



Green Tips

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The Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens is pleased to bring you *Green Tips*, our quarterly e-magazine featuring in-depth articles written by Duval County Gardeners. Enjoy!



Photo Courtesy: Penelope Butterworth

A Note of Thanks

I just want to share what a great opportunity and experience it has been to serve as the president of the board at such a pivotal time during the short history of the Jacksonville Arboretum & Botanical Gardens - and thank you for your support of the organization during my tenure.

Although we didn't get as much accomplished over the last two years as I had originally planned, we did achieve some important objectives.

- The board established a new full-time executive director position and part-time horticulturist position in 2019;
- A new security program was established, and we'll have a new security system installed on site shortly -- thanks to the leadership of board member Steve Wingate;
- We developed a board succession plan, led by board member Kevin Blalock; and
- I'm excited to report that last month the board voted to engage 3. Fromme Design, based in Ocala, to expand our existing conceptual gardens plan to create a final master plan for our community's arboretum. We're currently raising funds to engage the firm with the goal of completing the process by next spring (so if you can help, let us know). The firm, among several recommended to us by the American Public Gardens Association, is familiar with Florida's native plants and has developed many beautiful designs at arboretums throughout the country.

On the management side, so far this year, our new executive director Dana Doody has implemented:

- A new volunteer and staff structure;
- A new membership system;
- A grants plan for 2020-21;
- The expansion of our donor outreach and recognition efforts; and
- A program offering 'pop-up' weddings (working in conjunction with PRI Productions for larger ones) - which is another small but notable revenue stream.

I again want to thank all our donors, including lead donor Marcia Mederos and the matching donation made by the Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund through the Community Foundation of Northeast Florida, who all helped make a permanent ADA-compliant paved pathway on the south lake loop a reality -

which is now named The South Loop Ravine Overlook.

I'm also very proud of how our staff and the entire board worked effectively throughout the COVID-19 closure earlier this year - closing and securing the venue to keep our staff and volunteers safe, and reopening as soon as possible to give people the opportunity to get out and enjoy nature when so many outside venues remained closed. While the pandemic certainly had a revenue impact, and we've had to rethink our various fundraising events and volunteer activities, we appreciate how our donors and sponsors have responded to these changes. Although the coronavirus proved to be a setback for us all, I'm excited to share that the board is now making up for lost time in a lot of areas. Our executive director is in the planning stage for a new bat event in collaboration with the Jacksonville Zoo & Gardens this fall, coordinating with the First Coast Plein Air artists for the return of a hybrid live/virtual 'A Brush With Nature' event in October and developing new events for 2021.

The transition from a board-driven to staff-driven agency is never easy and has its own set of challenges, but our board members and executive director have been working through those issues - and with the management experience offered by incoming board president Kevin Blalock, I'm certain that transition will continue smoothly and effectively.

As I take a new role on the governance committee to expand our board and work with our city officials, I believe this momentum will continue as we further develop our garden areas, add new amenities for visitors and put the programs in place to make the arboretum a growing, sustainable venue for the community and other visitors for years to come.

Ron Whittington,

Exiting Board President, Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens

A Note of Anticipation

As you probably have already read in Ron Whittington's note, the Board has accomplished a lot under his leadership over the past 2 years, continuing to support the vision and mission of the Arboretum's founders as well as the growth initiated by prior leaders and boards. Ron and the team have continued to make the Arboretum a destination of choice while gradually improving the site,

expanding the programs we offer, and continuing a focus on recreation, education and inspiration. This growth is highlighted by the increase in visitors and memberships over the last two years...there are many days when the parking lot is overflowing and we are all proud of that.

I am proud to have been involved in this growth in the last two years as a board member and President-elect. I am fortunate to be succeeding Ron as President, and happy that he will still be around to mentor me, guide us, and continue to make things happen as he has for the last several years.

Since I do not know many of you, I wanted to make a quick introduction and talk about my plans for the first few months in the new role.

