If you cannot see images, please click here

LITTLE RED WAGONFUL

Nurturing Nature One Wagon at a Time



October 2024

"I shall take my tea with the birds, the trees, and the bumbling bees." ~Amelia Dashwood



Ctober is Florida Native Plant Month, a celebration of native plants and grasses! The Florida Native

Plant Society chose the month of October because Florida's mild climate showcases native flowers and grasses in the fall. Watch for the fall wildflowers such as goldenrods, blazing stars and asters that provide lots of bright color with their beautiful blooms which are a hub of pollinator activity! Notice many plants that are full of berries for birds and other animals in the fall such as Beautyberry and Virginia creeper. Florida native grasses like lovegrass, muhly and bluestems are also bursting out and adding lovely textures that enhance any native garden. The cooler weather encourages people to visit parks and preserves, or to work in their gardens. Fall is fantastic for newly planted plants establish a healthy root system before the growing season in the spring. Florida also has more rain in the fall, whereas the spring is the drought time of year requiring more water resources to establish native plants. While many native plant enthusiasts leave the seeds for birds and deadheads on flowers for butterflies and other pollinators health, seed collecting in the fall is another activity that is fun to prepare for the following growing season. Leave the leaves! You can rake the leaves into your garden beds instead of buying commercial mulches that are treated with chemicals. Leaving or adding oak leaves as a mulch in your gardens or pine straw improves soil structure by providing essential nutrients for your native plants. Gardening this month is rewarding, offering a chance to enjoy the outdoors and cultivate a beautiful and productive garden and prepare for fall pollinators and birds that are coming through our area. Roll on by Little Red Wagon Native Nursery and pick up some native plants or pine straw bales today!

Butterfly of the Month



Monarch

Monarchs are perhaps the most iconic butterfly in North America. Famous for their long migrations, these orange and black beauties have a wingspan that ranges from 3 3/8 to 4 7/8 inches. With a characteristic "flap, flap, glide" flight pattern and a double row of white spots in a black border on the hindwing (see Photo 1), this butterfly is distinguished from the smaller Viceroy and the darker, root beer-colored Queen which are also both commonly seen in our area. (See Photos 2 and 3.)





Females lay eggs singly on milkweed leaves. (See Photo 4.) The yellow, black and white striped caterpillars that emerge are voracious and can easily devour several large Milkweed leaves each day as late instar caterpillars. (See Photo 5.) This appetite highlights just how important it is to have numerous native milkweed plants in your garden.





Adult Monarchs nectar on native milkweeds as well as goldenrods, blazing stars, ironweeds and other nectar-rich plants. Unlike other parts of the country, our area has a year-round Monarch population, so please take steps to conserve this species by planting native species broadly to support this beautiful butterfly. Please also avoid planting non-native tropical milkweed and home rearing. It is best to plant the native milkweed and a variety of nectar resources and let them be wild to help their population get healthier. Research shows that Monarchs breeding on tropical milkweed have higher levels of Ophryocystis elektroscirrha ("OE"), a debilitating protozoan parasite. You can learn more about this problem here.

Host Plant Of The Month



Aquatic Milkweed (Asclepias perennis)

Most people know that Milkweed is the only plant that Monarch caterpillars will eat. Fewer know that various species of Milkweed also act as a host plant for Queen and Soldier caterpillars. With <u>21</u> species of Milkweed native to our state, why not include some in your garden? Here is one of our absolute favorites:

Aquatic milkweed (*Asclepias perennis*) is a great Florida native Milkweed that will typically grow to a height of only 2 feet and 1 foot wide. Its bright white clusters of up to 25 flowers top individual stems and are an important nectar source for our native bees, wasps, and butterflies.

As its common name implies, Aquatic Milkweed occurs in a variety of wetland habitats, including floodplain swamps, marshes, and semi-shaded forests that experience dry and rainy seasons.

As a result, Aquatic Milkweed can tolerate 2-3 months of drought in our Florida sandy soils and also does very well in extremely wet and nearly underwater conditions during the Florida rainy season.

Aquatic Milkweed can survive lower amounts of direct sunlight than our other native species and will maintain its leaves throughout the year. Although it can become somewhat lanky, it is still a terrific plant to include in your butterfly garden as it's an important winter food source for Monarch, Queen, and Soldier caterpillars.

