



# Biosphere Buzz

Volume 4, Number 1

Winter Edition

February 2006



## *What is the Future of Biosphere?*

Biosphere Consulting, Inc. was first incorporated by me in 1973, one of the first environmental consulting firms in Central Florida. The prime goal was to decrease the impact of development as the region grew rapidly. Determining there was a need to provide ecologic restoration, the nursery was started in 1991, providing the means to actually install native plant species in reforestation and restoration projects to help mitigate for development impacts and to provide lakefront restoration where exotic species had come to dominate. This is still our major business at Biosphere.

In the last few years we have become more and more interested in residential landscaping that is environmentally sound and , in particular, provided habitat for the species that will co-habit with people. We have tested many species of landscape plants and coined the word "Bioscape" to describe this landscape concept. While we continue to recommend and prefer native plant species, we have broadened the appeal of bioscaping by using tested exotics. If they provide adequate habitat value, are not invasive and do not require pesticides to survive, we grow them. We have seen considerable interest developed in this concept, to the point where we now plan to expand this portion of our business and open to the public on a full time basis.

**SO, WAIT UNTIL YOU SEE OUR NEW GREENHOUSE!** We designed it to show off our interests. One of my hobbies is aviculture. I am interested in the captive breeding of doves that are declining in their native countries, so I built three aviaries to house my collection in the greenhouse. We have also included a predator-proof screened caterpillar room to protect butterfly larvae. We plan to build a cistern to catch and recycle rainwater from the roof and a large tank to raise fish to help fertilize our new ponds for growing aquatic plants.

And, wait until you see my choice of statuary for the entrance. (There is a story to it — I have been under tremendous pressure to sell the farm for development. When brokers or developers became too aggressive, I notified them I had plans to do a pig farm on this site. My choices are appropriate — it is real art!)

We may not make a lot of money with this new expensive venture, but we are going to have a lot of fun! Join us for an open house on Saturday, February 25 to give us your opinion.

*Jim Thomas*

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***Let us know if there is a topic you would like us to cover.***

### **Got a Question?**

E-mail us at our new address:  
**biosphere@biospherenursery.com**  
You can also check out our website at **biospherenursery.com** There is a lot of information on lakefront restoration, butterfly gardening, plant availability and upcoming shows and events.

Take a look!

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

**407-656-8277, BiosphereNursery.com**

**Nursery open to the public, Saturdays, 9 a.m.—3 p.m., or by appointment.**

## Early Spring - Time to...

**PLANT:** Wildflowers for bedding plants, False heather for pollinators, gaura, stokes aster, yarrow and all butterfly larval and nectar plants.

**FERTILIZE:** Everything in your garden using our new total organic fertilizer. Fertilize lightly this time of year, (see article below).

**PRUNE:** Any cold damaged or "leggy" plants.

**INSTALL:** Bird boxes for cavity nesting species. (Check our list of recommended ones for this area in the nestbox article on page 4).

**KILL:** The rest of your St. Augustine lawns.....

### ***What About Fertilizer***

We have found what we consider the perfect fertilizer. We wanted to be able to offer something totally organic that will not damage surface waters, that can be used in small amounts and last a long time. We will test the market to see if we can continue to make it available. It is low in phosphorus (the ingredient that damages our lakes and ponds) and none of it comes from manures, so it can be used on vegetable crops. It will sell for \$24.50 for a 50 pound bag but it is really worth it.

Give us your opinions.

### **How to get to Biosphere**

From Orlando, go west on Colonial Drive (HWY. 50) to Winter Garden. Turn south on Hwy. 535 and go 3 miles. Look for Tilden Rd. on the right (west side). Turn right heading west on Tilden Rd., go about 1 mile. Look for the nursery on the left. Or you can go west on the East-West Expressway (408) to the end where it joins the Florida Turnpike, take the first exit off (429 to Apopka) then exit immediately to 420 South. Exit at Winter Garden—Vineland Road (CR 535), take a left at the stoplight, to Tilden Road, turn right on Tilden, go 1 mile to the nursery on the left. If you are north of us take the 429 from Apopka heading South, you will exit on C.R. 535 (Winter Garden—Vineland Road), take a left to Tilden and turn right on Tilden.

## ***Let's Talk Mulch***

The value of a well-mulched shrub bed is well documented. The decreased need for water and the prevention of weeds makes it well worth the effort. We are frequently asked for recommendations for mulch types and our choice is pine straw.

Pine straw is relatively inexpensive, looks natural and lasts a long-time. It is also a sustainable crop which is now keeping some pine forests intact because a new crop can be raked each year. Please, by no means should you buy cypress mulch which results in the destruction of many trees. We are concerned about the safety of rubber mulch and really dislike the brightly colored dyed mulches which distract from the plants.

The problem in the past with the pine straw has been availability. So, we now plan to carry bales at a cost of \$5.00/bale. One bale will cover about 30 - 40 square feet. Call us if you have questions.

### ***Now, Let's Talk Trees***

We have been horrified by the number of people who tell us they never plan to plant another tree. The two years of storms have made many people really concerned about the trees they already have in their yards.

Trees are extremely valuable to our quality of life and to decrease their numbers would be criminal. If you don't trust oaks and other large trees, look for smaller ones, especially those that held up well in the storms: cypress magnolias, winged elms, sycamores, and others. There is still time to plant most species of trees while they are still dormant, before spring budding begins. Keep your larger trees trimmed and thinned so they don't offer wind resistance. Check out our tree chart on our website or pick up a flyer at the nursery.

