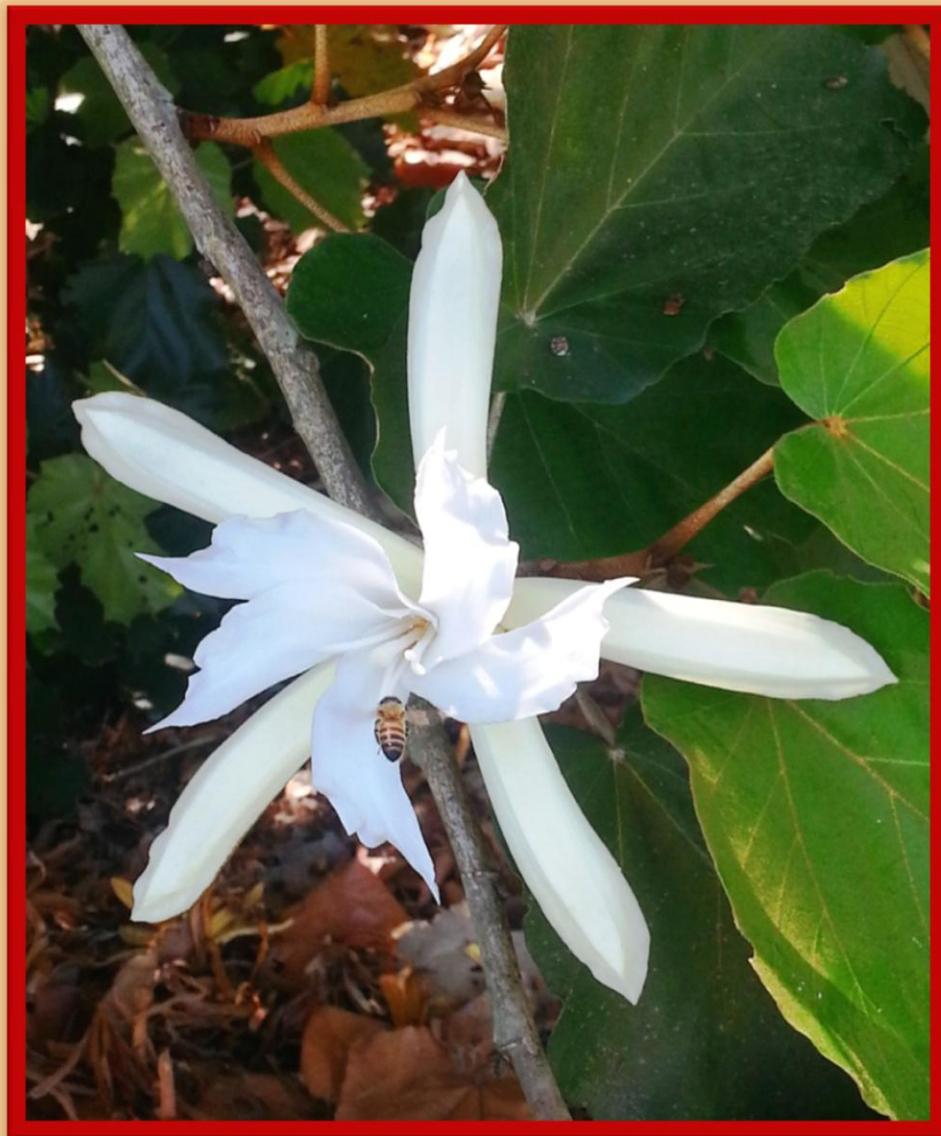


BEAUTYBERRY POST

**THE NEWSLETTER OF MACKAY GARDENS AND LAKESIDE
PRESERVE**

May/June 2016



In Touch by Steve Franklin

A couple of weeks ago I was in the back yard of the Mackay house watering some freshly planted crape myrtles when Anaeli, the Parks Department's Administrative Assistant, called my name. She was standing on the side porch of the house with a visitor who had questions about the history of the Mackay family, which she thought I might be able to answer. After we'd made our introductions the gentleman asked if I could show him around and answer a few questions. Though reluctant to delay the work I'd been doing, I agreed to a walk and talk.