Aquatic Milkweed can tolerate shade although it will bloom better in full sun. This wildflower is commonly propagated for home gardeners and is quite hardy. I plant it in areas around my yard that get a mix of sun and shade as well as some areas that are full sun - the plants do well in pretty much any condition Florida seems to throw at it, so why not try some in your butterfly garden?

Caution: Please wear gloves when handling all milkweeds. Their white milky toxic sap can irritate skin and cause chemical burns to the eyes. (Note: if you get it in your eyes, please see an ophthalmologist right away.)

(Fun fact: During World War II, Milkweed seed floss was collected and used to fill life jackets. The floss is still used today as a hypo-allergenic filling in pillows and comforters.)

SHOP NOW

Garden Swag







Get Your SwagON!

Beetle Juice, Beetle Juice, Beetle Juice! Decorated skulls are iconic symbols for both Halloween and the Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos), each carrying its own unique cultural significance and style.

For Halloween, decorated skulls often take on a spooky and eerie appearance which can be used as centerpieces, wall hangings, or even as part of costumes, adding a macabre touch to the festivities. For the Day of the Dead, decorated skulls, known as calaveras or sugar skulls, symbolizes the beauty and joy of life and death. Both styles of decorated skulls serve as powerful visual elements that enhance the atmosphere of their respective celebrations.

Whether you're aiming for a haunting Halloween vibe or a festive Day of the Dead tribute, these skulls can add a meaningful and artistic touch to your decorations. Stop by Little Red Wagon's Gift Shop and incorporate decorated skulls into your celebrations this October!

SHOP NOW

Nectar Plant of the Month



Black-Eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta)

Black-Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) is perhaps the most recognizable of our native plants. With 3-inchwide flowers that have golden-yellow petals and a dark chocolate brown center, this wonderful plant is a hallmark of prairies, wildflower meadows, and roadside plantings. A biennial that readily self-seeds, Black-Eyed Susans will easily grow to 3 feet tall and about 2 feet wide. In Florida, this plant typically blooms from spring through summer and early fall. It's a favorite nectar source for our native pollinators including bees, moths, and butterflies. It is the host plant for Silvery Checkerspot caterpillars; Silvery Checkerspots are found in the extreme northern parts of Florida.

Native to meadows and fields and woodland areas, Black-Eyed Susan is also commonly found in disturbed areas. It is a low-maintenance plant that can tolerate somewhat moist (not wet) to dry soil conditions and does best in full sun. Deadheading spent flower heads encourages repeat blooms.

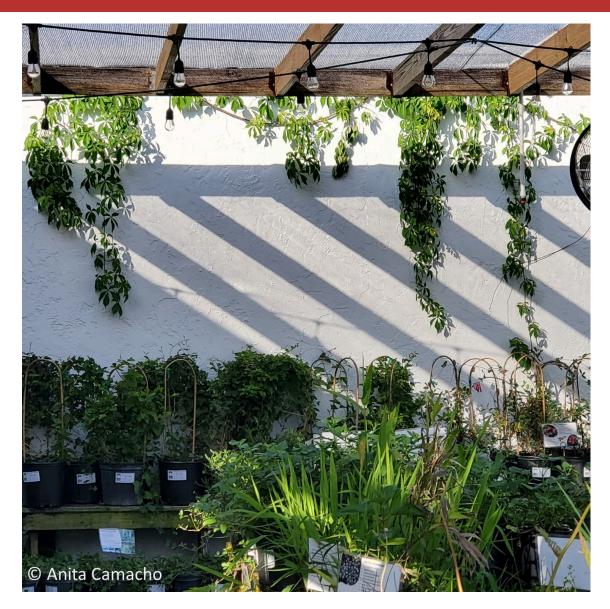
Black-Eyed Susan petals can be used to make colorfast, natural yellow dye. It's a great plant for a cut flower or wildflower garden and can be used to help control erosion. It pairs well with Sunflowers (*Helianthus spp.*), Coreopsis (*Coreopsis spp.*), and Blanket Flowers (*Gallardia spp.*).

How are you using Black-Eyed Susan in your garden? We'd love to know--- email your photos to Info@ButterflyTampa.com

(Fun Fact: According to NC State Extension, the plant's Latin "genus name honors Olof Rudbeck, a 17th-century Swedish botanist. The species epithet means "hairy" and refers to short bristles on the leaves and stems.")

