



Biosphere Buzz

Volume 6, Number 1

Summer Edition

August 2008



Do you Need to Change Your Landscape?

After years of preaching about drought-tolerant landscaping and landscaping for habitat, we are finally seeing more interest with homeowners. Much of the interest is not stimulated by ecological concerns as it is by increased water bills, but hey, we will take it as a positive trend anyway. It simply makes no sense to use excessive water, pay high fees and further pollute the earth with pesticides just to have a beautiful lawn!

Our basic recommendations have centered on reducing the lawn areas and installing mulched perennial beds that are chosen for their drought tolerance and habitat value. This must be carefully done with some attention to design principles so that your property doesn't end up looking like an abandoned house. Great care must also be taken to guarantee the plant palette you choose will not include invasive species or one that requires pesticides or a great deal of maintenance. We can help you with this!

We are still working on an educational flyer on this topic that includes plant lists and hope to finish it soon (it is much more complicated than we thought)! We have scheduled a workshop for Saturday, October 4 and we will get the flyer on the website as soon as it is completed.

One of our newest projects at Biosphere is the construction of a large pergola (that's a big arbor) we can use for better organized meetings. We covered the sides with cheap plastic lattices so it looks like a wedding chapel but it will be a cooler place to meet than the greenhouse. We will just cover it with vines.....

Another project I hope to finish this fall is an enlarged garden where we can offer vegetables with no pesticides. I would be a farmer if I could afford it!

With a faltering economy we don't know what the future of Biosphere will be. We are far off the beaten track and we can't afford a lot of advertising so retailing is difficult. We have to rely primarily on word-of-mouth promotion so we encourage you to tell friends and neighbors about us. We will do our part in trying to keep costs down and keep a varied inventory to satisfy everyone. We have made many new friends since we opened to the public and have greatly appreciated your comments and advice.

Come see us soon!

Jim Thomas

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Oakland Nature Preserve Fundraiser

Oakland Heritage Day

As you may already know, our pet volunteer project is the Oakland Nature Preserve located in the Town of Oakland on the southwest shore of Lake Apopka. The long-time goal of completing our environmental education center is now becoming a reality but we are still short of much needed funds.

One of our major fundraisers is the Oakland Heritage, Arts and Craft Festival, which is scheduled for Saturday, October 25. This year the festival promises to be bigger and better than ever so get the date

on your calendar!

We plan to have a variety of plants donated by local nurseries for sale at a good price and all the proceeds will go to the Preserve.

Plans for all the wonderful events that have helped make the festival a success in the past are taking shape promising a great day for family fun.

If you are interested in becoming a vendor, or participating in some of the events, you can visit our website for more information at :

www.oaklandnaturepreserve.org.

Biosphere Consulting, Inc., 14908 Tilden Road, Winter Garden, Florida 34787

407-656-8277, BiosphereNursery.com

Nursery open to the public, Monday - Saturday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

We Have a Wildflower Dilemma

Our attempts to market wildflowers for the typical gardener have been very frustrating. We have tried to encourage customers to buy them in the seedling stage, plant them as bedding plants and get a long blooming period with drought-tolerant, colorful species. Many people insist on a blooming – size plant and won't buy them until they come in bloom, which means they are more difficult to transplant and the blooming period doesn't last as long. Let's try this again!

We will grow wildflowers in 4" pots and show you pictures of the flowers so you can get more for your money and enjoy a longer blooming period!

Turn Your Yard Into a Home!

A few months ago a couple of our customers came into Biosphere (all the way from Largo) to purchase some plants and decided to take a second owl box home. They reported that soon after getting it up and stable a family of owls moved in. Two boxes, two families. We are happy and proud to report their joy and amazement on how much Bioscaping has improved their lives, not to mention the impact on the "natives". Heartfelt thanks were received on behalf of the family, the owls, butterflies, mammals and countless birds.....

It is well worth the efforts. Join in! We sell several different nestboxes for a variety of birds. Informational flyers and pricing is available on our website.

Going Out of Season Sale

The Mexican Sunflower (*Tithonia rotundifolia*) with it's large, vibrant orange blooms could not be a prettier plant. An outstanding nectar source, with plenty of blooms left this season offering a great seed source for next year. We can't bear watching them go down without giving you an opportunity to introduce this species into your garden. So, we are putting the **1-gallon size on sale for \$1.00** while supplies last. I will try to get a picture for you up on the web! If you enjoy orange flowers you will love it!

How to get to Biosphere

Sorry, I ran out of room. If you have trouble and can't seem to find us - don't give up! Give us a call (407) 656 – 8277. We will be happy to help you find your way!

Make Your Winter Landscape More Colorful and Functional

Remember, many pollinators in Florida live throughout the winter so the well-planned Bioscape should include a variety of blooming species throughout the year. Many species thrive well, even prefer, the cooler months and they can be added at low cost!

Plant wildflower seeds or seedlings, corn flower (bachelor buttons), snapdragons and petunias to brighten the garden and provide nectar and pollen

Herbs like dill, fennel, rue, and parsley do much better in the cooler months and serve as the favorite host plants for the Black Swallowtail. The Cassias (Sennas) are fall- bloomers and serve as hosts for the Sulfur Butterflies.

Climbing Aster and Elliott's Aster are native fall-blooming species that are hardy and beautiful. Rough or narrowleaf sunflowers bloom late in Fall and are spectacular.

Don't forget the Tree Sunflower if you have the space - - it is a hardy, fast growing species that may have hundreds of yellow flowers that are 4-5 inches in diameter.

The African Blue Basil is one of our favorites and will continue to bloom through the Fall and into Winter. Pink Cosmos will be ready to plant by September and it is well worth the effort.