After a few minutes of conversation he asked, "So you're a volunteer here?" I said, "That's right." Then he asked, "Why do you volunteer?" My first reaction to this question whenever it's asked, as it frequently is, is to recall the comment a yacht salesman at a boat show once made when asked, "How much does one of these babies cost?" With nose in the air the salesman replied, "If you have to ask, you can't afford it." Instead of blurting out some kind of similarly smug reply to this man's question, I did my best to clearly explain my motivations.

I told him that for many years I'd spent weekends and vacation time visiting county, state, and national parks and preserves where I enjoyed hiking their well-maintained trails and camping in their clean, shady campgrounds. Therefore, I felt an obligation to show my appreciation to the volunteers who'd made those places and occasions special by volunteering to help out at my local preserve. Frankly, the gentleman looked a bit amazed, but then he continued to ask questions until I'd quenched his thirst for knowledge.

Many years ago when I was managing a retail business I worked with an assistant manager who once attempted to rationalize some of our employees' lack of motivation by quoting from a book he'd read in college. He said, "No matter where you go you'll find that twenty percent of the people do eighty percent of the work." I can't say that I found those numbers at all comforting or even accurate, but personal experience has proven that there is something to that cynical point of view.

I guess that's one of the reasons I've found volunteer work so satisfying. Quite often it's seemed as though the people on the volunteer groups that I've worked with must have belonged in the twenty percent category of productivity wherever they worked before. As another saying goes, "Busy hands are happy hands." This certainly holds true with volunteers. They seem happiest when faced with a challenging set of goals for the day.

I've noticed something else too. Most volunteers don't require many pats on the back or some kind of recognition for their accomplishments. They know they are doing important work, doing it well, and that it is appreciated so they acquire all of the satisfaction they desire from that knowledge. In fact, they find the experience very fulfilling.

Do you live in the City of Lake Alfred? Are you proud of your home town? Would you like to leave Lake Alfred a meaningful legacy? If so, then plan to join us for a Tuesday or Saturday volunteer work day real soon. Check our Calendar of Events for the dates and times.

Why not become one of the happy, productive twenty percent?

Calendar of Events

May

- 5/5- First Thursday Presentation: ***Milkweeds and Monarchs*** with Ginger Hansill-10 am. “Those Marvelous Monarchs” is how Master Gardener Ginger Hansill describes them...& you will see why as we learn about this butterfly & its amazing migratory habits, the alarming population decline experienced in the last decades & what we can do to help.
- May **Volunteer work dates:** 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Tuesdays 9am – noon.
- 5/28- **Saturday** volunteer work day! 8am – 11am**

June

- 6/2- First Thursday presentation: ***Hypertufa, Make and Take!*** with Pat Farris & Debra Howell-10am. Hyper what? In this workshop learn what hypertufa is & how to make it. Participants will create their own pots to take home & should come dressed for slightly messy work. **Registration** and **fee** for materials required for this class. Call (863)291-5272 to sign up.
- June **Volunteer work dates:**7, 14, 21, 28 Tuesdays 8am – 11am*
- 6/11- **Saturday** volunteer work day! 8am – 11am**

July

- 7/7- First Thursday Presentation: ***Biopesticides: Good Bugs & Natural Pesticides*** with Joe Wolf, Florida Master Gardener-10am. Come & learn how to control unwanted garden pests through the use of their own natural enemies.
- July **Volunteer work dates:** 5, 12, 19, 26, Tuesdays 8am-11am*
- 7/9- **Saturday** volunteer work day!**
- 7/30-**Astronomy night** with Cleve Carter-7-10p.m. This ever popular event teaches the basics of astronomy. An observation session on the back lawn will follow the presentation, weather permitting. Some telescopes will be provided but feel free to bring your own.

*Note time change. Tuesday work days are for maintaining the grounds nearest the house and the Florida-Friendly Demonstration Garden. This involves the removal of fallen limbs and palm fronds and keeping these areas weeded. Lyn Rumrill or Tom Zimmers will advise volunteers on areas to work or inquire at the Parks and Recreation Office in the house. Please bring a drink.

** Saturday work days will focus on invasive plant removal. This important and fun work will involve hand removal of troublesome plants or their seeds within the Preserve. Bring shovels and small hand pruners if possible. A limited amount of tools are available at the shed. Trash bags and 5-gal.buckets will be provided. Report to Juliet Rynear for assignments at the kiosk. Please bring a drink. A cooler with ice will be provided. The use of repellent and sunscreen are recommended.