SHOP NOW

Vine of the Month



Virginia Creeper (Parthenocissus quinquefolia)

Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) is a deciduous, woody vine that can be trailing or climbing, growing to lengths of 30 to 50 feet. A vigorous and rapid grower, Virginia Creeper is one of the easiest vines to grow. It tolerates a range of condition and will grow in full sun to part shade and average, medium-moisture (but well-drained) soils.

Virginia Creeper's tiny white (and somewhat inconspicuous) flowers provide a great nectar source for bees in the summer and the plant is a larval host for some sphynx moths. However, it's this time of year that Virginia Creeper really shines. In the fall, its dark green leaves of summer turn brilliant shades of mauve, red, and purple. Its blue berries are an important fall food source for birds and small animals. Birds that are attracted to the berries include woodpeckers, titmice, chickadees, nuthatches, thrushes, robins, and more.

Virginia Creeper is native to habitats that include riverine forests, flatwoods, hammocks, and thickets. Because of its similarity to Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), children learn the rhyme, "Leaves of three, let it be; Leaves of five, let it thrive" because Poison Ivy's leaflets are normally in groups of three, while those of Virginia Creeper are normally in groups of five.

Great words to heed! About 85 percent of the population is allergic to Poison ivy and, according to researchers at Duke University, it's the most common cause of environmental contact allergy."

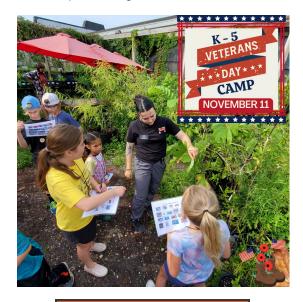
SHOP NOW

KIDS' CORNER



FALL NATURE CAMP FUN!

Now that fall is here, Kindergarten to Grade 5 children can enjoy awesome activities while discovering nature on non-student days! Each of our fall camps will have a different theme and participants will have the opportunity to release a butterfly by the end of each camp. Click below to obtain more details about each camp and to register.



REGISTER: NOV. 11



REGISTER: NOV. 25-27

Camps will be held from 8:00 am to 3:00 p.m. at the Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation Gallery located at 4111-A Henderson Blvd. (beside Little Red Wagon Native Nursery). Camp drop off will be between 8:00-8:30 am and pickup between 2:30-3:00 pm.



Build a Bug Hotel

Have you visited Butterfly Tampa's new Bug Zoo? Come see various insects, spiders, millipedes, our living exhibits and get inspired to create your own "Bug Hotel".

To build your Bug Hotel, fill a flowerpot or a small wooden crate with sticks, stones, toilet paper rolls, smaller flowerpots, and twigs. With the help of a parent, place it in your yard in an area that is sheltered and dark. Check back in a few days to see what creatures have checked in to your Bug Hotel! Share pics of your Bug Hotel on Facebook and tag us...we can't wait to see your visitors!





There are over one million species of insects which makes them the most diverse group of animals on Earth. Insects are a class of invertebrates and they play important roles in ecosystems as pollinators, decomposers, and food sources for other animals. Visit Butterfly Tampa's Bug Zoo to see a variety of insects and to learn more!







BLACK-EYED SUSAN AND FRIENDS

This book is fun, interactive, and educational for both school-age children and pre-schoolers. Children of all ages will enjoy meeting "Black-eyed Susan", a pretty little flower who likes to talk with children. She teaches about insects that visit her, other flowers, about pollination and helps children learn which insects are critical to pollination.

JEWELED SPIDER PINS

These spider pins features gemstones and crystals that mimic the glistening appearance of a spider's body. A blend of elegance and spookiness, makes these little critters perfect accessories for Halloween!

The combination of the eerie spider motif with the dazzling jewels creates a unique contrast that captures the essence of Halloween—celebrating the mysterious and the beautiful.

FLYING BLACK BAT ON CANDY POP

Want to add a touch of fun to your Halloween? Check out this spooky black bat finger puppet that "flies" atop a delicious, sweet treat.

The bat puppet is approximately 4 inches and is made from soft, durable material, making it a fun toy to play with even after the candy is gone. Enjoy the perfect blend of playful and spooky with this whimsical Halloween treat!

SHOP NOW

SHOP NOW

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

Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation regularly has a number of ongoing monthly volunteering opportunities.



