



Dade Chapter

# TILLANDSIA

Newsletter of the Dade Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, Inc.  
- For Miami-Dade County and the Florida Keys -

## LATE APRIL 2020

### A MESSAGE FROM THE DCFNPS BOARD

Greetings DCFNPS members! We sincerely hope that you and your families remain safe and healthy. As you know, we have been unable to host our usual events, including monthly meetings, field trips, workdays and perhaps most unfortunately of all, our annual Native Plant Day. After almost two months of continuous self-isolation, we really miss seeing you all and sharing our mutual passion for native plants and the abundance of wildlife they bring. The consolation is knowing that these temporary sacrifices work towards everyone's safety and well-being, a priority that supersedes all else.

With the likelihood that we are not able to host the May monthly meeting in person, we are exploring the option of broadcasting the presentation via an online platform (which platform has yet to be determined). Additionally, it is possible the board member elections will be postponed until June. We will continue to provide updates as these decisions are made. Stay tuned!

In the meantime, now is the perfect opportunity to get some gardening done, add to and maintain your native landscapes, and rest outdoors while enjoying the songs of passing birds and the colors of visiting butterflies. We encourage you to share photos of what you've seen through our social media pages (Facebook and Instagram)! Though we're physically kept apart, nature nevertheless keeps us together in spirit. We look forward to the day we're able to meet again and resume sharing native plants and stories. Until then, please stay safe!

**Brian Diaz, Vice President, DCFNPS**

Contact the chapter at [DadeFNPS@gmail.com](mailto:DadeFNPS@gmail.com), 305-985-3677

**Chapter activities are currently suspended, but we'll let you know when that changes!** You can check our [events calendar](#) and [Facebook](#) for updates as they become available. And we'll have a timely newsletter and email when there are online or in-person activities to announce.

• **FNPS 40th Annual Conference** - Rescheduled to May 13-16, 2021. University of North Florida, Jacksonville.

### **Thank you to all who donated to support FNPS**

**Conservation Grants over the past year.** The Dade Chapter fund in honor of chapter founders Don and Joyce Gann - and now in memory of Joyce - has provided \$1500 annually since 2013. Donors to this fund include chapter members, friends and speakers who contributed their honorarium. This year, donations for the grants were also made directly to FNPS in memory of Joyce after her passing in February by friends and admirers inside and outside of FNPS. Together these sources totaled \$3730. Certainly Joyce would be pleased along with Don at the good done in their names.

### **And speaking of FNPS Conservation Grant awards ...**

**Congratulations to the South Florida Conservation Team at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden!** Their proposal "Optimizing cultivation and increasing the availability of four locally rare *Asclepias* species, an important wildlife-supporting plant" has been chosen for funding. Fairchild's Conservation Program Manager Jennifer Possley says, "We are frequently asked for locally-sourced milkweed for one reason or another, but seed is difficult to obtain, plants are difficult to grow, and they are just plain rare. This project, a \$5000 award, will allow us to sustainably collect *Asclepias* seed, which we will use to store, develop propagation protocols, and establish ex situ plants for seed bulking."

The proposal was written by Sabine Wintergerst, Seed Lab Manager, and Lydia Cuni, Field Biologist.

### **DADE CHAPTER and FNPS NEWS**

**Cheers to new and "old" members!** Welcome to our newest member, **Amy Atkins**, and thank you to all who have renewed or rejoined. Your support of FNPS, the Dade Chapter and native plants is greatly appreciated.

Special thanks to those who have joined at a higher membership level (including several Life members); made donations of funds, plants or other items; volunteered in any capacity; or been a loyal presence over the years. You keep us going!

### **FNPS:**

• **The FNPS Annual Members Meeting** will be held virtually on Saturday, June 6, 2020. All members will be sent an invitation with a code to use for online voting during the meeting.

### **MORE NEWS and THINGS TO DO**

*Learn about, enjoy and help native plants and natural areas.*

**Miami Blue Chapter, North American Butterfly Association.**  
**Sunday, May 3** – Live online using Zoom.

12:30 pm - technical & social gathering

1:00 pm - meeting begins

Aerin Land, Everglades National Park Fire Ecologist, will speak about the endangered Florida Leafwing butterfly.

