



## Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens e-Newsletter May 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, May 12  
8:00AM-11:00 AM

#### Nature Walk

Saturday, May 26  
9:30 AM- 10 :30 AM

#### Discovering Nature Nearby

Saturday, May 19  
9:30 AM- 10:30 AM

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Photo credit: Florida Hikes, Flickr Creative Commons

### Coontie

by Chuck Hubbuch'

Over three hundred species of cycads range throughout the warm regions of the world. Superficially, they look similar to palms but they have an ancient lineage with fossil records dating back to the time of the dinosaurs. Their most distinctive feature is that cycad seeds are produced in cone-like structures called strobili.

One species, coontie is native to Florida. Its common name comes from the name used by

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Arboretum & Gardens is  
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Native Americans when colonists arrived. In Florida, it ranges from the Keys to St. Johns County. Botanists have changed their interpretation of this species through the years. Several species have been described in Florida alone. At another time, this plant and its Caribbean relatives were all lumped together under the name *Zamia pumila*. Today, *Zamia integrifolia* seems to be the most widely accepted scientific name for this plant.

Coontie has a branching stem below ground with arching, dark green, compound leaves that grow to a few feet tall. Seed bearing strobili are brown as they develop but fall apart to reveal bright orange to red seeds at maturity. Plants produce either pollen or seeds so the right two are needed for fertilized seeds to develop. It is a durable landscape plant for the garden growing in sun or shade in any reasonably well-drained soil. It grows well with irrigation but does not thrive in a wet site. Single specimens make attractive small accent plants. Mass plantings can be used as a tall groundcover. The dark foliage makes a nice background for small flowering plants.

Gardeners should wear waterproof gloves when handling coontie and other cycads. Their sap contains cancer-causing and neurotoxic compounds. Despite these nasty toxins, people around the world have mashed the stems and seeds of cycads to produce food. Typically, the mashed material was washed repeatedly to remove the toxins - or most of them - before baking or cooking into a porridge. In fact, Florida's coonties were harvested commercially by colonists and residents until 1925 when the USDA banned its use. It was called Florida

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

### **Supporters & Corporate Partners**

Bronze Partner \$250  
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arrowroot and was prized as a flour for baking. In the past, its seeds were strung as beads. While most of its non-landscape uses have come to an end, coontie leaves are used today as cut foliage by florists.

You can see coontie and some of its relatives at the Jacksonville Arboretum and Gardens in the palm garden along the lake loop and in a few other locations.

### **Its a Jungle in There!**

by Angela Chene

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Thank you!



*Aloe maculata*



*Hamamelis virginica*

Sometimes while I stand in the bathroom brushing my teeth, I look at the bottles and tubes I've accumulated. They promise wonderful things like making me glowingly beautiful or preserving the vestiges of my fleeting youth. It's a little comical, because I'd really be happy just to not have chapped lips in the winter or a farmer's tan all summer. Whether your skin-care regimen is an elaborate ritual or an afterthought, it's interesting to think about how many of these products start as plants.

Cultural differences aside, people have been using plants to look and feel better pretty much forever. Perhaps a Neolithic woman noticed how many shaggy heads she could turn after her lips were stained from eating berries. That is not a scientific fact, but I wish it was. (If you're curious about plants used in antiquity, here's an article I found that was loaded with interesting tidbits.)

The things we use today are pretty elaborate and

sometimes far-removed from their plant origins. Today products like sunscreen, moisturizers and cosmetics are formulated in labs, tested extensively and mass-produced to be as profitable as the market will allow. All that aside, I still remember my mom using a black tea bag on my gums to stop the bleeding after I'd pulled a tooth. And even today, when I get a little too much sun, I just break off an aloe leaf (*Aloe maculata*) and the cooling, green watery insides really seem to soothe the burn. (The prickly edges of the leaf not so much).

Another common plant that's used as a beauty product is witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*). I've seen that growing at the arboretum and recall when I've used the liquid decoction as an astringent to clear away oil and dirt from my skin. You can still find it easily at grocery and drugstores-it's usually near the peroxide and rubbing alcohol. I remember witch hazel being super gentle and pretty cheap - and it's good for diaper rash, poison ivy and sunburns too.

Now that I'm a little older, I find that my skin seems to want more moisturizing. (There's probably a connection between too much sun then and needing moisturizing now-I should have listened to you, mom!) If you're hoping to slow the ravages of time, consider looking for anti-aging treatments that have Okinawa hibiscus (*Hibiscus makinoi*) in them. I also noticed that many of my go-to moisturizers have shea butter as a main ingredient. I've even seen big blobs of pure shea butter for sale at flea markets and ethnic shops. Turns out that shea butter is made from the oily nut of the shea tree (*Vitellaria paradoxa*), which is native to central Africa.

There are thousands of other plants that are used for skin care and beauty, and many of them grow right here in north Florida. Right here at the Arboretum, you can see aloe in the pollinator garden, the hibiscus on the north side of the Lake Loop trail and the witch hazel along several different trails. You could almost think of your bathroom cabinet as containing a jungle! Some plants may go through myriad chemical changes before finding their way into those bottles and tubes, but others I can obtain myself with a quick trip to the backyard. Either way, I try to appreciate that someone had to preserve that knowledge for modern times, and someone else had to grow and harvest it, and still others had to refine it. Read some labels and see what you can find.

### **Discovering Nature Nearby**

Join us at the Jacksonville Arboretum and Gardens for a FREE program



DISCOVERING  
**NATURE  
NEARBY**

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**SPRING 2018**



3rd Saturdays in April and May 2018 at 9:30 a.m. in the Picnic Area  
The picnic area is wheelchair accessible



**Apr 21**

Dr. Tony Rossi, UNF Entomology Professor, will present an Insect Discovery Walk and Talk identifying species found. Insect collections will be available for viewing.



**May 19**

Second Annual Butterfly Release with collections and posters of our most common Florida butterflies. Native species will be available for participants to release.

NOTE: Nature tours change from the 2nd to the 4th Saturday starting in April at 9:30 a.m.



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## Trail News



Several members of Florida's Rare Plant Task Force toured the arboretum April 13

## **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

### **Show the World You Love the Arboretum**

Show the world you love us, by posting your Arboretum photographs at [#jacksonvillearboretum](https://www.instagram.com/jacksonvillearboretum) & [www.facebook.com/JacksonvilleArboretumGardens](https://www.facebook.com/JacksonvilleArboretumGardens)  
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### **OUR MISSION**

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