All events are **free** unless otherwise noted.

Have you considered volunteering at MGLP? Volunteers are absolutely essential to conducting successful programs and continually improving the appearance of MGLP. Volunteers work in garden areas, help restore native habitats in the preserve, develop and perform educational programs, and assist with advertising, fund raising, and volunteer recruitment. By donating a small portion of your time you are helping to improve and protect a piece of Florida's rich history and the habitats which surround it. If you'd like to become involved in any of these very worthwhile endeavors, please contact Volunteer Coordinator, Cathy Butcher, at cassiebelle@verizon.net.

Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve is located at 900 Mackay Blvd. in Lake Alfred, Florida, 33850. It is free and open 7 days a week from dawn until dusk. To inquire about renting the house or picnic shelter, or to ask about upcoming events please call Parks and Recreation at 863-291-5272. Beautyberry Post is a bi-monthly newsletter edited by Cathy Butcher with assistance from Steve Franklin. To receive the BP by email please contact Anaeli Quinones at aquinones@mylakealfred.com. Also, please feel free to forward it to interested friends.

If you would like to peruse back issues of the **Beautyberry Post** you can find them at the City of Lake Alfred's website, mylakealfred.com. Look for the newsletters under Parks and Recreation, Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve.

Please help promote awareness of MGLP by LIKING our **Facebook** page. Check out **Friends of Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve** to keep up with events, see photos, and read interesting historical information.



Photos in this issue are by Cathy Butcher unless otherwise noted.



Kanak Champa or dinner plate tree, being visited by a honeybee, is featured on the **front cover**. The delightfully sweet-scented flowers of ***Pterospermum acerifolium*** have been in full bloom at MGLP since April. Traditionally the large, stout leaves have been used as plates. The natural range of this exotic tree is through parts of the Himalayas, India, Southeast Asia, and China.

The following article is the third installment of, The Incidental Benefactor. The first two installments can be found in the January/February and March/April 2016 issues of the Beautyberry Post.



About the author;

Steve Franklin, recently retired, spends as much time as possible practicing his current hobbies: reading, writing, playing his trombone, hiking, biking, kayaking, gardening, and a variety of volunteer work at MGLP and Brasstown Bald in Georgia. He conducts interpretive walks at MGLP, which include information about the cultural and natural history of this area, environmental and conservation issues, and a few entertaining poems. He considers himself an amateur naturalist with an eagerness to continue learning about the natural world around us. His passion for nature is reflected in his poetry and he enthusiastically writes articles on a wide range of topics that we are thrilled to share in this newsletter!

An Incidental Benefactor (continued) by Steve Franklin

Some of you may have discovered that one of the trees at Mackay Gardens contains a fruit with a rind as hard as a baseball or coconut. It was while touring the east coast of Africa in 1903 that Dr. David Fairchild was introduced to the monkey orange or *Strychnos spinosa* tree. He sent the poisonous seeds to Florida and it was the first tree he planted at his property in Miami. Though the seeds are poisonous the fruit itself is edible and was one of his favorites.



As with his study of the almonds in Spain, other research trips were undertaken with the soil and weather conditions of one location or another in the U.S. in mind. He was thinking of farming conditions along the Rio Grande and Colorado Rivers while studying the irrigated crops in Egypt. He found there: sesame (an oil producing plant), garbanzo, onions (which have been grown extensively in Texas), and cotton that would grow in arid Arizona. After numerous attempts

by his fellow explorers to acquire it, the Saidu date was finally obtained from Egypt and was being grown in Mecca, California and Tempe, Arizona at the time of the publication of Fairchild's book, *The World was My Garden: Travels of a Plant Explorer*.

Grapes were another plant on which he focused considerable attention during his travels to various countries. In Greece he was disturbed to find that for centuries the vineyard operators had dried grapes to make raisins by distributing them atop dried cow dung spread on the ground since the dung was very absorbent and transformed the grapes well. Knowledge of this process, if it still exists, kind of makes you want to wash the raisins in the next box you purchase very thoroughly before you eat them, huh?

