

# BEAUTYBERRY POST

THE NEWSLETTER OF MACKAY GARDENS AND LAKESIDE PRESERVE

Jan. /Feb. 2014



## **Another Milestone** by Steve Franklin

Since first opening to the public in 2008 many subtle changes have taken place at Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve. Now some of us have decided it's about time we devoted some of our energy to doing a better job of acquainting the public with topics such as: improvements to the house and grounds; recent and upcoming events; historical, biological, and botanical facts; and the good deeds of the people who make things happen. Those are some of the reasons you're receiving this newsletter. The name, "BEAUTYBERRY POST," was chosen from among several others based on the fact that quite a few beautyberry plants are found growing wild along the Preserve's trails and because we simply liked the sound of this

title. It's our hope that you'll enjoy perusing the contents and then forward the newsletter to any friends who you feel might be interested in learning more about Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve.

**Master Gardener Corner** by Cathy Butcher, Polk County Master Gardener

It is late September. You are strolling along the trails at Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve and suddenly you see the most striking glow of color that you could ever imagine coming from within a nearby large bush. You walk closer and realize that what you are seeing are the magenta berries clustered along the stems of the *Callicarpa americana*, or Beautyberry plant. This native shrub grows in all areas of the Gardens and Preserve except for wet soils. If growing in sunnier locations it develops into a large, spreading plant with long stems drooping down to touch the ground, sometimes creating a lovely weeping form. It does grow nicely in light shade



and will survive in full shade, however, the growth will be straighter and fewer flowers and berries will develop. Beautyberry is recognized as a Florida-Friendly Landscape™ plant. It is valuable to

wildlife by providing berries which are eaten by some birds, and the flowers attract butterflies and pollinators. It grows moderately fast, achieving up to 8 feet in height and can spread equally as far. When pruning Beautyberries remember that flowers and berries are produced only on new growth. Shearing will reduce these so allow enough room at planting time for the plant to achieve its full size. A hard pruning, in central Florida in late winter to early spring, will achieve a denser bush with many flowers and berries produced. Thinning can be done to control size but at the sacrifice of some flowers and berries. It will grow in just about any well-drained soil and flowers and fruits best in full sun but can still be lovely in part shade. Hardy Beautyberries can be planted at any time of the year but locating plants to purchase may be the challenge. Native plant nurseries are good resources and Polk County Master Gardeners sell Beautyberry plants at their annual Backyard GardenFest and Plant Sale, which will be held this April 26<sup>th</sup> at the Polk County Agricultural Center in Bartow. Once established, Beautyberries are drought-tolerant and have no serious disease or pest problems.

To learn more about *Callicarpa americana* go online to [edis.ifas.ufl.edu](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu) and search for circular FPS90. For a wealth of information on the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program go to [www.floridayards.org](http://www.floridayards.org). Happy Gardening!

## **Calendar of Events**

January 2- First Thursday Workshop (Orchids Made Easy) **CANCELED, to be rescheduled**

January 11- Bluegrass Bash

January 12- Guided Nature Walk

February 5- Mackay Volunteer Work Day 9AM-NOON

February 6- First Thursday Workshop (Gopher Tortoises) 10AM

February 9- Guided Nature Walk 2PM-3:30

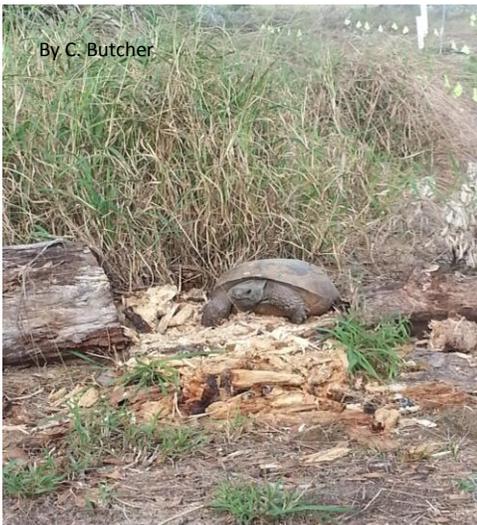
February 12- Mackay Volunteer Work Day 9AM-NOON

February 19- Mackay Volunteer Work Day 9AM-NOON

February 26- Mackay Volunteer Work Day 9AM-NOON

Tuesdays & Thursdays- Zumba classes 6-7PM, a small fee required for this class

For more information or to register for the guided walk please contact Parks and Recreation at 863-291-5272.



