



Tillandsia

Newsletter of the Dade Chapter Florida Native Plant Society
For Miami-Dade County and the Florida Keys
Mission: To champion Florida's native plants and their habitats.
FEBRUARY 2026



Chapter calendar

See <https://dade.fnpschapters.org/events/> for activities of the Dade Chapter (and all FNPS)

Feb. 21: Chapter workday at Everglades National Park

Feb. 24: Meeting at Pinecrest Gardens and online

Feb. 28: Field trip to Nixon Smiley Pineland

Mar. 1: Visit to a private hammock in Redland (registration required)

Mar. 21: Native Plant Day!

Mar. 24: Meeting at Pinecrest Gardens and online

In this issue:

February meeting / Field trip / Visit to a Hammock / Workdays

🌿 🌸 **Native Plant Day – *What you need to know and do now*** 🌿 🌸

News from the Dade Chapter and our friends

“Land Management Reviews: How FNPS helps state parks, too” – by Alan Scott



DADE CHAPTER MEETING

Tuesday, February 24, 2026, 7:30 – 9:00 PM

Pinecrest Gardens, 11000 SW 57 Ave. (Red Road), Miami

Free - All are invited

Come early or stay late to enjoy refreshments, socialize and browse the merchandise and raffle tables. Plants for sale might also be available. The raffle follows the program. The program is also [live-streamed](#) and recorded on YouTube. Check out our [online store](#) in advance for plants, shirts, mugs and tote bags, and pick up pre-orders at the meeting.

“The Ruins of Orchid Jungle”

- Eric M. King, Interpretive Programs Manager for Miami EcoAdventures (Miami Dade Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces)

Once a popular roadside attraction, Fennel's Orchid Jungle was owned and operated by the same family for upwards to 70 years. After two major events, the family would sell the property to Miami Dade County to be opened as a passive park. After two more major events, the site would be closed to the public indefinitely, its historic structures slowly deteriorating while being reclaimed by nature.



Eric King has been an employee of the Miami-Dade Parks Department for nearly 26 years. Of that, he has spent 18 as an interpretive naturalist, developing and leading environmental programs from as far north as the historic Arch Creek Park, south to Redland's Castellow Hammock Preserve and Nature Center. He has an extensive background in South Florida history and a love for storytelling, both shown in his presentations and published essays on the subject.

- **Refreshments:** You are invited to bring light finger foods and to help set up and clean up afterwards. Questions? Contact Karina, 305-490-1677 or kmgxoxo@me.com.
- **Raffle contributions:** Thank you for your native plants or plant-related items!

PLEASE LABEL EACH PLANT with at least the common name written on paper, tape or stake (more info is encouraged).

• **Online viewing:** www.youtube.com/channel/UCmassuC5-OsAX2KsRYQ6X5A. You will see only the computer-based portions of the meeting, with the presentation starting about 8:00, after announcements and plant raffle discussion. Chat will be enabled.

We regret that circumstances sometimes arise that prevent online viewing and thus recording.

• **Watch past presentations:** Use the **YouTube** link above or at DadeFNPS.org (at bottom of home page), **Click Videos** or **Live** for all available recordings.

• **Upcoming March 24, 2026:** “Protect Our Wetlands: Local Action, Statewide Impact” - Melissa Fernandez, Executive Director of

FIELD TRIP

Nixon Smiley Pineland Preserve, Miami-Dade County

Saturday, February 28, 2026. 9:00AM – noon

Encompassing approximately 125 acres, Nixon Smiley Pineland Preserve is an excellent example of sandy pine rockland. There are also remnants of marl prairie (finger glade), although it is drained. It's been over three years since we've done this trip led by Lydia Cuni. Pine rockland is a globally imperiled ecosystem, and in Miami-Dade County outside of Everglades National Park less than 1.5% remains. Nixon Smiley's pine rockland is sandier, and has species often associated with sandy pinelands north of Miami Dade. South Florida Critically Imperiled plants which occur here include Pineland Lantana, Yankeeweed, Rockland morning glory, and Florida Brickellbush. This preserve is also an introduction site for the rare Florida gopher tortoise. Steve and Tiffany will guide us through the restoration portions of the preserve and along the firebreaks through intact pine rockland. The Dade Chapter recently formed a Native Plant Restoration Team which is helping manage portions of this preserve by removing weeds, and there is an option to help pull some weeds for 30 minutes to an hour after we are done with our hike.

