Doug Tallamy wows Symposium by Dixie Tate

How best to sum up the fifth annual Florida Wildflower Symposium? For starters, there’s this observation from symposium participant Marta Daltry: “The keynote speaker was fantastic, and the buffet dinner that evening was delicious.”

Indeed, Doug Tallamy, entomologist and author of the acclaimed Bringing Nature Home, wowed a sellout banquet crowd with image after colorful image of caterpillars of all stripes as he made “A Case for Native Plants.” Tallamy’s photographic tour of the specialized relationships between plants and animals elicited many oohs and ahhs as he dove home his message about how and why every little bit matters when it comes to restoring biodiversity in residential landscapes.

While Tallamy’s appearance was the highlight of the event held Sept. 19 and 20 in partnership with Bok Tower Gardens in Lake Wales, the symposium offered an array of native wildflower experiences and learning opportunities to the more than 100 attendees in attendance. Field trips to Tiger Creek Preserve and Snell Creek were among the offsite offerings. The gardens provided a lush backdrop to walks, talks and workshops that were staged in the Visitors Center and the Olmsted House.

Dodge raindrops a time or two, symposium participants were able to stroll the grounds of the historic Polk County Gym in between a behind-the-scenes tour of the rare and endangered plant garden, a butterfly walk, history and photo tours, as well as presentations on such subjects as preserving roadside wildflowers, landscaping for wildlife, designing a native landscape, growing 10 easy wildflowers, and learning more about the heavy lifting bees do to keep food on our tables.

“I really enjoyed Mark Deyrup’s talk” on the nature of insect-flower relationships, said Anne Cox, “Great ideas, and the addition of art was perfect,” she said in reference to the presentation by Mollie Doctrow of her Shrine Trail Art Project.

“There is always something new and magical to learn about plant-animal interactions,” said Catherine Bowman.

Mike Howell, Polk County Master Gardener advisor to the Davenport School of the Arts, said, “I left the symposium with several good ideas for improving the butterfly garden and the native areas that we just this month installed with the aid of The Natives Nursery in Davenport. Our project at the school will be even more relevant in the future.” Howell is in the fourth year of developing an Outdoor Learning Center on a 1 ¼-acre site at the school.

There were a couple of new and much anticipated draws at this year’s event: Winners of the Florida Wildflower Foundation’s first photo contest and of the Foundation’s recently launched Wildflowers, Naturally! native landscaping recognition program were announced at the banquet. See pages 4 and 5 for winners’ names and photos and visit www.flickr.com/photos/flawildflowers/sets/ to see more photos.

Fall is for planting

Monarda punctata

(continued on page 5)
2014 Florida Wildflowers Symposium photos Be sure to visit our Flickr photo album to see more symposium highlights. If you attended the symposium and have photos you would like to share, please email them to photos@flawildflowers.org.

Friday field trip to Snell Creek with Nancy and Bill Bissett (Photo/Peg Urban)

Walter Taylor gave a lively talk on wildflowers. (Photo/Bill Randolph)

Bok Tower from the Pine Ridge Trail (Photo/Peg Urban)

Bok’s Rare Plant Curator, Glen Bupp, gave attendees a tour of the Rare Plant Garden. (Photo/Peg Urban)

Doug Tallamy addressed a sold out crowd at the FWF annual banquet at Bok Tower. (Photo/Terry Zinn)

FWF board and staff members (Photo/Vince Lamb)

The Geology of the Lake Wales Ridge walk was lead by Bok docent, Pete Brockman. (Photo/Peg Urban)

Nancy Bissett presented 10 Easy Wildflowers for the home landscape. (Photo/Bill Randolph)

Black swallowtail on blazing star (Liatris sp.) (Photo/Peg Urban)
Jackie Rolly joined the Florida Wildflower Foundation when she purchased a State Wildflower license plate for her car many years ago. She’s also a member of the Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS), as well as the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club. On Mondays, you’re likely to find her at the Oakland Nature Preserve (ONP) where she’s been working since 2007. And when the travel bug bites, Rolly volunteers for expeditions with Earthwatch Institute, on which she’s done such things as helped track wild elephants in Sri Lanka and studied biodiversity in the vineyards of France. Here, Rolly shares some ideas on matters closer to home:

Tell us about your work at the Oakland Nature Preserve. You could call our work “combat gardening.” I started out just taking care of a small area where plants salvaged from a construction area were planted as part of restoration efforts. I noticed there was no aftercare for these plants, so I started coming out on a regular basis to water and weed. That grew as I started removing noxious and exotic plants from other areas around the parking area so the natives planted earlier could thrive.

