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Little Red Wagonful

Nurturing Nature One Wagon at a Time



January 2022

“Anyone who thinks that gardening begins in the spring and ends in the fall is missing the best part of the whole year; for gardening begins in January with the dream.” ~Josephine Neuse

January is a month of new beginnings and opportunities for a fresh start. Perhaps you will make a commitment to #nurtrenative this year by planting a garden for pollinators. Stop by our nursery and our knowledgeable staff can help you select native plants for your garden environment.

Butterfly of the Month



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHN LAMPKIN

Dainty Sulphur

There are two things that surprise people new to butterflying in central and south Florida:

1. We have butterflies 12 months of the year.
2. Many of our butterflies have different colors in the summer and winter.

One such butterfly is the Dainty Sulphur. The smallest North American sulphur (its wingspan is typically only $\frac{3}{4}$ "-1 $\frac{1}{4}$ "), this little butterfly flies year-round in Florida and is commonly found in open, dry places with low-growing or mowed plants such as one might find along roadsides and [hellstrips](#). It flutters very close to the ground with an erratic flight pattern and typically lands with closed wings to nectar on plants or to absorb nutrients from puddles. As can be seen in Photo 1, its closed wings are a buttery yellow in summer, while, as seen in Photo 2, its bottom wings are more of an olive green or gray in the winter. (This darker coloring allows the butterfly to absorb solar heat more quickly so its muscles warm and it can fly.)

Dainty Sulphurs have several identifying characteristics that can be used to distinguish it from other small yellow butterflies such as the Barred Yellow (see Photo #3): most notably, a Dainty Sulphur's front wing (forewing) is elongated (think maple tree seed pod shape!) and, when the butterfly is perched with closed wings, one can see an orange "swoosh" running along the top part of its top wing and dark spots near its bottom.

Females lay yellow eggs on host plant seedlings which, in our area, include [Spanish needles](#) (*Bidens alba*). Green caterpillars with a yellowish-brown strip along the sides typically hatch in 4-7 days; they may also have purple or lavender stripes. If there's less than ten hours of daylight when the caterpillar is growing, the Dainty Sulphur will emerge with the darker, winter coloring.

Dainty Sulphurs are unable to survive the cold. Populations from warmer climates like Florida and Texas colonize as far north as Minnesota during summer months. With multiple broods throughout the year, why not ensure your garden includes food for both caterpillars and adults? Plant some [Spanish needles](#) for caterpillars and some [frogfruit](#) (*Phyla nodiflora*) for adults and enjoy these tiny sulphurs throughout the year.

Plant Of The Month



Spanish Needles - *Bidens alba*

The original version of this article appeared in our [blog](#) on September 15, 2021. It's worth sharing again – Spanish needles are ranked as one of the top three nectar resources for Florida's pollinators. They're also one of the few plants that will bloom continuously throughout the year. Easy to integrate into any garden, Spanish needles can go wild for a natural look, or be kept trimmed and shaped for a more formal garden.

Spanish needles (*Bidens alba*) is an underappreciated workhorse in the garden. There are approximately 230 *Bidens* species with 8 species of *Bidens* found in Florida. It is a repeat bloomer with dainty white daisy-like petals surrounding tiny yellow flowers that bloom year-round in Florida. An annual or short-lived perennial herb that can grow as tall as 3-4' and 1-3' wide, Spanish needles are great companions to dune sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*) and purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*).

Perhaps more importantly, though, it's a plant with incredible importance to our native wildlife.

I was reminded of its importance this past weekend as I walked along a nature trail where the plant was thriving. Plant after plant was covered with nectaring butterflies: Queens; Fiery Skippers; White Peacocks; Longtail Skippers; Cassius Blues and many other pollinators. Documented as having a special value to our native bees, the plant is also the second most common nectar source in Florida for all of our pollinators as well as for honey production, as cited here. It's the caterpillar food source for Dainty Sulphur butterfly. Small birds like sparrows, warblers, finches and cardinals eat the seeds. The bearded dragons and tortoise at my nursery really enjoy the flowers and young tender leaves. And, according to at least one wild forager, the flowers make a tangy addition to salads – so they are edible for us! The entire plant, including the roots, is medicinally active. Its use can help fight infections and viruses and it's been reported to also be antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, diuretic and to lower blood pressure and prevent liver damage.

Why, then, do so few people include the plant in their gardens?

Well, its common name is perhaps a giveaway. Spanish needles seeds have prongs that adhere to just about everything, including clothing and pets, helping it to spread. With plants producing anywhere from 1,200-6,000 seeds, the plant spreads easily by wind and water as well, which contributes to its reputation as a “weed.” The flip side of this weedy reputation means that the plant is low-maintenance and easy-to-grow. It can also be mowed and kept a little high to allow for blooms or even shaped into small shrubs.