Leader: **Steve Woodmansee**, President and Field Trip Coordinator for DCFNPS, and **Tiffany Melvin**, Biologist Miami-Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands Division

Meeting place: There isn't much parking so we will **meet at the Publix Super Market** at Plaza Del Paraiso, 12100 SW 127th Ave, Miami, FL 33186. **Park in the SE corner of the lot**, then carpool/shuttle to the preserve.

Preserve location: West side of 127th Ave, between SW 124th St and SW 128th St, west of the Turnpike, and east of Miami Executive Airport.

Difficulty: Easy to moderate, generally along dry trails, with some brief ventures into the pine rockland.

Notes: Restrooms available at Publix.

Bring/wear: Closed toed shoes, water, sun protection, gloves. A walking stick may be helpful to some for extra stability. Binoculars are handy for viewing wildlife. Lunch offsite nearby is an option.

Dade Chapter's iNaturalist Project: Add your **DCFNPS field trip nature photos** to iNaturalist for inclusion in our project to help us showcase the amazing biodiversity we find! Upload your photos via the iNaturalist website (www.inaturalist.org) or app. Then you can add them to "Florida Native Plant Society- Dade Chapter Field Trips". See how [here](#).

A VISIT TO A PRIVATE HAMMOCK IN REDLAND

Sunday, March 1, 2026, at 10:00 am

This amazing property is part of the Krome Hammock. Therefore, it is not a landscaped yard, but an original tropical hardwood forest. The two parcels feature several solution holes and are very well maintained. There's also lots of history - Julia Morton lived here for the



last few years of her life https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_Morton. George Allen, a pioneering native plant nursery man owned the other parcel. Today's owner is a DCFNPS member.

Staying longer after the tour is encouraged.

• **Who is invited:** **Dade Chapter members only** (as the number of participants is very limited). If you are not a current member, please join or rejoin before you register.

• **Registration:** Email Daniela Champney at d_champney@yahoo.com. Please include your full name and use "Yard visit" in the subject line.

• **Other details:** A few days before the event, you will receive a response with the address and parking info. Please bring your own water. If you are sensitive to mosquitoes, cover up or bring repellent, just in case. **No pets, please.** For questions,

please contact Daniela.

• **How to join or rejoin DCFNPS:** <https://www.fnps.org/home> or call FNPS at 321-271-6702.

CHAPTER VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS

• Everglades National Park's Coe Visitor Center

Saturday, February 21, 9 AM-noon: Join us for the next workday held every other month since 2001. Volunteers already on our list will be notified by email.

If you are a potential new volunteer: Please contact Patty (pharespl@gmail.com) for details, questions and to be added to our volunteer list. Non-members and students are also welcome and encouraged. We weed, prune, clean up, answer questions from

visitors, and enjoy our fellow volunteers. Knowledge of native plants is not a prerequisite. The work is not difficult but is greatly appreciated by ENP! Afterwards you can enter the park for free.

- **DCFNPS Native Plant Restoration and Conservation Team**

This new chapter committee assists in local native plant restoration and maintenance projects. **If you would like to join the team or learn more about it**, please contact Scott (scottsuth@aol.com) or Carmen (info@carmenferreiro.com). The entire membership will also be notified of most activities, but you'll be the first to know! - **Co-Chairs: Scott Sutherland and Carmen Ferreiro**

On the chilly Friday morning of January 16th our first workday at Nixon Smiley Pineland Preserve took place. After an orientation and walk through with EEL preserve manager Tiffany Melvin, weeding of Natal grass, Spanish needle, Mexican clover, False Buttonweed, Burma Reed, Yellow alder and Rattlebox was undertaken on the recently restored 10-acre pineland. The preserve supports endangered species like the Gopher Tortoise, Tiger Beetles and Bonneted Bats. A big thank you to club members Lourdes Rodriguez and Daniel Rojo for participating in our inaugural event.

On Monday, January 19, the team also participated in an event with James Duncan, Chief Urban Forest and Tree Division for DERM, Miami-Dade County at the South Miami Little House, one last remaining stands of Slash Pines in South Miami. Team members removed Dioscorea Air Potato from the site which is currently being restored to its native state. A second event is scheduled for February 14th.

 28th ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT DAY
Saturday, March 21, 2026, 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

This year, we'll be back in the northern part of Miami-Dade County, in a wonderful location within Amelia Earhart park, at the Bill Graham Farm Village. The park is conveniently located near the Palmetto Expressway and NW 119 Street.