Eventually, I was voted to the [ONP] board and asked to continue restoring other areas of the Preserve. Continuing salvage efforts through Florida Native Plant Society led to more and more ecosystem-appropriate plants being brought in, which meant opening up more areas to plant them. As these efforts progressed, other volunteers interested in propagating and maintaining our beautiful native plants participated. Many of our volunteers are community service individuals who come and go, but always leave with an appreciation of our unique Florida environment.

Is there a moment you recall that first sparked your interest in the outdoors, specifically native flora? I lived for a while in the 80s and early 90s in Titusville and was always dismayed that plants and flowers bought at box stores did not thrive. I am a fourth-generation Floridian, and my family always had beautiful gardens, so I guess it’s in my blood. Upon returning to Florida in the mid-90s (when my husband retired from the Air Force), I promised myself I would figure out how to get plants to live here, which led me to FNPS and the monthly chapter meetings and their great education programs on our native plants. One of the first plants I brought home from a meeting was tall Elephantsfoot (Elephantopus elata). When it bloomed, I just stood watching in fascination at the number and variety of insects that visited that one tiny bloom. That was my “aha” moment.

How did you first get involved with the Florida Education Center. This area is now a beautiful site of various grasses and flowers, which will bloom this fall. The fact that it is so close to the Education Center provides a great opportunity to introduce new and old generations to a fast disappearing habitat—which couldn’t have happened without the grant.

What natives are growing in your yard? Do you have some words of wisdom to share with new gardeners? I have coonties (Zania pumilla), wild coffee (Psychotria nervosa) as foundation plantings, muhly grass (Muhlenbergia capillaris), love grasses (Eragrostis spp.), Fakahatchee grasses (Tripsacum dactyloides), dune sunflower (Helianthus debilis), rain lilies (Zephyranthes atamasca), American snowbell (Styrax americanus) wax myrtle (Myrica cerifera), various oaks (Quercus spp.), and cherries (Prunus spp.) Our property backs up to the Little Econ River, so the back area is heavily wooded with too many species to name. Gardening with natives takes patience and perseverance. You need to learn what will thrive in your environment and what level of maintenance you are willing to undertake. It helps to know what ecosystem was in place prior to house construction and to plant appropriately for that environment. It’s hard to get plants that thrive in a wetland to grow in a hot, dry, sandy area. If the plant doesn’t want to grow in your landscape environment, learn what will.

What do you like most about native wildflowers, or native plants in general? Do you have a favorite wildflower? My favorite wildflower is the morning buttercup (Ranunculus acris), among many others, such as Liatris, greeneyes (Berlandiera subacaulis), sky blue lupine (Lupinus diffusus). I love the fantastic variety of flowers, ferns, shrubs and trees that call Florida home and don’t grow anywhere else in the world. What greater sense of place could you have?

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing Florida’s environment? How important is sense of place? The greatest challenge to Florida is the loss of our natural areas due to wanton construction and urban sprawl; also the introduction of exotics. I understand the majority of people in Florida came from somewhere else and want the same plants they grew up with, or the generations born here who never had the opportunity to know what Florida used to look like and should look like. People in Florida don’t have a “sense of place.”

Why should people care about wildflowers? Our wildflowers feed us. The loss of flowers equals loss of pollinators, loss of a majority of our food and the food for our wildlife — not to mention the appreciation of beauty in the colors, smells and patterns of nature. There is no better way to relax, relieve the stresses of an electronic lifestyle than to sit under a tree or by wildflowers and just take in the peace and tranquility and watch insects and birds.
Advice on fall garden maintenance and seed collecting by Claudia Larsen

Do you think my Rudbeckia bouquet (pictured, right) is past its prime? You wouldn’t give me a quarter for it? Not so fast—if you like soft hair coneflower (*Rudbeckia mollis*), you are looking at a terrific seed collection worth a lot more than a few cents.

