Skippers, Little Glassywing, and Common Wood-Nymphs. It is also a valuable seed source for many of the songbirds migrating through our area.

The plant can be found in much of the eastern United States from Maine south to Florida and west to eastern Nebraska and eastern Texas. It is a great colonizing grass with deep, fibrous roots that help control erosion. It does best in full sun and dry clay or loamy soils. Plant it with Purple Love Grass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*), which develops seed heads earlier in the season for a purple fest from mid-summer through late fall.

Please note: Because many of our native insects overwinter in this grass, if you're tempted to tidy your garden, cut this back in Spring rather than the fall. Your butterflies will thank you!

[SHOP NOW](#)

## Garden Swag



You will love the sweet chimes of these Heart Wind Chimes while relaxing in your garden. Makes a great Valentine's Day gift.

[SHOP NOW](#)

Make your Valentine's heart flutter with a gift card to make their own butterfly garden. Gift cards can be emailed and never expire.

[SHOP NOW](#)

## Nectar Plant of the Month





### Buttonsage Lantana - (*Lantana involucrata*)

Buttonsage (*Lantana involucrata*) is a heavily branched, evergreen shrub that typically grows to 5 to 10 feet tall by 5 feet wide. With clusters of tiny white to lavender very fragrant flowers that attract a range of butterflies, bees and, occasionally, hummingbirds, this plant is a true winner: its flowers give way to tiny purple fruit that birds devour and it provides cover.

Buttonsage is native to coastal dunes, pine rocklands, and disturbed areas within tropical hammocks. Historically, the plant was found in coastal areas from Pinellas County south to Monroe County and then, on Florida's Atlantic side, north to Brevard County. The plant requires full sun and, once established, is drought resistant. Buttonsage prefers well-drained, sandy soils and is especially resistant to hurricane-strength winds. It can also tolerate an occasional storm surge and some exposure to salt wind.

Buttonsage is easily grown in large planters, as a specimen, or if grouped, pruned to form a hedgerow. Pair it with Beach Spider Lily (*Hymenocallis latifolia*) or Carolina Jasmine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) for a fragrant, bird- and butterfly-friendly combination.

Notably, Buttonsage's leaves smell like sage when they're crushed. According to one source, leaves of the plant were traditionally used in folk medicine to remedy coughing, treat insect bites and break fevers. According to published research, antitumor agents have also been isolated from Buttonsage.

Buttonsage is the only lantana native to our area. Unfortunately, it is less commonly sold than the non-native *Lantana camara*, a Category I invasive species that can become the dominant understory and is also toxic to livestock.

So, why plant a poor imitation? Plant the original and help #NurtureNative.

(Please note: Buttonsage Lantana is toxic to humans, cats, dogs, and horses. It can cause skin irritation in people with highly sensitive skin so it's best to wear gloves when handling.)

[SHOP NOW](#)

## Design With Edimentals



### Virginia Pepperweed - (*Lepidium virginicum*)

Virginia Pepperweed (*Lepidium virginicum*) is an herbaceous, annual or biennial plant in the mustard family that typically grows to a maximum height of 20 inches and less than 6 inches wide. With bottlebrush-like racemes that bear small, white flowers, Virginia Pepperweed has a delicate air that belies its importance in the garden. Host plant for both Great Southern White and Checkered White caterpillars, this plant is also an important nectar source for some of our native flies and bees.



Virginia Pepperweed is high in vitamins A and C and all of its parts are safe to eat. Add fresh, young leaves and seedpods to your salad for a peppery, mustardy kick or cook older leaves in soups for additional flavor. Seed pods can be dried and then ground to add seasoning to recipes that call for traditional black pepper. (Indeed, in some parts of the country, Virginia Pepperweed is known as Poor Man's Pepper.) Check out the recipe, below, which makes a substitute for horseradish. Flowers can also be dried and used in dried floral arrangements. According to the [Native American Ethnobotany Database](#), members of the Cherokee and Menominee tribes traditionally used Virginia Pepperweed as a dermatologic aid and to treat poison ivy. Cherokee also used the plant to treat croup while Houma used it to treat tuberculosis.