Native Plant Day is our one big annual event and the board cannot make it happen without help from our members and friends, so please read on!

There will be many exhibitors (organizations / agencies / businesses) with educational display tables, native plant and merchandise vendors, speaker series, landscape professionals, raffles, live music, children's activities, artists, bird walks, food trucks, opportunities for networking / socializing, and more.

- **Volunteers needed** – Besides attending the event, please consider volunteering (recruit friends and family too). Just email Daniela Champney at d_champney@yahoo.com and she will happily sign you up.

Help is especially needed early Saturday morning with setting up tents, tables, and assisting vendors / exhibitors.

During the event, we need volunteers to help participants carrying their plant purchases to their cars (with carts), running the plant holding area, and assisting at the various DCFNPS tables (information, membership, raffle, plant sale, merchandise, children's activities).

Also, please tell us if you know of any youth groups (Age 16+) interested in volunteering.

- **Plant donations for DCFNPS sale / raffle in three easy steps:**

First, pot up volunteers/prepare plants in 4" to 3-gallon pots. **Please prep your plants now so they will be well-established and looking healthy by March 21.** Small species like wildflowers and shrubs are especially desirable. We'll also have a freebie table for tiny seedlings / lawn weeds.

Second, to streamline this process, please **provide us with a list** (as early as possible) of plant names, approximate quantity and pot size **you expect to donate.** This allows us to prepare nice plant information signage for all the species in advance. Email Daniela Champney at d_champney@yahoo.com.

Third, if possible, **we'd like for all plants to be dropped off no later than one week BEFORE the event**, especially if you donate more than ten plants (**there will be several drop off locations, we'll personally coordinate with you**). Plants will be well taken care of, and selected for either sale, raffle or giveaway.

New option: you can **bring your unfinished plants** to the monthly meeting at Pinecrest Gardens on February 24 and Raul Moas will grow them out for NPD.

You can bring plants directly to the event on March 21, but we kindly ask you to help us as we try to keep this to a minimum. Many thanks!

- **Donate other items** - anything related to native plants, nature, or gardening (and which is in good shape). Items will be selected for either sale or raffle.

• **Save seeds of SE Florida native species.** We'll make seed packets for giveaway. No messy fruits / berries please. Please tell us promptly which species you'll have and we'll coordinate. Email Daniela Champney at d_champney@yahoo.com.

• **Spread the word** to friends, family, colleagues, neighbors - send out emails, post on your social media and encourage them to attend.

Details are on our website at <https://dade.fnpschapters.org/events/nativeplantday/> and on social media. Or share [Linktree](https://linktr.ee/dcfnp) (<https://linktr.ee/dcfnp>) to find everything in one place, including social media. More details will be posted closer to the event.

Please note: if you email Daniela Champney regarding any of the above, she might forward your message to one of the other members involved in organizing NPD. Therefore, you might receive a response to your email from someone else (i.e. keep a careful eye on your inbox).



DADE CHAPTER and FNPS NEWS

• **Welcome new Dade Chapter members!** Alaine Ball, Betty Joyce, Orestes Mayo, William McKinley, Jedda A Wong.

We thank The Invoka Group (Camilo Garcia) for their extra support as a new Business member. They are a landscape and hardscape company focused on native Florida plants, water-wise design, and environmentally responsible outdoor spaces that support local wildlife. They are currently in the process of building their website.

Thank you to all who renewed recently. We greatly appreciate your continued support, interest and participation.

• **Dade Chapter Plant Store** at <https://store.dade.fnpschapters.org/> is constantly expanding and replenishing out-of-stock species. Check the site often for new species from more habitats. Pick up plants at the nursery in Pinecrest or at a meeting, or arrange delivery. *You can also return the square pots from past purchases.* We will have a small selection of plants available for purchase at most upcoming meetings.

OTHER NEWS and ACTIVITIES

• **Dade Native Plant Workshop.** See <https://nativeplantworkshop.ning.com/>. **Feb. 17, 5 PM** at Miami-Dade College Kendall Campus. **Topic:** Anacardiaceae (Cashew Family). You may want to bring in a pair of disposable gloves as this family includes poison ivy and poisonwood. Please bring in at least 3 plants (whole or cutting), which needn't necessarily cover the topic. It is best to bring plants with flowers and/or fruits, especially for those which you do not know. Old hands and new learners are encouraged to come – and it's free!