This picture is just a little reminder that it’s the season for seed collecting. As you return to the garden after the last two months of unbearable heat, biting bugs and sweat, you’ll probably encounter a lot of overgrown stems. I cut those back to the their base to refresh up the plant for winter. Trailing species, such as beach sunflower and *Gaillardia*, also can be whacked into submission and will probably bloom again by late November.

As you remove debris, why not nip the seed heads into brown bags? Most wildflowers with cone-shaped seed heads, such as soft hair coneflower and purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), are easy: Simply wait until they are very brown and dry, then tap a few heads to see if any tiny seeds are dislodged, or pry out seeds with your fingernail or a pointed tool. Wildflowers with larger flower heads, such as ironweed or goldenrod, are ready to collect when seeds with your fingernail or a pointed tool. Don’t collect too early in the morning or after rain when seed heads are wet. Dry seed heads are essential to avoid mold and rot. You can keep seeds in bags for four to six weeks as needed. Extended storage is better done in refrigerated, air-free containers.

You don’t need every seed head on every plant unless you’re starting a nursery! There were more than 50 seed heads on each of my soft hair coneflowers, and I only need 20 to 30 cones to resupply my nursery for next year.

You may need to dissect some wild-flower species to determine what and where the seed is. For example, *Salvias* keep their shiny black seeds tucked into a tube that forms on the old flower stem. Finding them is like playing hide and seek with Mother Nature.

You don’t need every seed head by hand, but if that doesn’t fit your time schedule, the whole caboodle can be pulverized with a rolling pin or another implement before dispersing seeds to the ground. Just consider the extra non-seed parts as free mulch. Check out Jeff Norcini’s article on page 5 for more tips on fall planting.

Here are a few more tips on collecting seed:

- Don’t collect too early in the morning or after rain when seed heads are wet. You can keep seeds in bags for four to six weeks as needed. Extended storage is better done in refrigerated, air-free containers.
- You don’t need every seed head on every plant unless you’re starting a nursery! There were more than 50 seed heads on each of my soft hair coneflowers, and I only need 20 to 30 cones to resupply my nursery for next year.
- You may need to dissect some wildflower species to determine what and where the seed is. For example, *Salvias* keep their shiny black seeds tucked into a tube that forms on the old flower stem. Finding them is like playing hide and seek with Mother Nature.
- You can process rough seed heads by hand, but if that doesn’t fit your time schedule, the whole caboodle can be pulverized with a rolling pin or another implement before dispersing seeds to the ground. Just consider the extra non-seed parts as free mulch. Check out Jeff Norcini’s article on page 5 for more tips on fall planting.

The Wildflowers, Naturally! program recognizes gardens throughout the state that have areas dedicated to native wildflowers, flowering shrubs and trees. The top three landscapes are honored at the Foundation’s annual Florida Wildflower Symposium. This year’s winners were Joanne Mason of Plant City, Dave and Terry Mainous of Fort Myers, and Nancy Bickner of Largo.

Nancy Bickner was inspired to plant wildflowers when her husband, who saw a butterfly garden at his school, asked her to create one at their home. The enjoyment she and her family have experienced from the wildlife they see in her yard has caused her to continue replacing her grass with wildflowers and other natives plants.

Of her landscape, Nancy said, “My family’s expectations... have been amazingly exceeded. My grown son... thinks the yard is ‘magical.’ My husband loves to sit... with his camera to try... get photos of dragonflies. One of my favorite pastimes is taking photos of all my wildflowers and sharing them with friends and family.”

Dave and Terry Mainous wanted to create a wildlife oasis in their deed-restricted community. They now have over 3000 square feet of varied native habitats and have reduced their turf coverage by more than 50 percent. Terry wrote in her application, “What started as a small wildflower patch as a tribute to a beloved cat, has morphed over the years into an entire landscape of natives and the accompanying wildlife it now supports. Everywhere you look in our landscape there is movement, and we see new things every day. It is our favorite place.”

Joanne Mason of Plant City received the Foundation’s highest recognition for a wildflower landscape. She and her husband turned two of their eight acres into a wildflower garden, which includes more than 80 species of Florida native wildflowers, grasses and flowering shrubs. Three of the remaining acres are wetlands. Joanne said she fell in love with native plants because they are easy to care for and they attract butterflies and other wildlife.

“The results and rewards have been amazing,” she said. “So many beautiful plants, lots of fabulous butterflies, caterpillars and other critters... It is a great learning source for our grandchildren.”

