



Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens e-Newsletter
June 2018

**HAPPENING
THIS MONTH!**

**Arboretum
Gates Open**
8:00 AM-5:00 PM
Tuesday and Thursday
8:00 AM -7:00 PM

**Volunteer Work
Day**
Saturday, June 9
8:00AM-11:00 AM

Nature Walk
Saturday, June 23
9:30 AM- 10 :30 AM

**SUPPORTERS
& PARTNERS**

BRONZE PARTNER



Photo credit: Chuck Hubbuch

Ragweed!
by Chuck Hubbuch

Common ragweed is known to botanists as *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*. This is an interesting choice for a scientific name. To the ancient

Greg and Pat Cloud

SILVER PARTNER

Anthony John Rigney,
PA & Rigney Family
of Jacksonville, FL
Russell Blueberry Farm

GOLD PARTNER

David W. Cromer DVM /
Baywood Animal Hospital
Robb & Pam Mitchell

Gate Keeper

Marcia Mederos

Steward

bestbet Jacksonville
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Greeks, ambrosia was the food of the gods. It conferred immortality to those who ate it. Ambrosia has also referred to beverages and perfumes in ancient literature. The specific name, "artemisiifolia", means that it has leaves like *Artemisia*, plants that are also known as sagebrush, mugwort and wormwood. To me, the smell of fresh ragweed is pungent and unpleasant - not something I would consider to be a perfume.

Common ragweed is native throughout Florida. Three additional species are found in the state, too. About fifty Ambrosia species are native to the Americas and some have become weeds in other parts of the world. Ragweed provides the usual environmental benefits of plants. Plants are common in disturbed areas where they help prevent erosion. Like most plants, they convert water and carbon dioxide into oxygen and sugar. Reportedly, deer and horses eat ragweed but this may not help in your garden.

The greatest impact of ragweed on people is not a beneficial one. Many of us are allergic to ragweed pollen and it causes the coughing, sniffing disorder commonly known as hay fever. The leaves cause skin rashes in some people. While it is generally considered to be a fall problem, ragweed flowers throughout the summer and into winter in Florida. One reference says that a single plant can spread about a billion grains of pollen in one season. Because of this, ragweed is considered to be a major contributor to hay fever in the United States. The worldwide cost of allergens, including ragweed, is estimated at billions of dollars per year. That does not include the cost of controlling these plants as

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
\$ 55 Dual
\$ 70 Family
\$100 Friend

Supporters & Corporate Partners

Bronze Partner \$250
Silver Partner \$500
Gold Partner \$1,000

John Bartram Society

Gatekeeper \$2500+
Steward \$5000+
President's Council \$10000+

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weeds in our farms and home yards.

The Jacksonville area is a great place for ragweed. Clumps of twenty or more stems can grow to over six feet tall in a good location. We work to control ragweed in the garden area of the Jacksonville Arboretum and Gardens. Despite our efforts, you should be able to find plants there through the growing season.

Nature's School of Hard Knocks

By Angela Chene

More often than I'd like, I am flat-out wrong in my assumptions. This seems especially true in my well-intentioned but usually doomed attempts to "assist" in some of the drama I observe in my landscape at home. I will give two embarrassing examples.

I replaced a struggling hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) with a bigger, lovelier one this spring. It was doing fine until the enemy arrived - hordes of tiny aphids who were brought in by their evil overlords, the ants. Determined not to lose another hibiscus, I covered the aphids with a diluted soap spray. Then I put little ant baits around the base of the plant, thinking that if I could beat the aphid ranchers, I could beat the aphids. (I could almost hear the ants laughing it up at my expense.) It helped a little, but not much. I was about to give up on it when one evening, I noticed that the cavalry had arrived! They aren't much to look at-in fact, they look like

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Thank you!

tiny red and black alligators, but to me they're beautiful. What were they? Ladybug nymphs! These scary-looking baby ladybugs accomplished in a few days what all my spraying and baiting had failed to do, because these hungry ladies (and gents) love to gobble up aphids.