• **Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program Volunteer days.** Register online [here](https://www.miamidade.gov/eel/). For questions: 305-372-6687 or eel@miamidade.gov. Read more about EEL and the volunteer program [here](https://www.miamidade.gov/eel/).



***Tuesday, February 24, 9 AM-noon: Wetlands restoration event at Cutler Wetlands (Cutler Bay)**, celebrating National Invasive Plant Awareness Week

***Tuesday, March 3, 9 AM-noon: Urban Forest Habitat Restoration at Navy Wells Pineland Preserve (Homestead) on World Wildlife Day**

LAND MANAGEMENT REVIEWS: How FNPS helps State Parks, too

by Alan Scott

The state of Upper Keys State Parks

The state of Florida has a statute that requires any state managed areas that exceed 1000 acres in size be scheduled for a land management review at least every five years, and that the review team should include at least one conservation organization. So when it came time for the land management reviews of three upper keys state parks, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection reached out to the Florida Native Plant Society to see if FNPS would like to participate as the conservation organization team member. Steve Woodmansee then reached out to members of the Dade Chapter FNPS and recruited me to represent the FNPS in the review of three Upper Keys state parks.

The review is pretty straightforward; you attend a one-day, in-person tour of the property led by park managers and staff who describe the condition of each habitat and significant resource. Then on a separate day, the team meets virtually to review a checklist and rate how well the managers are adhering to the sites approved Land Management Plan, what's going well, and what needs attention. The overall goal is to determine if the site is being managed to meet its purpose and is maintaining its significance as defined by the sites management plan.

Our site visits to John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park, and Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park were scheduled at the end of September 2025, followed by three virtual meetings a week later. After introductions the Park Manager and Park Biologist led the team on a tour of each significant habitat. This included boating to reefs, wrecks and seagrass beds, and driving state vehicles to see significant land habitats, cultural resources, damaged areas, boundary issues and restoration projects. A lot of information was shared, and territory covered, in a short time. As a former park ranger who had worked in Key Largo for a few years, I was thankful to have been familiar with these parks and their habitats.

Overall the team found these sites to be well managed and in relatively good shape. The park staff are passionate about their parks and are excellent at managing with limited resources. We were impressed to learn about significant partnerships with other agencies and local municipalities who help them accomplish their management goals.

A few topics of note:

- Major issues for these parks are encroachment or illegal development on park boundaries, exotic species infestations, boating impacts to seagrass beds.
- Sea level rise is clearly changing Coastal Berm and Keys Tidal Rock Barren habitats in each park, something park staff are monitoring but is outside of their control.
- John Pennekamp has an on-site native plant nursery operated by volunteers who grow plants that are genetically native to each of these parks. The nursery plants are used in habitat restoration projects to avoid introducing non-local genetics.
- At John Pennekamp we learned that approximately 50% of the corals have died of coral bleaching over the last two years due to warm water.
- Dagny Johnson used to support pine-rockland species but the majority of that habitat has been lost due to changes in hydrology and rising sea level.
- Dagny Johnson has a major restoration site where an unpermitted barrow pit and canal are now being filled and restored. Park staff are partnering with local contractors and the County to receive clean fill to restore the site. Progress is significant but long-term.
- A highlight of the visit to Dagny Johnson was seeing the worm vine orchid and mahogany mistletoe.
- John Pennekamp has received funding to build a new combined visitor center and concession building that will feature three large aquariums and overlook the boat basin where the concession tours leave from. Construction is expected to begin in early 2026 and last 2 years. The old visitor center and concessions buildings will be removed to improve traffic flow and parking. A mangrove boardwalk which had been closed since hurricane Irma has been replaced and reopened.
- The habitats on Lignumvitae Key are some of the healthiest plant communities in the keys (plus a healthy mosquito population). We learned European rats are a constant problem around the cultural sites, but not in natural areas. The parks main issue is with boater impacts to seagrass beds. Managers employ a variety of seagrass restoration techniques including simple “bird stakes” that attract birds and their guano to kickstart seagrass growth.

I commend the State and its staff for their efforts in managing these important parks, and for inviting the Florida Native Plant Society to participate in their reviews. It was a once in a lifetime experience that I would recommend for any FNPS member who has the time and interest in supporting our state parks.