My family and I moved to Jacksonville in 2010, and we did not expect to be here this long. My wife, Carina Santalucia, two boys Avery and Jake, and our two dogs, fell in love with the town and the lifestyle here. In 2018 I was looking for a way to give back to and get more involved in the local community while building on my interests. At the time, I had no idea the Arboretum and Gardens existed. But when I learned about it, my family and I were excited because we spend most of our free time and vacations traveling to national, state and local parks for hiking, birding and site seeing, and we have visited many arboretums around the country. This seemed like a great fit, and offered the bonus benefit of getting outside when I needed to "work" (and sometimes I can drag my sons along with me without complaint). My wife is also an avid gardener, so volunteering here makes sense. Finally, when I met with Ron, Melinda Simmons and Martha Mazza about potentially joining the board, I learned quickly that the organization was poised for growth and had outstanding potential. That kind of environment plays to my professional skills and I hope I can continue to foster the kind of environment the Arboretum needs at this stage and continue to execute the plans that Ron and the team have set in motion.

Any new leader wants to put their fingerprint on an organization. However, since I have been a part of the organization for the last 2 years, I see a lot of opportunity in what is already in progress, and I do not want to repeat what Ron has highlighted in his note. My primary task and that of the Board will be to listen to our members, patrons and donors to make sure we are meeting your needs. With that in mind, you can expect us to continue to improve the site as our master plan evolves and we begin to add infrastructure and expand our attractions; maintain the city's best trails which draw visitors from all parts of the city and region; continue to provide great programs, implement some new events and programs, and to improve our financial position to support the plans for growth. This will require continued support from our donors, supporters and members who have been so reliable through the years, a strong, dedicated

board who works well as a team, and your energy and passion for this incredible venue and organization.

Kevin Blalock,

President-Elect Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens

New Palms of the Arboretum

Florida has many beautiful native palm trees, many which are showcased around the arboretum. Florida boasts twelve native palm tree species, many with multiple utilitarian uses. *Rhapidophyllum hystrix*, *Sabal palmetto* and *Sabal minor* are three of the twelve which call the arboretum home. In efforts to showcase other significant palms, we established a palm, cycad and bromeliad garden. This garden features a multitude of palms, both native and from around the world, including many interesting bromeliads and cycads. Nestled under a sparse canopy of live oaks provides an excellent microclimate which allows us to push the boundaries and the limits of our zone.

As you wander the garden you may stumble upon one of the most recent additions to our collection, the cold hardy coconut palm, *Beccariophoenix alfredi*. This new palm specimen was donated by Andy Turner with Serenoa Landscape Design. This newer species of palm was originally discovered in 2002 when Alfred Razafindratsira took numerous photographs of the vegetation surrounding Andrembesoa while on an expedition to search for a species of *Pachypodium*. The palm was later named after Alfred.



All three species of the *Beccariophoenix* genus are Native to the high plateau of Madagascar where they experience a sub humid climate with average temperatures between 59-68 F and annual rainfall averaging 60 inches. The hardy coconut palm is one of the three species in the genus and is a solitary, unarmed, tree palm which grows to 45' with a trunk diameter of 11". The fronds bring a softer texture which react pleasantly in the wind and add a tropical personality to the landscape. Hardy up to 25 F, this palm could work as a nice specimen providing an elegant tropical accent for a suitable microclimate. The palm likes sandy soil with good drainage and can tolerate less water although for quicker growth give your plant ample sun and regular waterings. *Beccariophoenix alfredi* does produce an small edible coconut and may become extremely popular because of its cold hardiness and resemblance to the coconut palm. Seeds and young plants are currently available at specialty nurseries and online retailers.

Another recent addition to the palm, cycad and bromilead garden is *Arenga engleri*, the dwarf sugar palm. This new palm specimen was donated by the Varn Family. The dwarf sugar palm is native to Japan, Taiwan and the Ryukyu Islands

where it grows on slopes and in dense forests.



Also known as the Formosa palm, *Arenga engleri* is widely sought after for its long graceful pinnate leaves which grow up to 8 feet long with silvery undersides. Black fibers wrap the thornless stems as the clustering palm fans its leaves out. The flower stalks have fragrant male and female flowers that produce deep purple fruit which are toxic. Plants can be propagated from seeds or division of suckers and larger specimens are readily available in the nursery trade.