## **First Thursday Workshops**

Did you know that Gopher Tortoises can live up to 80 years in the wild, or that their burrows can be up to 52 feet long and provide refuge for about 360 other species of animals, reptiles, and insects? Join us in the Alexander Mackay house on Thursday, February 6<sup>th</sup> at 10AM to learn more about these fascinating creatures whose numbers are declining rapidly due to habitat destruction. Art Wade, Senior Environmental Scientist and Authorized Gopher Tortoise Agent, will give this presentation. Afterwards we will take a short walk to see an

active burrow on the Mackay property. First Thursday Workshops are hosted by the Polk County Master Gardeners.

## **A Priceless Work Of Art**

When caring hands attend a garden  
They preen and prune and pluck,  
And consider their pains a bargain  
If their toil brings them luck;

For things living and dear to one's heart,  
When given loving care,  
Often become priceless works of art  
As they grow, bloom, and bear.

**Steve Franklin**

### **Recent Happenings**

2013 was a year of changes and progress at Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve. The City of Lake Alfred Parks and Recreation Department relocated to new offices within the east side of the Mackay house. This means that city staff is now available during weekly business hours to assist visitors and give tours of the home for rental prospects. This also provides volunteers with a central meeting place for work days. A self-guided plant tour featuring native and exotic plants occupying the front yard is now completed. The map for this can be located in a brochure holder near the paved parking area. Look for the nearby numbered post to begin the tour. We have a new information kiosk at the trailhead next to our Florida-Friendly Demonstration Garden. Check this out for upcoming events and interesting environmental information. The nearby Demonstration Garden has new plant labels and brochures located in the holder beneath the Nine Principals of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ sign. And in December, 300 seedling scrub lupines were planted by volunteers in our *Lupinus aridorum* plot at Mackay. This project is headed by Juliet Rynear of the Bok Tower Rare Plant Conservation Program.

The First Thursday Workshops resumed in January after a brief hiatus over the holidays. The free presentations given within the Mackay house the first Thursday of every month are hosted by Master Gardeners Pat Farris and Debra Howell. These entertaining and educational workshops offer attendees a variety of information ranging from Florida environmental topics to gardening and landscaping in central Florida.

Also in January, Steve Franklin continued guiding his popular Nature Appreciation Hikes at Mackay. These hikes, offered free to the public, are scheduled one Sunday afternoon each month. They can also be scheduled for private groups upon request. Subjects such as the cultural and natural history of the area, conservation, preservation, nature, and nature-related poems are all touched on during a lazy stroll through this beautiful property.

The Bluegrass Bash was held on January 11<sup>th</sup>. Joey Foley and the City of Lake Alfred hosted this annual melodious event that attracted hundreds of people for a full day of music

provided by regional bluegrass musicians and cloggers. The Mackay house was open to visitors. Mackayster volunteers were there to offer information on the Gardens and Preserve and invite folks to return for other events or just to walk our lovely trails.

Have you viewed the Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve video on YouTube? This beautiful video can also be accessed from the City of Lake Alfred website. From the website go to Parks and Recreation and click onto Mackay Gardens. The video is under Pictures and Video.



**This newsletter is in the developmental stages. We have lots of ideas for upcoming newsletters, but we'd like to hear from you as well. Please give us your feedback about this edition and what you would like to read about in future Beautyberry Posts. Send remarks and suggestions to: [cassiebelle@verizon.net](mailto:cassiebelle@verizon.net). Include Beautyberry Post in your subject line. Volunteers are essential to the continued progress at Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve. Wednesday workdays are devoted to maintenance of the Gardens and Preserve. Hours are 9am-noon. Other volunteer opportunities include; assisting with educational seminars and nature hikes, creating environmental or historic displays, helping build outdoor projects, and developing fund-raising ideas. However you choose to contribute as a volunteer is extremely valuable. If you have questions or suggestions about volunteering please contact the above email or Parks and Recreation of Lake Alfred at [Jtillman@MyLakeAlfred.com](mailto:Jtillman@MyLakeAlfred.com) or Phone: 863-291-5272.**