Fairchild's explorations with philanthropist Barbour Lathrop eventually came to an end. He returned to Washington and again worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 1903 he was invited to give a presentation to the National Geographic Society about his trip to Bagdad. That was when he met his future father-in-law, Alexander Graham Bell. His association with Bell and the Society led to an interest in other people's fields of endeavor and an acquaintance with a number of very interesting and eventually famous people.

But for Fairchild, his introduction to Bell's daughter Marion and their marriage on April 25, 1905 were pivotal points in his life. Realizing that they'd be spending much of their time in the vicinity of Washington the Fairchilds soon purchased 40 acres in the woods of Maryland, which his friend Mr. Lathrop very simply christened, "In the Woods." Over a period of years the

Fairchild's made it a very special retreat by planting many of the exotic specimens sent to his office by other explorers. Visitors to "In the Woods" found time for quiet contemplation, which may have been the reason why Fairchild wrote that during one visit there his father-in-law proclaimed that he had "...a yearning for something deeper than bare facts." It's no wonder then that the plant researcher and the inventor apparently enjoyed a very comfortable relationship.

As I said earlier, Fairchild's relationship to Bell led to acquaintances with other famous people and an interest in their work. In August of 1907 he and Marion went to Nova Scotia to visit the Bells at their estate, "Beinn Bhreagh." While they were there Bell was experimenting with tetrahedral kites, which he hoped would lead to the development of a flying machine. The previous winter, while dining in Washington with Mr. Bell, Simon Newcombe, the famous astronomer, Octave Chanute, the noted engineer, and Professor Langley of the Smithsonian Institution, he first became aware that the Wright Brothers had truly flown a heavier-than-air machine. Up till then he, like many other people in the U. S., wasn't sure this news amounted to anything more than a rumor.

His interest in flying was such that on July 4, 1908 he and Marion were present at Hammondsport, New York when aviator Glenn Curtiss won a trophy offered by The Scientific American magazine for the first powered flight of at least one kilometer. The industrial age was in full swing. Coincidentally, a bit of personal trivia was attached to this day for Fairchild as he recalled how as a thunderstorm passed overhead he and some others were taking shelter beneath a large tree when a stranger came to tell them that his research showed that "...lightning had a way of striking trees which stood alone, and that cattle and men were often found dead under them," a fact that most of us take for granted today.

By 1912 David Fairchild led a staff of sixty-eight employees with an operating budget of \$80,000. Throughout his tenure in the offices of the Plant Introduction Bureau, arboretums were established in various locations around the U.S. and in other countries, which allowed the free exchange of plants and botanical research information to flourish. He wrote, "I felt that I had done some of my best work as a plant explorer and, on the other hand, had balanced my years of travel by an equal number in an office chair."

This story of famous plant explorer and Mackay Gardens contributor, Dr. David Fairchild, will continue in the next **Beautyberry Post**.

Did you know that Mackay is pronounced- Mac-EYE?

Florida Wild Life

By Cathy Butcher

Snags

“What are you going to do about those dead trees?” That’s a question I hear frequently on tours that I give at Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve. The question is in reference to two stately, yet gnarly, expired long-leaf pines on either side of a well-trimmed lawn. Mostly limbless, they have been dead for years. This question gives me the opening to explain why we would allow dead trees to exist in this garden setting.

Snags, standing dead or dying trees, are probably one of the most important features necessary for a healthy forest ecosystem. I think of them as a “keystone” feature in the environment. Without dead and dying trees a complex and diverse species of wildlife, insects, and plants would not develop. An enormous spectrum of living organisms depends on snags for survival. Everything from microorganisms to insects, birds, and mammals benefits from dead trees at some point in their life cycle. Once these standing snags fall to the ground yet another habitat is created that appeals to different species including fungi, plants, insects, and spiders.

Many of us are familiar with the sight of woodpeckers chipping out homes in dead trees. We’ve all smiled at cute pictures of raccoon babies peering out of tree cavities. And some of us have been fortunate to see bald eagles or ospreys perched in tall snags being used as a lookout. Many birds, reptiles, and amphibians need dead trees for breeding sites. In Florida almost 40 species of birds use snags for dens or nesting. Primary cavity excavators, such as woodpeckers, peck out holes in the dead



tree to create a suitable nesting site to lay eggs. Once the baby woodpeckers fledge and leave the nest other birds and small mammals take advantage of the cavities to raise their young or take shelter. These are referred to as secondary cavity users. Several species of bats roost between loose bark to safely snooze away daytime hours.