Hardy up to 23 F, *Arenga engleri* is one of the most cold hardy pinnate palms in the world. The palm does well in semi-shade lighting and works well planted under a protected understory to maintain a deep green hue. When planted in full sun the leaves turn yellow-green. The species grows moderately and responds to more water and nutrients by dramatically increasing its growth rate. The palm grows to over 10 feet tall with a width of over 16 feet making it a great alternative to a shrub hedge. *Arenga engleri* is said to be among the finest landscape and cultivated palms.

Sources:

[Researchgate.net/publication](https://www.researchgate.net/publication)

https://www.palmpedia.net/wiki/Beccariophoenix_alfredii

<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/nassauco/2017/05/21/fact-sheet-dwarf-sugar-palm/>

https://www.palmpedia.net/wiki/Arenga_engleri

Shayan Khatibi - Horticulturist, Jacksonville Arboretum and Gardens. Shayan earned a degree in biology from the University of Central Florida where he focused his coursework on botany and biochemistry. Since then, he has taken on professional horticultural roles working for companies like Walt Disney World, Knox Nursery and KYV Farms. Shayan says "My fascination with plants and passion for horticulture stem from experiences gardening with my grandfather as a child".

Our horticulturist Shayan Khatibi sells arborist mulch and installs it with his landscape business or contact your local tree service and ask if they carry it.

Invasive Plants: Lantanas and Mexican Petunias

Despite the lovely appearance and easy caretaking of the Lantana and Mexican petunia, both plants are harmful to Florida's ecosystem.

Why are the Lantana and Mexican petunia invasive?

An invasive species is one that causes harm in an environment where it is not native. The Lantana is native to the tropical zones of South and North Africa. The Mexican petunia is from Mexico, the Caribbean, and some of South America. Both plants are non-native to Florida and cause harm. The Mexican petunia is known for its eagerness to spread anywhere due to its high tolerance for environmental conditions. The spreading of Mexican petunias takes up space from Florida's native plants. The successful spread of the Lantana is due to the allelochemicals or plant toxins it releases. These plant toxins located in the roots and stems are known to slow the development of Florida's native plants or remove them altogether. To add on, the Lantana is part of the ten most troublesome weeds in Florida. It is known to have invaded 58 of 67 counties.

Despite, this the Lantana and Mexican petunia are still found in homes. Cities and counties plant these dangerous invasive plants knowingly or unknowingly, while states try to remove them from harming the ecosystem.



<https://zicxphotos.com/hoa-tram-oi.html>

Lantana (Lantana camara)

Lantanas are great for those wanting to attract visitors such as hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies. Its attraction of bees makes a great anchor in our pollinator garden. Due to its colorful array of flowers in red, white, orange, purple, and yellow. However, the Lantana is not as friendly to animals as it is to insects and birds! The Lantana's allelochemicals give an unpleasant taste to insects and animals. Even worse animals who eat the leaves may begin to show symptoms of skin peeling. These symptoms are incurable.

Although harmful for animals, birds often consume the fruit and are partly responsible for its seed distribution. These birds are unknowingly destroying their ecosystem. The Lantana camara is a category 1 invasive plant, meaning the Lantana invades native natural areas, displaces native plants, and crossbreeds with native plants. In Miami Dade, the Lantana camara has hybridized with Florida's native Lantana depresses, which in return, contaminated the gene pool. Even worse, the plant flourishes in disturbed lands, nutrient-poor soil, poisonous to herbivores, and often regrows regardless of attempts of removal.

One preventative measure taken was the breeding of numerous seedless

Lantana hybrids, cultivators, and varieties. This eliminated the spread of seeds. However, allelopathic properties do not change.