### PEPPERWEED 'FAUX' HORSERADISH

Ingredients: Pepperweed roots, Vinegar, Salt

Kitchen Utensils: Mortar and pestle

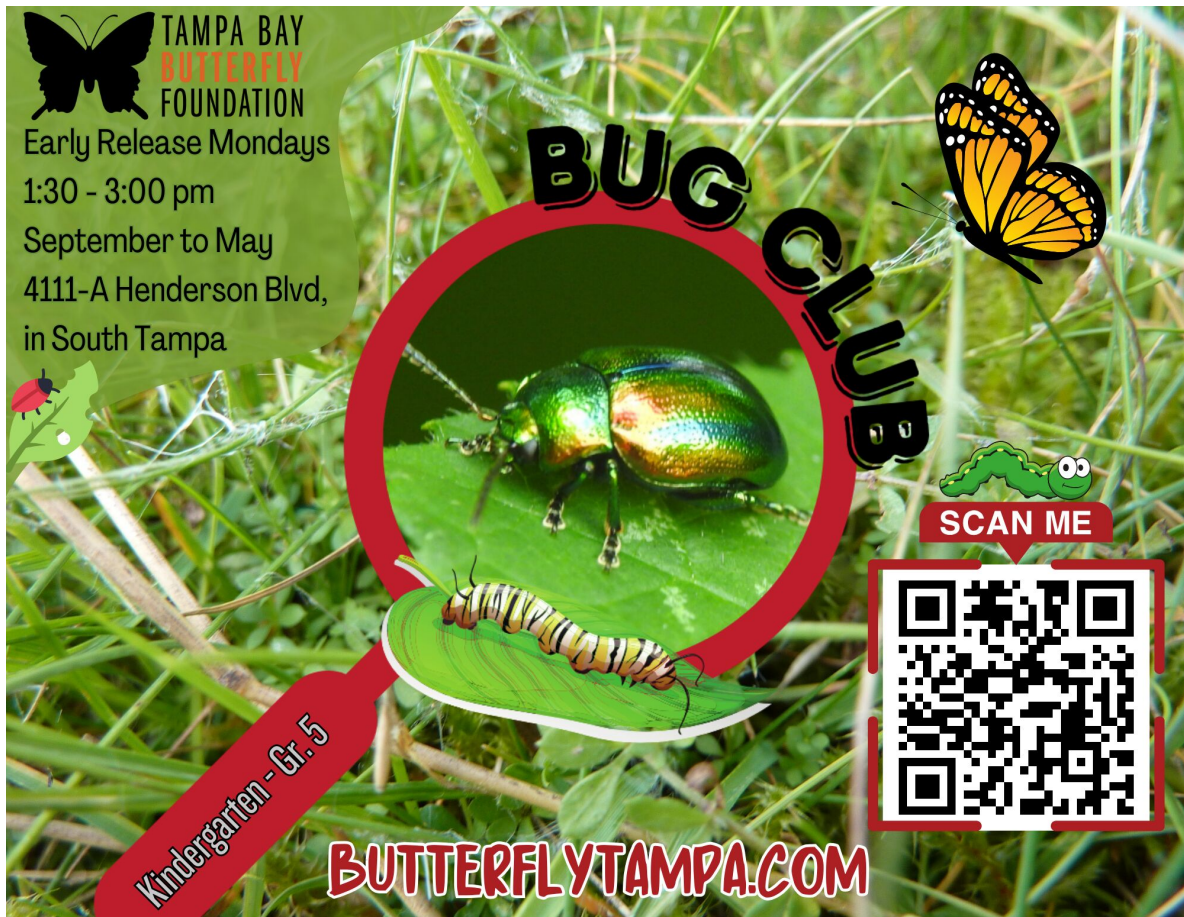
1. Collect Pepperweed roots.
2. Wash the roots to remove the dirt.
3. Using a mortar and pestle, crush the Pepperweed roots.
4. Add salt and vinegar to taste for a horseradish substitute!

Virginia Pepperweed prefers full sun and well-drained, sandy soils. In our area, it is typically found alongside roads or waste areas from March through October or November. Why not plant some in the edible section of your garden and share your recipe with us at [info@ButterflyTampa.com](mailto:info@ButterflyTampa.com)? We'd love to hear how you use it.

**SHOP NOW**

## KIDS' CORNER





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.



### FEBRUARY BUG CLUB:

Young backyard entomologists! Get hands-on with local ants racing through school hills, engineer symmetrical butterfly wings that soar, craft love bug valentines delivering cheer, and magnify insects anatomy using micro-investigation superpowers at our Bug Club.

Spread your wings across the small yet wondrous world of insects with us each week by signing up today!

**REGISTER NOW**

### FEBRUARY 16 NATURE CAMP: REPTILE ENCOUNTERS





We still have some spots available in our February 16 Nature Camp, which is a non-student day this month. Looking for something awesome for your K - Gr. 5 child to do? Register for this one-day camp focused on reptile encounters. It will be ssslithering with fun as campers have an opportunity to meet our resident reptile ambassadors.

**Reptile Encounters Camp: FEBRUARY 16**

**Time: 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

Drop off: 8:00 – 8:30 AM

Pick up: 2:30 – 3:00 PM

Location: 4111-A Henderson Blvd. in South Tampa

**REGISTER MY CAMPER**



**NATURE CAMP FUN THIS SPRING**

**March 4**

**PREHISTORIC BUGS & PLANTS**

**MARCH 11 - 15:**

**SPRING BREAK**

Every child will have the opportunity to release a butterfly.

**March 29**

**PLAY**

**BUG POKEMON**

**BUTTERFLYTAMPA.COM**

Bug hunts, butterfly releases and animal encounters, oh my! Lots of nature adventures coming this March on non-student days and Spring Break. All Nature Camps are held at the Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation Gallery located at 4111-A Henderson Blvd. in South Tampa, right beside Little Red Wagon Native Nursery.