Download Zoom to your computer, tablet or smartphone and join the meeting by clicking the link [zoom.us/j/546974796?pwd=N111eEJ1cUhnWThFS25HWWhMShAzQT09](https://zoom.us/j/546974796?pwd=N111eEJ1cUhnWThFS25HWWhMShAzQT09)

**The Florida Wildflower Foundation's Seedlings for Schools grants program** is open for applications through June 15. Pre-K-12 teachers at public and private Florida schools may apply for a grant, which includes \$50 worth of Florida native wildflower plants. Professional guidance on garden establishment and classroom resources also are provided. Grant winners will receive plants in September 2020 for fall planting. Wildflower gardens can beautify school grounds while providing an outdoor classroom that helps create connected pollinator pathways. Teachers are expected to use the gardens as a tool to help students meet Sunshine State Standards in math, language arts and science. Visit the [Seedlings for Schools grants page](#) for the link to the application and more information.

**FNPS YouTube Channel.** See videos by chapters and individuals. Just poke around and you'll likely find something interesting. [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTom5I9pQlwTC-S\\_uDjkAEw/featured](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTom5I9pQlwTC-S_uDjkAEw/featured)

**Broward Chapter FNPS.** [broward.fnpschapters.org/](http://broward.fnpschapters.org/). Enjoy past issues online and subscribe to the free newsletter. Find Broward activities on their website or along with the Dade Chapter's on our [events calendar](#).

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## “NATURE’S BEST HOPE” The latest book by Doug Tallamy

Those who wish to encourage native plant yards that tend toward a “Homegrown National Park” will appreciate a Washington Post article (Feb. 12, 2020), “A native plant guru’s radical vision for the American yard.” Columnist Adrian Higgins discusses the new book, *Nature’s Best Hope*, by Doug Tallamy, author of the 2007 book, *Bringing Nature Home*.

*Tallamy became the darling of the native plant community with his 2007 book, “Bringing Nature Home,” which provided a scientific basis for replacing the exotic ornamentals that dominate our gardens with home-grown perennials, ground covers, shrubs and trees. Indigenous flora, Tallamy says, supports far more of the insects, birds and other creatures that co-evolved with them than a ginkgo from China, say, or an azalea from Japan. In his latest book, “Nature’s Best Hope,” he presents a full-blown manifesto that calls for the radical rethinking of the American residential landscape, starting with the lawn.... If everyone started to reduce that biological wasteland known as the lawn in favor of native plants, including trees, Tallamy says we could create one big connected habitat for species we are driving to the brink.*

Article: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/home/in-the-garden-rethinking-the-nature-of-nature/2020/02/11/656fc87a-46ce-11ea-ab15-b5df3261b710\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/home/in-the-garden-rethinking-the-nature-of-nature/2020/02/11/656fc87a-46ce-11ea-ab15-b5df3261b710_story.html)

The book: <http://www.bringingnaturehome.net/>

Tallamy in a video presentation discussing the book: <https://vimeo.com/396957344>



(The following article is reprinted from the November 1999 *Tillandsia*. Cocoplums are now coming into fruit, so get out your ice pick or sail needle.)



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## THE COCOPLUM \* *CHRYSOBALANUS ICACO*

“... In the Bahamas ... it is so common that the natives go out to gather the fruit in season as one goes out to gather wild strawberries in the North...preserved cocoplums are a popular native product. ... The fruits are generally peeled and cooled down with a good deal of sugar and this causes them to turn a deep purplish-red. Lemon juice should be added to offset the sweetness. In preserving the fruits, each is generally punctured with an ice pick or sail needle, which is driven through the thin shell and kernel of the single large seed. This permits the sirup to penetrate, and the nut-like kernel, after separation from the shell, is eaten with the fruits.”

[Excerpted from “Fifty Tropical Fruits of Nassau” by Kendal and Julia Morton, Text House, Coral Gables, FL., 1946.]

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## THE REAL WILDLIFE OF SOUTH BEACH: An Unlikely Habitat for Atala takes Root

By David Reese

In the busy urban corridor between 17th and 22nd Streets on Miami Beach, Atala hairstreak larvae and adult butterflies are finding an abundance of coontie and nectar plants at the demonstration South Florida Pine Rockland habitats of the Miami Beach Botanical Garden and Miami Beach Senior High School, in the newly planted public spaces surrounding the Miami Beach Convention Center, and throughout the popular outdoor shopping mall of Lincoln Road.

Thousands of coontie (*Zamia integrifolia*) dot the raised beds, medians and gardens within the twenty-or-so block circumference of this heavily-paved destination, an area better known for its larger than life social scene than for the mix of coastal and hammock flora that survive here.