Another drama that I saw recently was pretty sad, until I thought it through. I've planted several tropical milkweeds (*Asclepias curassavica*), hoping to attract Monarch butterflies. I'd been hovering over the plants, eager to see those orange and black wings fluttering over them. In a few weeks, I saw a very tiny striped caterpillar eating holes in the leaves. I picked it off, and tossed it aside, thinking "Beat it, bug! These plants are reserved for the Monarchs!". That was mistake number one. I read up on it and realized I'd killed the very thing I was trying to help, and I felt so dumb. Soon after, I saw three big, fat, striped Monarch caterpillars, about the size of my pinky finger. I was delirious with excitement, thinking that soon I'd get to see them make a chrysalis and emerge into beautiful butterflies, all because I'd planted the milkweeds! Finally, I'd gotten something right...right? All that day I watched those three. They were just hanging out, not doing a whole lot but I know they were still alive. It was hot, so I went in the house to get some tea and when I came back out, one of them was gone. I looked up and down all the stems, all over the ground nearby and to my terror, found a big wasp eating the caterpillar. "NO!" was all I could manage; I was so discouraged. I watched the remaining two and the same thing happened to a second one. Keeping hope alive, I put the last one on a stick and tried to hide the stick in the leaves of the milkweed. Then I noticed the wasps

have a strategy - they fly in circles all around the milkweed, flying up and down looking for the caterpillars. Later that evening, I checked on it again only to find the shriveled green remains of the last one. I almost started to cry, knowing that the caterpillars were there (and now dead) because I'd planted the milkweed. But then I remembered that these wasps eat bugs that are eating my other plants too. Still other wasps are beneficial like bees because they're good pollinators, even though they aren't fuzzy and cute, and they don't make honey. Wasps gotta eat too.

And I remembered how happy I was to see ladybug nymphs eating aphids-and had the realization that wasps eating caterpillars are no different. Ants aren't evil overlords, they just need the aphids. And the ladybugs don't care how my hibiscus looks. All these characters are really just playing their own parts in a really complicated story of plants and animals depending on each other, surviving and suffering together, living and dying in the process. And some caterpillars do make it or we'd never see the butterflies.

Nature seems to me to have an unapologetic ruthlessness that works when it's in balance. It's when I jump in to make things more "fair" for some underdog that it all seems to go haywire. That isn't to say that things shouldn't be responsibly managed, but next time I'll try to keep a big-picture perspective as I do.

Discovering Nature Nearby







The Butterfly Release and Insect Discovery Walk and Talk with Dr. Rossi was a lot of fun last Saturday. There were about 50 - 60 people there with many children in attendance. Dr. Rossi gave an informative talk about milkweed which has a cardiac glycoside that the butterfly absorbs making it toxic to predators. We took a walk along the lake and lower ravine trail and found termites and damselflies. He brought insect

collections which allowed closer observation of common insects. *Coreopsis* seeds and butterfly plants including *Ruellia carolinensis* and *Salvia coccinea* were given away. Packets containing a mix of Florida butterflies were carefully released by the children who enjoyed the wondrous amazement of observing and releasing the live butterflies.

Tribute Bricks

Dear Friends and Supporters,

We are asking for your support of our Tribute Brick and Tribute Bench fundraising projects at the Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens. This time of the year is great for making tax deductible gifts and, as a reminder, we are a non-profit organization and not a city park. We have no paid staff and rely solely on volunteers - and your charitable contributions - to operate the Arboretum for everyone to enjoy.

Consider supporting us by purchasing an engraved brick paver or an engraved bench with the name of your choice, permanently imprinted on the brick and on a plaque on the bench, to honor or memorialize those who are dear to you. This is a visible honor that you can use, and that other visitors will appreciate as they enter the arboretum to walk the trails and enjoy the grounds. The Tribute Brick area will create a living monument of pathways bridging the past, the present and the future. Your placement of a bench will also be appreciated, creating places of

rest for you and other guests. Your donation helps us today - and will be enjoyed now and for generations to come.

Your Tribute Brick will be located at the kiosk at the entrance to the Gardens, with benches placed in strategic locations throughout the arboretum grounds.

This year marks our 10th anniversary - and a great opportunity to celebrate the success of what's being called "the hidden jewel of Jacksonville" for its lakeside gardens focused on people's use of plants and extensive walking and hiking trails.

Thanks for considering the Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens Tribute Bricks/Benches fundraising program in your annual giving.

Sincerely,
Martha Mazza
Tribute Brick Coordinator

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We appreciate it!

OUR MISSION

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