**NATURE CAMP TIMES:**

**8:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

Drop off: 8:00 – 8:30 AM

Pick up: 2:30 – 3:00 PM

Location: 4111-A Henderson Blvd. in South Tampa

**Secure your spot by registering your Kindergarten to Grade 5 child now!**

**PREHISTORIC BUGS &  
PLANTS: MARCH 4**

**REGISTER**

**SPRING BREAK:  
MARCH 11-15**

**REGISTER**

**BUG POKEMON:  
MARCH 29**

**REGISTER**



## VALENTINE'S DAY CARDS

February is the month love bugs start reappearing in Florida, so make cute Valentine's Day cards celebrating friendship. Start by creating love bug shapes out of red and black construction paper glued together into oval bodies with antennae. Optional craft materials like wiggle eyes, silver pipe cleaners for wings, or glitter can add whimsy. On cardstock cut into heart shapes, have them write or dictate sweet valentine friendship messages: "I love bugging around with you!"



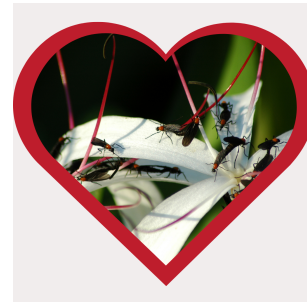
## BUTTERFLY CANDY ON A POP

Kids and those "young at heart" will enjoy this 4-inch orange butterfly on a candy pop.

[SHOP NOW](#)

## FUN FACT!

Love bugs, also known as March flies, are actually two different species - the female is *Plecia nearctica* and the male is *Phortica variegata*.



## "Diggin' in to Restore Butterfly Habitat in Tampa Bay"

Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation regularly has a number of 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: February 24**



### 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 28**



### 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: February 10**



### Nature Camp Volunteers

Sign up for a rewarding experience mentoring Kindergarten to Grade 5 children during our Nature Camp this month and several camps next month. 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: FEBRUARY**

**Volunteer: MARCH**



## 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 - 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



Did you know the Little Red Wagon is more than a native plant nursery? We have lots to see in our living education exhibits. Enjoy seeing live butterflies, their caterpillars munching on their host plants, and possibly witness a butterfly emerge from its chrysalis! While our main focus is butterflies and the native plants they rely on, there are many other creatures that rely on native plants and benefit our ecosystem. Visit our **new** native bug exhibit in our Bug Bungalow next time you visit! We also have several native and exotic reptiles, amphibians and turtle residents of Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation's living exhibit!

While the living education exhibits are currently free, donations are suggested to help us continue the mission of Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation to provide education, foster and engage in research, support the exhibit animals, and to restore habitats and conservation space for butterflies and native plants throughout the Tampa Bay area.

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



Come visit our Florida bark scorpion—Pinchy!

Contrary to its common name, the Florida bark scorpion, or *Centruroides gracilis*, is not actually native to Florida. The Florida bark scorpion has become naturalized and is now a member of the Florida ecosystems. These scorpions are considered semi-aboreal and can often be found squeezed into crevices of tree bark.



A communal species, they can often be found in groups of several dozen living on the same tree. They are the largest species of scorpion found in Florida. Scorpion stings are painful but rarely life-threatening. Healthy adults usually don't need treatment for scorpion stings. Young children and older adults are most at risk of serious complications. As with some other scorpion species, Florida bark scorpions will glow when placed under a UV light. They are highly opportunistic hunters, feeding upon crickets, cockroaches, centipedes and (in the case of the largest individuals) even small mice! Visit our new Bug Bungalow to see this cool scorpion!



Native to Southern Florida, the Florida Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula floridana*) is a subspecies of the Eastern kingsnake. These completely harmless and beneficial non-venomous snakes can grow between 3.5-6 feet in length. They have a curious nature and a gentle non-aggressive temperament.

As with other kingsnakes, the head will be the same width as the rest of its body. They prefer wet and hidden habitat such as marshes and drainage canals. They may curl into a ball with their head at the center and emit an offensive odor through their vent when threatened. They are solitary and territorial creatures that can live over 20 years! Come meet our juvenile Florida kingsnake at our living exhibit – we call him T-Rex.

## Monthly Calendar of Events

- FEBRUARY 1** National Serpent Day -- visit our reptiles exhibit
- FEBRUARY 2** Groundhog Day
- FEBRUARY 3** Feed the Birds Day - LRW has a variety of bird feeders
- FEBRUARY 11** International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- FEBRUARY 14** Valentine's Day
- FEBRUARY 15** World Anthropology Day
- FEBRUARY 17** Random Acts of Kindness Day -- Join our Volunteer Team!
- FEBRUARY 19** Presidents' Day
- FEBRUARY 27** National Strawberry Day, Pokemon Day

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://LittleRedWagonNativeNursery.com)

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

This email was sent to [volunteer@butterflytampa.com](mailto:volunteer@butterflytampa.com) because you've subscribed on our site or made a purchase.

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