<https://plantcaretoday.com/mexican-petunia.html>

Mexican petunia (*Ruellia simplex*)

The Mexican petunia is loved by many gardeners for its easy caretaking, heat tolerance, and beautiful flowers! However, the Mexican petunia is exceedingly hard to get rid of. Its underground stems are difficult to remove and the seeds can thrive in the soil for many years. Not to mention that its also a Category 1 Invasive Plant. The Mexican petunia has spread to nine different states from South Carolina to Texas. Its seeds can be sprayed out up to 10 feet from the plant. To add on, the seed has a mucous gel coating that forms when the seed contacts water. Enabling the seed to float and travel greater distances. Characteristics of the Mexican petunia that bring harm to the environment include the displacement of native species and the changing of the ecosystem's structure. Because of the effects on its nonnative ecosystem, it should be avoided altogether due to its rapid growth rate, which causes more invasive Mexican petunias to grow and harm the native plants. Its plentiful production of seeds which allows for a huge quantity of these wild Mexican petunias to be planted and suffocate natural surroundings. Lastly, the absence of germination requirements for Mexican petunias means they can sprout in any environment---bad or good. This wild plant is hard to remove, but the right measures can be, taken to control this invasive, from causing harm to the ecosystem.

Mexican petunias 'purple showers'

Contrary to its counterpart, 'purple showers' are seedless. It expands aggressively by its roots and has become an issue in the south, where winters do not kill the top of the plant annually. This species is known for spreading and escaping gardens to naturalize in other areas. To remove this species, one must remove the roots entirely, due to its ability to spread from rootstocks.
Mexican petunias 'compact purple'

This new cultivator is a dwarf plant that spreads more slowly than the other Mexican petunias mentioned, but one should still take caution.

Management/ Preventative

Control is needed to ensure these invasive plants are not spreading uncontrollably and hindering Jacksonville's natural greenery. Measures taken in home gardens and landscapes may include herbicide treatments followed by replanting of a native plant or suitable ornamental plants. Or one can inquire about seedless hybrids, cultivators, and varieties.

At the Jacksonville Arboretum and Gardens, our land stewardship is a top priority. Land care staff and volunteers manage invasive species in several ways, whether it is pulling out the plant by its roots or using herbicide. Not only are invasive plants are treated to the best of our knowledge but so are our natives! At the Arboretum and Gardens, you can find many trees and plants such as the oak tree, the devil walking sticks, and ragweed. In addition, to the Lantana and other bee-friendly plants in the pollinator garden.

Whether or not it is a leisure walk to look at plants or walking the dogs, we have trails for everyone. The Aralia Trail is more difficult than the other trails, but it is worth the reward of a breathtaking view of the rippling waters and plants of Jones Creek. For easy walking with the family, our Lake Loop Trail is the best! It is 0.3 miles long and comes around Lake Ray. By Lake Ray, you can spot various insects, fish, turtles, and amphibians that live in the lake.

There are seven amazing trails for everyone to enjoy! So, please, come rest yourselves and enjoy the natural greenery of our trails and gardens!

Further information on the different categories of invasive plants according to the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council:

CATEGORY I "Invasive exotics that are altering native plant communities by displacing native species, changing community structures or ecological functions, or hybridizing with natives. This definition does not rely on the

economic severity or geographic range of the problem, but on the documented ecological damage caused."

CATEGORY II "Invasive exotics that have increased in abundance or frequency but have not yet altered Florida plant communities to the extent shown by Category 1 species. These species may become Category 1 if ecological damage is demonstrated."



Kaitlyn Murray is a high school student at Paxon High School and is volunteering with JAG on multiple projects because of her love of nature.

Member Discounts

For our members in the Family level or above. Here is a list of the nurseries participating in the 10% discount program. Please be aware you must show your membership card to receive the discount. Enjoy your discount and support these nurseries as they support us.

Plant Place Nursery
5611 Ft. Caroline Rd
Jacksonville
32277
904-738-7126

Trad's Garden Center
8178 San Jose Blvd
Jacksonville

32217
904-733-7549

Phillips Garden Store
4234 Herschel St.
Jacksonville
32210
904-389-0933

Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens, 1445 Millcoie Road, Jacksonville, FL 32225