In this region, the winter garden can be equal or even more spectacular than spring or summer as well as a beneficial habitat.

Don't Forget Our TLC Corner

We offer free plants in our TLC Corner, inside the white picket fence up front. These are plants that are not diseased but are too ugly to sell. Nobody should be put in the dumpster just because they are ugly.....

Check Out Our New Lawn Mower

We recently purchased a battery-operated lawnmower to test it out. So far, we are very impressed. It runs smoothly and quietly and no gasoline or emissions! Stop by and try it. We will be happy to provide information about purchasing one.

We Can't Grow Everything!

We admittedly try to grow too many species but we also know that the key to a good **BIOSCAPE** is to provide as much diversity as possible. We are constantly looking for different species to test to see if they provide better habitat value and meet all our other criteria: non invasive, drought tolerant and do not require pesticides. We are also constantly evaluating our existing stock to see if we want to continue to produce certain species. We have decided to delete a number of species from our plant stock and we will offer them at greatly reduced prices. In many cases more than 50%. The sale includes the following:

Gingers (several species), Non-native Palms
Holly Ferns, Bowtie Vines, Grasses, Tibochina, Pink Crinims, Salvias, Dianthus, Sand Pine, Trumpet Creeper, Sky Vine and much more.

All of these plants are healthy and have a place in the garden but we must make room for more species.

For a complete list and sale costs visit our website: www.biosphernursery.com

Plant a Tree!

We are still concerned about the number of people who do not plant trees because of potential storm damage. Trees are so essential for our well-being, especially now when we may be facing global warming and our carbon footprints are huge. (We should do a workshop on the carbon cycle so people are really aware of the roles of carbon in our lives).

As a tree grows, every molecule of added wood, bark and leaves is built on a carbon framework. This removes huge amounts of carbon from the air and sequesters it in a form that is not available to make carbon dioxide (the real culprit). When the sun shines on a leaf, photosynthesis removes lots of carbon dioxide from the air and emits oxygen. The removed carbon is used to make sugar, food for the plant, and much of it goes towards growth. A single tree may have acres of leaf surface to do this.

So, PLANT TREES! Help mitigate for your own carbon footprint.

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Mark Your Calendars — Upcoming Events

Saturday, September 6 10:00 A.M.

Butterfly Forum at Biosphere This is a great way to learn more about butterfly gardening (more on pg 4).

Saturday, October 4 10:00 A.M.

How to Convert a Standard Landscape into a Bioscape This workshop will be held at Biosphere. (more on pg 4).

Saturday, October 25

Oakland Heritage, Arts and Crafts Festival This show is close to our hearts. All the proceeds from this event go to benefit the Oakland Nature Preserve. Lots of small town charm spills over into hayrides, boat rides on Lake Apopka, good food and down home music, plus a silent auction. Come and enjoy an afternoon under the oaks in the Town of Oakland. This one-day event goes from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM. For more information call (407) 905-0054 or visit

www.oaklandnaturepreserve.org.

Saturday, November 1 and Sunday, November 2

14th Annual Mount Dora Plant and Garden Fair This show always strives to be a complete all-garden show offering all kinds of fun things to plant and some great yard 'art' projects. This will be their 14th annual show and it has just gotten better with every year. The show runs from 9:00AM until 5:00 PM both days. For more information call (352) 357-4116.

Saturday April 18th and Sunday April 19th, 2009

8th Annual Spring Fever in the Garden presented by Bloom'N Grow Garden Society and co-sponsored by the City of Winter Garden This event just gets bigger and better every year. Now a two day event in Historic downtown Winter Garden. Scheduled from 9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. on Saturday and 11:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M. on Sunday. For more information visit: www.springfeveringarden.com.

Don't forget your wagon or cart !

Miss a past newsletter or one of our educational flyers? Considering restoration of your lakefront or pond? Wish you had an updated list of all the plants we sell? All this information and more is available on our website at www.biospherenursery.com

Fall Events at Biosphere

Let's Plan Some Educational Workshops!

We have completed building a vine pergola to be used as a cool place for meetings and we are ready to organize some workshops and seminars to enable everyone to share their ideas, successes, frustrations and projects. We have scheduled our first two for Saturday mornings and, hopefully, they will be educational and fun. Come share what you know and ask lots of questions. You might want to bring a folding chair in case we get a big turnout.

Saturday, September 6 - 10:00 A.M. Butterfly Forum

Learn to improve your butterfly garden and hear about others. Bring plants or caterpillars to trade and maybe some snacks. This should be fun and educational!

Saturday, October 4 - 10:00 A.M. Workshop - How to Convert a

Standard Landscape to a Bioscape Learn how to get rid of a landscape or lawn that is boring or water-guzzling and install low-maintenance, drought—tolerant, habitat plants. Bring plants to trade and any ideas or questions you may have (snacks are always welcome too)!

If we find a source of plastic rain barrels we will schedule a rain-barrel workshop soon and get the information on our website. In the meantime, let us know topics you would like to have covered and we will schedule them.

A New Species We Really Like!

We have been testing a new Australian species of a grass-like rush that has a great deal of potential as a beautiful plant that is tougher than anything we have seen. It is drought tolerant but will live in damp soil, full or partial sun with a wide pH range. It is called Basket Grass, Spiny Headed Mat Rush or *Lomandra*. The scientific name is *Lomandra longifolia* and it grows in a clump or tussock and is somewhat cold tolerant from zones, 8-11. The variety we have selected is called 'Breeze'. It is beautiful as a groundcover or border, a specimen plant in a landscape or beautiful in a pot. Come in a check it out!

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