See page 5 for a list of other recognized landscapes. For more information about the Wildflowers, Naturally! program, visit www.flawildflowers.org/wildflowers_naturally.php.
Fall is for planting

by Jeff Norcini, OecoHort, LLC

“Fall is for planting” has been the unofficial promotional campaign of the nursery industry for many years. This slogan applies to sowing seeds of native wildflowers and grasses as well, at least here in Florida.

Establishing a planting of wildflowers, whether as a garden or converting some turfgrass to a low-maintenance area, is very laudable, but it first requires a reality check. Be aware that:

• The area might not be suitable for native wildflowers and grasses. Only consider areas that have few to no weeds, are sunny for at least six hours a day, and have soil that is well-drained (throughout the site, you should be able to use a sharp stick to penetrate the soil at least 6 inches without much effort).

• Unless steps are taken to minimize weeds, they’ll be a major issue, even in areas that appear to be weed-free. More about that later.

After a site has been selected, determine the best time to sow seed based on the region of the state. In general, sow in:

• mid-September to mid-October in North Florida
• mid-October through December in Central Florida
• November through January in South Florida

When sowing seeds, keep in mind that the goal is to have seeds germinate as fast as possible before weeds move in. Seeds need three things to germinate—water, appropriate soil temperature and oxygen. The sowing dates mentioned above are based on water (that is, rain) and soil temperature. And seeds of many native wildflowers and grasses also need light. So it is important that sown seeds remain near the soil surface, and generally not more than 1/4-inch deep. Even for seeds that do not require light, small seeds that are much deeper than 3/8-inches may germinate but never emerge, because seedlings do not have the food reserves to grow to the surface. Therefore, the soil seed bed needs to be firm enough to ensure that seeds do not become buried too deeply.

For more details about establishing a wildflower planting, download “Establishing a Small Planting of Native Wildflowers from Seed.”

A few words on weeds...

Weeds may be a major issue affecting the success of the planting, even in seemingly weed-free sites. Within the top few inches of soil, hundreds to thousands of weed seeds may be lurking, waiting to germinate when they “sense” disturbance. The act of converting a site from turfgrass to wildflowers is a type of disturbance, even if the soil is not physically disturbed. Weeds are Mother Nature’s colonizers of disturbed sites — that’s their ecological function. The more wildflowers that emerge, the less weeds will emerge. The best way to eliminate the soil weed seed bank is by soil solarization. However, this should be done in the summer. To soil solarize a site, please see the article “Let the sun shine in to eliminate weed problems before you plant,” which is in the Foundation’s Summer 2013 newsletter; click here to view it.

Wildflower resolutions are blooming all over!

by Eleanor Dietrich

The Florida Panhandle is getting greener as yet another county, Holmes, recently passed a wildflower resolution and is now on its way to implementing it with wildflower areas. The Florida Wildflower Foundation has been actively involved in all of these efforts by providing liaison support between Panhandle counties and FDOT.

Holmes County is the latest county to pass a wildflower resolution, which the county commission approved unanimously in August. This effort was initiated by the Bonifay Garden Club. Members of the garden club are already making plans to make downtown Bonifay beautiful with lots of wildflowers.

Congratulations to the wildflower enthusiasts for not only making these resolutions happen, but for moving forward to implement them with roadside wildflowers in their areas.

(Farewell, continued from page 1)

coughs; and medical doctors once prescribed it to treat digestive disorders.

Narrowleaf sunflower (Helianthus angustifolius) may be the queen of fall wildflowers. The flowers are large, the plants are tall, and colonies of them may fill the damp roadside areas. Plants are available at nurseries that sell native plants, and if you want to include them in your garden, give them plenty of room to spread. This flower can be identified by the combination of the dark center and the very narrow, stiff leaves down the flower stalk. It is a composite; what look like yellow petals are actually individual ray flowers, and the center is also composed of individual tubular disk flowers.

2014 “Land of Flowers” Photo Contest Winners

Winners of the Florida Wildflower Foundation’s first “Land of Flowers” photo contest were announced at the annual banquet in September. The contest was open only to amateurs, and entries were accepted in two categories: up close and personal shots of native Florida wildflowers, and natural landscapes containing native Florida wildflower and plant communities.