LMR Review Team Participants:

- Keith Singleton, Program Consultant for Florida DEP
- Maria Maffei, DRP District
- Beth Bergh, Local Gov’t.
- Ryan Hess, FWC
- Bailey Harding, DEP District
- Mike Edwards, FFS
- Karyn Allman, SFWMD
- Alan Scott, FNPS

State Park Staff - John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park and Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park:

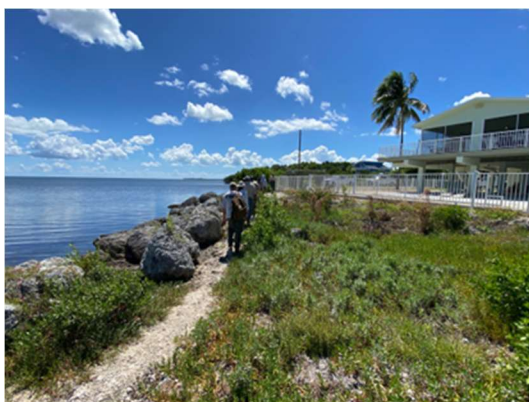
- Shane Zigler, Park Manager
- Trudy Wilson, Park Biologist

State Park Staff - Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park:

- Lu Dodson, Park Manager
- Rebecca Collins, Park Biologist

Alan Scott is a member of the Dade Chapter FNPS, and a former Park Manager at Everglades National Park. Alan was also the manager of the Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center after it was built following Hurricane Andrew. He noticed that the landscape around the visitor center featured a mowed lawn instead of the native vegetation for which the park was established. So in 2000 he reached out to

the Dade Chapter FNPS to enhance the landscaping and make it more self-sustaining. Since then all the planting areas around the visitor center look more like their counterparts inside the park.



1. Visiting threatened Keys Tidal Rock Barren habitat in Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park.
2. Park Biologist describing a solution hole at Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park - Note there were a few mosquitos around.
3. Worm vine orchid wrapped around a poisonwood tree in Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park.
4. Native yucca growing on an unpermitted berm and canal in Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park.
5. Development on the park boundary has led to encroachment issues in Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park.
6. The review team discusses the parks efforts to restore habitat at the site of illegal development in Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park.



Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), and [X](#).
Check out the [DadeFNPS](#) website and our [Online Plant & Merchandise Store](#).
[Linktree/defnps](#) for DCFNPS has all our links (plus some for FNPS) in one place.



THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS AND NON-PROFIT MEMBERS

and other businesses who support FNPS and DCFNPS at a higher level.

Their interest in native plants and extra financial support are much appreciated and very helpful to the mission of FNPS and the chapter. They may also promote FNPS and may contribute in other ways through event participation, presentations, articles, field trips, donations and more. Thank you from all of us!

Casaplanta Garden Center www.casaplantamiami.com/

Institute for Regional Conservation www.regionalconservation.org/

Key West Tropical Forest & Botanical Gardens www.keywest.garden/

LandscapedE www.landscapede.com/

NaMa Native Landscapes www.namaprojects.com/ and **Flora of Miami Garden Center** floraofmiami.com/

Native Tree Nursery www.nativetreenursery.com/

Susan Casey (Casey's Corner Nursery) www.plantrealflorida.org/professionals/detail/16

The Invoka Group (website in progress)

3o5Gardens www.3o5gardens.com/

Dade Chapter Florida Native Plant Society - For Miami-Dade and the Florida Keys

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Mail: Dade Chapter FNPS, 6619 S. Dixie Hwy, #181, Miami FL 33143-7919

Board members and team members:

President: Steve Woodmansee **Vice-President:** Karina Gomez **Secretary:** Carmen Ferreiro **Treasurer:** Susan Walcutt
At Large: Joey Basna, Riki Bonnema, Daniela Champney, Harley Guerra, Charlie Reverte, Jeanne Rothchild **Past President:** Brian Diaz
FNPS Council of Chapters representative and volunteer hours reporting: Riki Bonnema

Newsletter editor: Patty Phares **Mail Chimp and Social Media:** Karina Gomez

Webmaster: Haniel Pulido Jr., dadefnpsweb@gmail.com

Tillandsia Newsletter

Please contact the editor if you might like to join the *Tillandsia* staff or contribute an article or news item.

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 communication: info@fnps.org, 321-271-6702, <https://www.fnps.org>

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The Florida Native Plant Society's mission is to champion Florida's native plants and their habitats through conservation, preservation, restoration, education, and advocacy.

January 2026 field trip to Everglades National Park: walking through a cypress dome near Pa-Hay-Okee

Photo by Scott Sutherland