HURRICANE HELENE RELIEF

Thank you to all who helped those in need in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene! We packed the van on the first day collecting! However, we still need:

Diapers sizes 4, 5 and 6, bread and jelly are at the top of list. Peanut butter (need more jelly and bread than peanut butter), bleach, dish soap,



water, ready-to-eat foods that don't have to be microwaved (such as SpaghettiOs), shampoo, conditioner, body wash, men's and boys' shorts. They have plenty of other clothes. Also needed are bird food, cat food, dog food. Kids toys.

Everything helps!



Butterfly Alley Maintenance

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

VOLUNTEER: OCTOBER 8



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: OCTOBER 17



Encore Park! Maintenance

Volunteers help 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: OCTOBER 29



Nature Camp Volunteers

Sign up for a rewarding experience mentoring K to Grade 5 children during our Fall Nature Camps: Veterans Day Nature Camp: November 11 and Thankful for Nature Camp: November 25-27. These are great opportunities for college environmental science students or High School students to earn hours for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship program. Assistants must be available 7:45 am - 3:30 pm. for entire camp session. Click date(s) below to volunteer!

VOLUNTEER: NOV. 11

VOLUNTEER: NOV. 25-27



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.

Education Exhibit



The metamorphosis of Butterfly Tampa is complete! The grand opening of our new Botanical Native Butterfly Gardens and living exhibits was held on August 2. Butterfly Tampa emerged as a unique, memorable, and educational attraction for all ages attached to the Little Red Wagon Native Nursery. Attendees can view our living exhibits that include many native and some exotic reptiles, amphibians, and arachnids. We also unveiled our new "bug bungalow" featuring many of our vital native insects. You can view caterpillars eating their host plants and look at our fantastic butterfly collection in the educational facility. On your way to our demonstration botanical garden, showcasing our native Florida flora, you will see our new butterfly emergence lab and may have the chance to see a butterfly emerge from its chrysalis or a moth emerge from its cocoon. As you stroll through a tranquil oasis tucked behind our South Tampa native nursery, you can enjoy our new native butterfly botanical garden with butterflies in their native habitat free flying around you. We have had over 30 different species of butterflies regularly visiting our gardens and you never know which will visit on any given day.

Get inspired and join us on the quest to re-wild Tampa Bay and beyond! Learn how to do your part to support the conservation of wild butterfly populations and their natural habitats together through chemical-free native plant landscaping. Our new attraction will give you the chance to explore our exhibits, read the educational signage, learn from our knowledgeable nature interpreters, and connect with other amazing folks just like yourself.

NEW HOURS:

Monday through Saturday Plant and Gift shop open 9am – 5:30pm

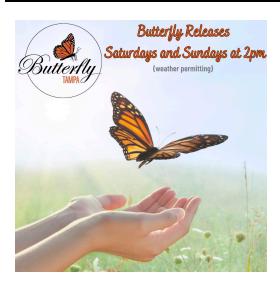
(Living exhibits and butterfly garden open 9:30am – 5:00pm and last admission at 4:30pm)

Sunday Plant and Gift shop open 10:00am - 5:30pm (Living exhibits and butterfly garden open 10:30am – 5:00pm and last admission at 4:00pm)

Annual memberships are now available for purchase. Membership opens the door to numerous perks, including discounts to the gift shop and plant shop, exclusive early access to sign up for presentations, events, camps, and more. By subscribing now, you'll stay informed and be ready to explore all the exclusive content and features we have in store for you.

Watch for new hours as we approach the end of daylight savings time November 3, 2024. As the days are shorter, so are the hours the butterflies are flying.

PURCHASE MEMBERSHIP



BUTTERFLY RELEASES

Butterfly releases will be held Saturdays and Sundays at 2pm (weather permitting) included in paid single day ticket purchases and memberships.

Skilled nature interpreters and horticulture specialists will be available to answer questions and provide visitors with a personal and highly engaging experience.



Amphibian of the Month: Pinewoods Tree Frog



Meet Woody, our Pinewoods tree frog (*Hyla femoralis*) and this month's featured amphibian at the Little Red Wagon Native Nursery and Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation! Native to the southeastern United States, including Florida, these small tree frogs are known for their excellent camouflage and distinctive calls, making Woody an exciting ambassador for local amphibian species.

Pinewoods tree frogs have a slender body with smooth skin that can vary in color from gray to brown or green, often with darker markings that help him blend in with tree bark. They have large, adhesive toe pads that allow them to climb and cling to various surfaces with ease.

These frogs are primarily arboreal, spending much of their time in trees and shrubs in pine forests, mixed woodlands, and around swamps or ponds. They are most active at night, when they hunt for small insects and spiders.