The first place close-up winner was Lisa Ludlum for her photo of Southern fleabane (Erigeron quercifolius), taken in her backyard along a freshwater lake in Palm City (top right). The first place landscape winner was Julie Tew for her photo of narrowleaf sunflowers (Helianthus angustifolius) lining a foggy road through the Apalachicola National Forest in Liberty County (bottom right).

To view the second- and third-place winners, visit www.flickr.com/photos/flawildflowersets/ and click on the 2014 Photo Contest album.

Narrowleaf sunflower is quite common and you will see them in a variety of places. The Panhandle’s Apalachicola National Forest is a wonderful location to see them in abundance. Fall is a perfect time to enjoy a day trip there along State Road 65. You can stop and enjoy shopping and lunch along the way. To help plan your trip, see www.flawildflowertrips.org. Visit www.flickr.com/photos/wildflowersflorida/sets and select the “Fall on SR 65” album to see more fall wildflowers.
Add a hand lens to your field backpack by Claudia Larsen

Artists view wildflowers as fields of color, variations of shape and form that may be depicted through the artist’s creative vision. Sweeps of yellow may suggest sunflowers, goldenrod or coreopsis to the viewer. But scientists view wildflowers with exacting parameters and measurements that record everything crucial to each flower’s necessity for competitive growth and reproduction.

If you have ever walked a trail with a botanist to discover and name each flower you pass, you realize the importance of plant morphology in the taxonomic routine of plant identification. Not only do the “small parts” of each flower and leaf provide clues to each plant’s identity and separate members of the same genus and family, they also show the evolutionary trends that forced that species to specially adapt for survival.

What do I mean by that?
To tell the difference between meadow beauties (Rhexia spp.), you must observe much more than the color of the flowers, which occur as yellow, pink, purple or white. Are flower anthers curved or straight? Are the bracts below the flowers leaf-like (foliacious) or hairy (with trichomes)? How about those seeds — are they wedge-shaped or coiled like a snail (cochlate)?

You will never look at a flower the same way again after you have looked at it through a magnifying hand lens! OK, most of us may not do the “small parts” of each flower and leaf, but you can bring the increase to your eye and bring the flower up to your face to view it. To avoid losing your magnifier, wear it around your neck on a lanyard for safekeeping. You’ll use it more often if you don’t have to dig it out of the bottom of a bag.

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So what do you need?
Magnifying loupes are often used by jewelers to inspect and grade gems for clarity, color and cuts, but our gems are wildflowers with many interesting characteristics too small for viewing with our eyes.

Magnifiers may be single lens, a doublet with 2 lenses, or a triplet with 3 lenses stacked together. Price varies with quality, but even a $3 plastic lens can be a great tool for kids of all ages.

• Nikon and Coddington both offer a single lens with a special groove around the circumference that gives a corrective effect for optical aberrations.

• Coddington also offers a doublet lens.

• Triples are true 3-lens magnifiers that are placed together in a way that corrects distortion and color problems. Black framing around the lens helps eliminate reflections that alter the colors you are viewing. Bausch and Lomb offers the Belomo Triplet ($35-$40) and Hastings triplet ($50-$75). There are many lower priced options as well.

Hand lenses are available online, at natural history museums, in college bookstores and in some office supply stores.

Magnification tips:
Loupes are labeled with a number, followed by the symbol “X,” which means “times.” For example, a 2X loupe makes an object appear two times its actual size, and a 5X loupe shows you a five-time increase. Lenses are available to 30X, but most consider 10X acceptable since the stronger sizes have smaller fields of view.

You may hear new terms when you shop for a loupe. Three important terms are:
• Focal length: The focal length is the distance that you can hold the loupe from an object in order to get the best focus and magnification. As magnification powers increase, focal length decreases.

• Field of view: This refers to the size of the area you can see through the lens. The diameter of the lens affects the field of view, but so does magnification power. The higher the power, the smaller the field of view.

• Depth of field: This characteristic tells you how far you can move the loupe towards or away from an item and still have the item in focus. The higher the power, the shorter the depth of field.

Tips on use in the field:
• When using your lens, hold the lens close to your eye and bring the flower up to your face to view it.

• To avoid losing your magnifier, wear it around your neck on a lanyard for safekeeping. You’ll use it more often if you don’t have to dig it out of the bottom of a bag.

Enjoy your new close-up world of petals, stamens, pistils and more!