



Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens e-Newsletter April 2016

HAPPENING THIS MONTH!

Volunteer Workday

Saturday, April 9
9 AM-12 PM

Nature Walk

Saturday, April 9
9:30 AM-10:30 AM

Arboretum Extended Hours On Tuesday & Thursdays

8:00 AM-7:00 PM

Save The Dates!

Themed Nature



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Plant of the Month: Lyre-leaf Sage

March and April are great months to view local wildflowers. Blue and purple flowers are especially common at this time of year. Woodland phlox, Venus' looking glass, blue-eyed grass, spiderwort, wild iris and lyre-leaf sage are some of those blue to purple wildflowers.

The lyre-leaf sage, *Salvia lyrata*, is a common wildflower in the Jacksonville area that often occurs

Walk
May 14

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in large numbers in lawns and along roadsides. They can persist in unsprayed lawns because the leaves lie flat on the ground below the blades of a mower. The flower spikes grow to twelve to eighteen inches tall. Typically, the flowers are blue to purple, but white flowered plants can be found. The leaves may have some purple coloration and one cultivated form, 'Purple Volcano', has leaves that are solid purple. This plant can be a little weedy for use in a formal garden. Individual plants are short-lived, but seedlings pop up all around them. They survive just about anywhere and have been recommended for use in difficult sites like green roofs. They grow and flower best in a sunny, moist area. In a good spot, they may produce flowers several times during the growing season.

Besides having attractive flowers, lyre-leaf sage was used by Native Americans for medicinal purposes. However, literature on these uses includes some that seem contradictory. For example, the plant is said to have been used as a laxative and as a treatment for diarrhea. It has been used to heal wounds, but also to remove warts. It could be that different parts of the plant were used for different purposes. Other plants may have been added to a treatment for a specific result. Of course, knowing and using the proper dosage of any medicine is extremely important.

Salvia is an interesting genus that contains nearly a thousand species, including eight that are native to Florida. Several species, from around the world are cultivated in gardens for their attractive flowers. A few are grown as edible herbs. Two species produce the edible seeds that we call chia. At least one species causes hallucinations in its users. Even the well-known herbal sages are thought to cause

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JAG Membership

By becoming a member or donor, you are supporting the Arboretum's operations and improvements. All donations are tax-deductible. Details are available on our website.

Membership Levels

\$ 40 Single
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problems when eaten in certain situations or in large quantities. Enjoy the beauty of these plants, but talk to your doctor about what ails you.

Lord of the Forest

The genus and species name for the more commonly known indigo snake is aptly *Drymarchon couperi* or "lord of the forest". This Latin name is likely based on their immunity to rattlesnake and cottonmouth venom and the fact that they are the longest native snakes in North America. The common name refers to their blue-black color, which covers all but the sides of the head and chin. These areas can be shades of orange, red, or brown.

Indigo snakes are not picky eaters. Birds, frogs, small mammals, other snakes, and the occasional gopher tortoise egg and hatchling have all been reported prey. While they are a top-food-chain predator that can put on quite a show when threatened- flattening of the head, hissing, and tail vibrating- they rarely bite anything but prey and are non-venomous.

Indigo snakes are a protected species throughout their range, which once included south Alabama, southeastern Mississippi, southern Georgia, and Florida. They currently have a "federally threatened" conservation status in Florida and Georgia and are locally extinct in Alabama and Mississippi. The decline in indigo snake populations is mainly due to over-collection for the pet-trade, inadvertent death during gassing of gopher tortoise burrows to collect rattlesnakes, and lack of suitable habitat. Due to their protected status indigo snakes should never be disturbed or handled without a

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Thank you!

permit.

The Arboretum has a wide array of flora and fauna. While an indigo snake sighting was reported, indigos are easily confused with black racers, coachwhips, and other darkly colored snakes from our area. If you come across a potential indigo snake or any interesting plant or animal at the Arboretum, please take a picture and post it to Instagram [#jacksonvillearboretum](#) and facebook www.facebook.com/JacksonvilleArboretumGardens

It will help the Jacksonville Arboretum and Gardens non-profit identify Arboretum inhabitants and encourage more visitors to the on-site donation box. Thanks!



Photos courtesy of Jane Pope

**Invasive Plant Removal By
Greenwood High School Volunteers**

February 27th, the Zoology Club from Greenwood School turned out in tall boots and gloved hands ready for a rough morning of digging elephant ears

from the mud and Boston fern from brier patches. By the end of the morning the students had filled our entire dumpster with coral ardisia, nandina, wax begonia, Peruvian primrose willow, and seedlings of tallow tree and chinaberry. For three of the seniors, it was their sixth year of helping with what used to be the Air Potato Round Up. They all remarked about the amazing change in the round up in the past few years. There are now few potatoes to be found. About two years ago, JAG introduced air potato beetles supplied by University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF-IFAS). The beetles have eaten almost all the air potato vines. As a true turnabout, this year students collected a small bag of air potatoes to send to the UF-IFAS beetle-rearing facility in Gainesville. The air potato beetles have been so successful in eradicating the invasive vine that UF-IFAS can no longer find enough leaves and relies on donation of potatoes from Air Potato Round Up's state wide to supply the colony. Our deepest thanks go to Greenwood School for their years of dedication.

March Nature at Night

The latest Nature at Night event was a big all-ages hit. The combination of Terry Whitehead's great music, the bonfire, night time nature tours, and fabulous food from Certified Steak & Seafood and Potter's House "Soul Food Bistro" made for an epic evening. To those of you who participated - thank you for coming out! If you would like to attend our next Nature at Night, please visit our [membership page](#) and sign up.

Earth Day & National Arbor Day

Earth Day, April 22nd, and National Arbor Day, April 29th, are rapidly approaching. In honor of these special dates, we invite you to enjoy the Arboretum and Gardens for a minimal donation. You are also encouraged to visit until 7PM on Tuesdays and Thursday during our new Daylight Saving Time hours. We hope to see you there!

OUR MISSION

*Cultivating a unique environment
for recreation, education, and inspiration.*