In their natural habitat, Pinewoods Tree Frogs play a crucial role in the ecosystem. As both predator and prey, they help control insect populations and serve as a food source for various animals. Their sensitivity to environmental changes also makes them important indicators of ecosystem health. While not currently listed as endangered, pinewoods tree frogs face challenges from habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. Conservation efforts, including protecting wetlands and forested areas, are vital for ensuring the survival of these remarkable amphibians.

Visit us at the Little Red Wagon Native Nursery to meet Woody, observe our tadpoles, and learn about the important role these small but mighty frogs play in our local ecosystems!





Meet Bessie, one of adult our bess beetles (Odontotaenius disjunctus) and this month's featured bug at the Little Red Wagon Native Nursery and Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation! Bessie is an excellent example for other members of her "patent leather beetle" family, Passalidae. She can be found in Bug Bungalow in our newly curated insect zoo.

Bess beetles such as Bessie are known for their extraverted nature, communicating to each other through a series of clicks and squeaks.

Bess beetles commonly communicate to other members of their colony to warn each other of danger and to initiate courtship. The pattern of the clicks and squeaks distinguishes the meaning behind their signal. They produce this noise by rubbing their wings against their grooved abdomen.

Bess beetles naturally range from central Florida to southern Ontario and as far west as Nebraska, spanning into Oklahoma and Texas. This species of bess beetle is frequently found in rotting oak and hickory trees, and prefers warm, humid habitats. This species moves within rotting wood, which offers them higher humidity from the wood's water retention. In addition, the bess beetles will feed on the decaying wood, aiding in the natural breakdown of organic matter and decomposition process. Coupled with wood, adult and larval bess beetles will re-ingest adult fecal matter. This is done to gain microorganisms that are necessary to digest wood fibers.

Visit us at the Little Red Wagon Native Nursery to meet Bessie and her friends and learn about our other insects and bugs!

Monthly Calendar of Events

OCTOBER is FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT MONTH!

OCTOBER 1 National Green City Day

OCTOBER 2 National Pumpkin Seed Day--pick up scoops from our Gift Shop

OCTOBER 4 World Animal Day

OCTOBER 7 World Habitat Day--visit our Bug Zoo

OCTOBER 16 World Food Day

OCTOBER 19 Tampa Bay Youth Ocean Summit



Tampa Bay YOUTH OCEAN SUMMIT

Saturday October 19, 2024 Eckerd College

4200 54th Ave S, St. Petersburg, FL 33711

Join us at the Youth Ocean Summit from 10:30 am - 4 pm at Eckerd College.

REGISTER TO ATTEND

OCTOBER 19 Creepy Crawlies in the Garden

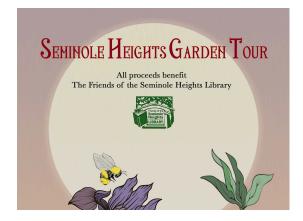


Join us Saturday, October 19th from 9:00 am - 12 pm for the Creepy Crawlies in the Garden at Vista Gardens in Carrollwood.





Visit our tent October 19 & 20 at the Florida Birding & Nature Festival in Apollo Beach!



OCTOBER 20

Spend an afternoon on a self-guided tour showcasing some of the best local private gardens. Limited to 200 tickets spaced out over the day!

PURCHASE TICKETS

Tickets may be purchased through Eventbrite via the above button or at the Seminole Heights Library (2nd floor Help Desk) during normal hours (cash or check only) before the day of the tour, or at the Seminole Heights Library on the day of the tour (cash, check, or credit card).



October 26 - Free Family Fun!

Visit Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation/NABA Tampa Bay/Little Red Wagon's booth supporting monarch butterflies. Enjoy educational displays & presentations, Kids' Zone, live butterflies, raffles and more...fun

for all ages! Polly Touchton Park is located between 5th St. & 7th St. and Bougainvillea Ave. & Southview Ave Dade City FL. We hope to see you there!

OCTOBER 26 National Reptile Awareness Day--come see reptiles in our Living Exhibit

OCTOBER 30 Sustainability Day OCTOBER 31 Happy Halloween!

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 Email: Info@ButterflyTampa.com

Hours: Monday - Friday: 9:00 am - 5:30 pm | Sunday: 10:00 am - 5:30 pm

Visit Little Red Wagon Native Nursery

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