Spanish needles tolerate full sun to partial shade and soil that ranges from moist to dry. If you are looking for a great filler plant that provides a wealth of help to our native pollinators, birds, and butterflies, why not add some to your garden? You can even grow it in a pot to help manage it if that is a concern. To thicken it to be more shrub like, simply sprinkle more seeds in the area you are trying to encourage their growth. The seeds do not really need much dirt to cover them, if any at all.

Stop by Little Red Wagon, see the pollinator party all over this plant nearly all of the time, and we'll be happy to help you pick some out. Perhaps learning how amazing this plant is, you will give it a little space in your garden.

Garden Swag



Get Your SwagOn For The Birds!

January 5th is National Bird Day and February will be National Bird Feeding month.

- Decorate your lawn or garden with one of the creatively-designed bird houses and feeders available.
- Hand-painted with detailed accents, the sunflower birdfeeder will add a bit of fun and playfulness to your outdoor decorations while welcoming your feathered friends to your yard! Due to the feeder's mesh design, we suggest using larger seeds (such as black oil sunflower, shelled peanuts, etc.) to avoid spillage.
- The charming cape cod bird condo provides a welcome shelter from the elements! Plenty of portholes give multiple entrance ways for a feathered friend to settle in and set up housekeeping.

Stop by our gift shop and choose from a variety of bird feeder and bird house styles to celebrate the birds.

[SHOP NOW](#)

AFTER CHRISTMAS SALE



Design with Vines



© Cori Campos

Skyblue clustervine (*Jacquemontia pentanthos*)

Skyblue clustervine, also known as Key West morning glory, is a woody, twinning vine that will grow up to 12 feet in its native pine rockland and coastal hammock habitats across extreme south Florida. While it may act as an annual and only grow to 3-6 feet in colder areas, the plant is worthy of a place in your winter garden: its quarter-sized, delicate, funnel-shaped blue flowers add a burst of color to the landscape from November through early May. Happy to act as a groundcover or climb on a trellis or other support, a single plant can produce hundreds of blooms on any given day. Skyblue clustervine requires at least a half day of full sun (and a full day of sun for optimal flowering) and can tolerate salt spray as well as occasional saltwater intrusion. The plant is a magnet for native bees and skippers and several sphinx moth species, including the Nessus sphinx, Tantalus sphinx, and Torsa sphinx. Pair it with other blue flowers like forked bluecurls (*Trichostema dichotomum*) or spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*) to inspire a zen-like calm or to make a small garden appear larger. Like most members of the morning glory family, skyblue clustervine flowers open in the morning and close by mid-afternoon so be sure to plant it where you can enjoy it as part of your morning routine. If you garden in pots or on a patio this vine does well in a pot with a trellis to climb.

\$20.00 / 3 Gallon

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- Butterfly Release (weather permitting)

January 17, 2022
K - Grade 3
8:30 am - 12:30 pm
\$50

Learn more and register at: [ButterflyTampa.com](https://butterflytampa.com)

Register your child for a one-day Nature Camp. Only \$50!

K - Grade 3
8:30 am - 12:30 pm
\$50

Presidents' Day Nature Camp
February 21, 2022

ButterflyTampa.com

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“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:

CFC Butterfly Garden Maintenance: January 13 @ 9:30 am - 11:30 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/ATC3C>

MLK Nature Camp Assistants: January 17 @ 8:00 am - 1:00 pm

Adult or High School volunteers are needed to assist with our nature camp for children 5-11 years old. We will have a planning meeting one week in advance of the camp (date and time TBD).

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

Encore! Technology Park: January 17 @ 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

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/T4JMW>

TBBF Hell Strip Habitat Maintenance: January 20 @ 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm

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/Y3MA9>



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.



Butterfly Walk at Picnic Island: January 16

Join Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation and NABA Tampa Bay on a butterfly walk to continue our monthly monitoring of butterfly species at Picnic Island in South Tampa on Sunday, January 16. We will start out at around the southern-most part of the park at 10 a.m. and work our way to the entrance by 12:30 p.m.

Join us for Free!

REGISTER

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](http://www.ButterflyTampa.com) website for updates regarding our Grand Opening. For updates, visit:

www.ButterflyTampa.com

Monthly Calendar of Events

- January 1: *New Year's Day*--LRWNN will be closed.
- January 5: *National Bird Day*
- January 8: *Earth's Rotation Day*
- January 10: *Houseplant Appreciation Day*—Purchase a native Low Peperomia
- January 12: *National Youth Day*
- January 16: *Butterfly Walk at Picnic Island*--Free to register!
- January 17: *Martin Luther King Day*
- January 20: *Get to Know Your Customer Day*
- January 22: *National Hot Sauce Day*—Get started with a *Bird Pepper plant* from LRW
- January 22: *Children's Gasparilla*
- January 29: *Gasparilla Parade*

Thank you for choosing us by supporting our small business throughout the year! Wishing you all a happy and successful New Year!

Store Hours:

New Years Eve: 11 am - 5:30 pm

New Years Day: CLOSED

Regular business hours will resume on Sunday,

January 5: (12 - 4pm)



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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Little Red Wagon Native Nursery



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