Let this emergence of *Eumaeus atala* serve as a case study of successful native habitat restoration occurring across a 1-2 mile area in a congested city space.

With very little direct coordination between people serving in different capacities in various institutions, people managing these green spaces have made real gains in restoring native floral and faunal biodiversity. A testament to this success is the abundant presence of this remarkable butterfly, which was thought extinct for much of the first half of the 20th century. Atala lay eggs on and larvae feed off the coontie, the starch of which also served as a staple food source in early South Florida. Overharvesting of this prehistoric cycad, and the drastic decline of Dade County Pine Rockland as development engulfed the region, also led to the near extinction of the Atala, once considered as abundant as a pest.

Coontie - which adapts well in a variety of soil types and settings, and which are found on the [Institute for Regional Conservation's](#) Natives for your Neighborhood plant lists for Miami Beach zip codes - have made a resurgence in greater Miami and the Beaches as more and more people realize the benefits of planting native. The Atala are eye-catching visual evidence that with a little effort and cooperation, people can live sustainably with the natural creatures endemic to the spaces we both occupy.



Photo: Michael Todd

Today, as the Atala's blue and black wings dazzle the eyes of the unexpected high school students at Miami Beach High, the great majority of whom have never seen this most iridescent of South Florida residents, something of a connection is being realized. Perhaps in this firsthand encounter with one of South Florida's first inhabitants, in thus connecting to the past, we can find our way more sustainably into the future.

*David Reese is a Language Arts Teacher at Miami-Beach Senior High, and sponsor of the Ecology Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods @ Miami Beach Senior High Clubs at the school. Born and raised in South Florida, he loves our natural habitat and with his students looks for ways to preserve it. He is a member of FNPS.*



*The demonstration pineland at Miami Beach High, a Connect To Protect Network garden, is still in an early stage but is already providing habitat for Atala butterflies.*

That the atala found their way back to South Beach between 2018 and 2020 has much to do with the vision of Sanna O'Sullivan, Florida Master Naturalist and Head Gardener of the [Miami Beach Botanical Garden](#) (MBBG), and Brian Diaz, Florida Naturalist and Vice President of the Dade Chapter Florida Native Plant Society. Back in late 2018, Sanna and Brian recognized that the thriving Pine Rockland demo garden at MBBG would support a colony of Atala if one could become established, and then obtained caterpillars from Montgomery Botanical Center to make that happen.

“Once the population of the Atala was established in the garden, the feedback from the public was enthusiastic, being able to observe the little butterflies so closely is a treat. We have been thrilled to see their population thrive. It's a special feeling seeing them every day, knowing their history in South Florida and that our effort of creating a highly diverse, native garden for wildlife is paying off.” -Sanna, @southfloridaplants @miamibeachgarden

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### *Dade Chapter Florida Native Plant Society*

For Miami-Dade and the Florida Keys

**Chapter information:** [DadeFNPS@gmail.com](mailto:DadeFNPS@gmail.com), 305-985-3677

**DCFNPS website & social media:** [www.DadeFNPS.org/](http://www.DadeFNPS.org/)

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**Board members (2019-2020):**

**President:** Kurt Birchenough

**Vice-President:** Brian Diaz

**Secretary:** Gita Ramsay

**Treasurer:** Susan Walcutt

**At Large:** Janeen Feiger, Jeanne Rothchild, Jennifer Stine, Steve Woodmansee

**FNPS Council of Chapters representative:** **Vacant**

**Newsletter editor:** Patty Phares

**Webmaster:** Haniel Pulido Jr., [dadefnpsweb@gmail.com](mailto:dadefnpsweb@gmail.com)

**Refreshment committee:** **Volunteers needed**

#### *Tillandsia Newsletter*

**Please contact the editor if you might like to join the *Tillandsia* staff.**

Articles, announcements and news items are invited for *Tillandsia* from Dade and Keys members. Advertising rates from \$12 per month.

#### *Florida Native Plant Society*

**FNPS office:** [info@fnps.org](mailto:info@fnps.org), 321-271-6702

**FNPS website, blog, social media:** <http://www.fnps.org>

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**Native nurseries are ready for your spring gardening needs.**  
See our [website](#) for a nursery list and call to verify their hours, address and requirements for masks and social distancing.  
Also check out [Connect to Protect Network](#) if you aren't a part!