Once the snag falls to the ground it is referred to as a log. Small mammals, reptiles, and birds will forage underneath loose bark and in rotting logs for insects. Lizards, salamanders,



and snakes seek protection for their eggs and young in the decomposing moist environment within and underneath logs. Dropped limbs and logs provide cover and runways for small animals while larger cavities, hollow trunks, and uprooted trees provide cover and dens for larger mammals such as foxes, bobcats, and bears. Decomposing logs slowly release valuable nutrients back into the soil and become growing sites for lichens, mushrooms, mosses, and young tree seedlings.

Snags along shorelines and rivers eventually fall into the water creating a valuable tangled woody habitat. This provides an important underwater structure in the sandy lakes and rivers of Central Florida which are naturally devoid of stabilizing rocks and boulders that occur in waterbodies elsewhere. This tangled structure provides shelter for invertebrates and fish. This abundance of food attracts predators. A simplified idea of the

food chain that develops goes something like this: colonies of algae form on the submerged logs, invertebrates eat the algae, small fish eat the invertebrates, larger fish eat the small fish, fishermen arrive to catch the larger fish, and alligators lurk about to catch unaware fishermen! Emergence of shallow water vegetation within these stabilizing structures provides cover for fish nurseries. This plant growth further enhances the habitat by helping protect the shoreline from wave erosion and produces forage and seeds for birds and mammals. Exposed portions of trunks and branches provide basking locations for turtles and perches for ducks and other birds.

Hopefully you have gotten the idea of how valuable it is to leave dying and dead trees on your property. If trees can be left without fear of damage to property or person, then the habitat will be enhanced and you will have an opportunity to enjoy a diverse range of wildlife viewing opportunities. If you would like to create a snag in your landscape a sure-fire way to do it is to hire a tree service that still believes topping trees is a good practice. You'll almost certainly end up with a snag. The University of Florida EDIS publication #WEC238 offers some interesting alternatives such as injecting the live tree with cultures of decay organisms or herbicide and do-it-yourself topping with guns or explosives. Wow! You better check with your neighbors first before pulling out your shotgun and blasting tree tops. Actually this information isn't really directed to homeowners. Instead look online for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; *Snags-the Wildlife Tree, the Importance of Snags in Your Neighborhood*. Download this informative document to learn how to choose a tree in your landscape and safely turn it into a wildlife condo. <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/snags/>

Recent Happenings

MGLP held its first **Earth Day** celebration on April 22nd with a field trip for about 90 enthusiastic first graders, teachers, and chaperones from **Lake Alfred Elementary School**.



The special day consisted of three

events which included: a hike led by Master Mackayster Steve Franklin who taught the children safety in the woods, how to read trail blazes and maps; another hike led by Volunteer Coordinator Cathy Butcher into the sandhill habitat teaching about different wildlife habitats and the threatened existence of the gopher tortoise; and a Show and Tell exhibit manned by Connie White, Juliet Rynear, and Nancy Daley. There the children created leaf rubbings, looked over materials found in the long-leaf pine/turkey oak sandhill habitat, and examined a gopher tortoise shell provided courtesy of Deb Porter, Bartow Elementary Academy, and Art Wade.

The excited students showed impressive environmental knowledge due to excellent preparation by their teachers. Several weeks prior to the field trip, Literacy Coach, Karie Insua provided the first grade teachers with an Environmental Highlight Kit featuring a short story about Char the gopher tortoise in the longleaf pine and turkey oak sandhill habitat specific to MGLP. The kit was created by Cathy Butcher. The kids enjoyed lunch in the house before heading back to school. The success of this event guarantees future field trips for the students to learn about the environment and stewardship of our unique Florida habitat found at MGLP.

House Restoration

The upstairs floor of the Mackay house is being restored through funding from a Small Matching Grant from the Florida Division of Historical Resources. Shutters have been removed from the side and back porches which will now remain open. Plaster has been repaired, walls have been painted, and wood trim stained. Once the work is completed, in the near future this will allow for optional use of a portion of the upstairs and porches for wedding rentals and other functions.