### ***Shade Tolerant Bioscape Plants***

In our new greenhouse we have a section dedicated to those plants which thrive in shady areas of the garden and have a habitat value. We have a new flyer dedicated to shade tolerant plants that is categorized by flower color. Check it out.

### ***A Word About Pricing***

We will continue to do our best to keep plant prices at wholesale levels because we want to compete with the chain stores who buy in large quantities. We would like to see bioscape-type plants used more and more in yards throughout Central Florida neighborhoods and communities. One of the problems, however, is that many native species are very difficult to propagate in the nursery and some take a long time before they can be sold. These plants have not been bred for generations to show uniform germination of seeds as most horticultural species have been. Some, like the palmetto, take two years to be big enough to sell, so they must be weeded, watered and fertilized until they are sold. This creates the need to raise prices to the point where they are higher than species that are produced in nursery "plant factories". We will do the best we can to be competitive. We appreciate your support and understanding.

#### **Biosphere Consulting, Inc.**

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**Biosphere Buzz** is published by Biosphere Consulting, Inc., and is sent free to interested parties.

### **Mark Your Calendars— 2006 Shows**

#### **Saturday, March 25 and Sunday, March 26**

***Harry P. Leu Gardens' Annual Plant Sale*** will be held both days from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the Harry P. Leu Gardens in Orlando. Once again, this is a perfect opportunity to visit the Gardens' (no admission fee). You can see all the beautiful foliage in bloom and have an opportunity to buy the plants you like to create your own garden at home. For more information call John or Tracy at (407) 246-3620.

#### **Saturday, April 8**

***"Spring Fever in the Garden"*** sponsored by Bloom N' Grow Garden Society. The name is perfect -- the weather will have us all itching to get out into the garden before beautiful spring days come to an end! This show has become very popular and attracts lots of great vendors offering a large variety of gardening fun. The festival will be held from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM in historic downtown Winter Garden. For more information call us at Biosphere (407) 656-8277.

#### **Saturday April 29 and Sunday, April 30**

***The 45th Annual Apopka Art and Foliage Festival*** sponsored by the Apopka Woman's Club, will be open from 9:00AM until 5:00 PM on both days. This is always a good show with a lot of people coming out to enjoy the day. Lots of plant and art vendors with great prices! They even have a plant doctor on hand to answer questions and offer advice. For more information call (407) 889-2628.

#### **Saturday, May 13**

#### ***Seminole Springs Antique Rose and Herb Farm***

This one day show is the last outing for us before fall and we are always pleased to see so many familiar faces. Besides vendors this show can be quite a learning experience. Tracy offers free presentations throughout the day with great speakers on gardening, ponds and butterflies. This one-day event goes from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM. For more information call (352) 357-2643

#### **Saturday, October 28**

***Oakland Heritage Festival*** This is a relatively new show but one that 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. Come and enjoy an afternoon under the oaks. This one-day event goes from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM. For more information call (407) 905-0054.

#### **Saturday, November 4 and Sunday, November 5**

***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 place in your yard. This will be their 12th 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.

## GRAND OPENING INVITATION!

You are cordially invited to join us for an open house on Saturday, February 25 to kick off the 2006 gardening season and our new greenhouse.

We have expanded our plant species and our native trees and shrubs are looking better than ever. We know this is going to be a great butterfly year. Start planning your spring garden now!

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### BUTTERFLY LARVAL PLANTS

A whole section of our new greenhouse has been devoted to larval plants. The more of these included in your garden, the more butterflies you will have. One of the earliest butterflies we normally see in spring is the beautiful Eastern Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*) which is attracted to dill, fennel, and parsley and these plants will be on sale.

### Time For Bird Nestboxes

Our research has shown that many bird populations are becoming seriously limited due to the lack of nest cavities. Old dead trees that were once the nesting habitat for many different species are now being cut down as fields are cleared for development.

**Many species will adapt and co-exist, even in an urban habitat, if the landscape includes the basics they require: food, cover, water and nesting space. A few simple nesting boxes, of the right specifications, will replace cavities in dead trees and make it possible for many species to breed.**

Our nest boxes are not fancy birdhouses - - they are functional nestboxes, built to the measurements recommended by wildlife biologists for individual species. They are made of durable untreated woods and the front panel of each box is attached with wood screws so they can be opened easily for cleaning.

We also offer a great bird feeder that could not get any simpler. It's easy design allows for drainage and the open platform lets for birds to feed more secure because they can see predators.

The following boxes are recommended for this area.

### Recommended Nestboxes for Central Florida

**Combo** – This nestbox is designed for three different species, all common in urban and suburban areas: Carolina Wren, Downy Woodpecker, and Tufted Titmouse. **\$ 7.95**

**Bluebird** – This beautiful bird is found in open woodlands and fields. It nests in hollow trees, fence posts and nestboxes. The species has experienced serious decline. **\$ 8.95**

**Crested Flycatcher** – This beneficial insect-eating bird is fairly common in urban and suburban areas where tree canopies are present. It is seldom seen because it feeds in the tops of the trees but its loud whistling call may be heard frequently. Their diet consists almost entirely of insects. **\$9.95**

**Flicker** – This large woodpecker is found throughout the North American continent. The “yellow shafted” form is found in the east and far north while the “red shafted” is found in the west. The “yellow shafted” male has a black “moustache” which the female lacks. **\$ 19.95**

**Screech Owl** – This small owl is found where mature trees are plentiful. They feed on insects and small rodents. They usually have broods of four to five young, once a year. **\$ 14.95**

**Wood Duck** – This beautiful duck is fairly common even in urban and suburban lakes. The males are very colorful with a sleek crest. One of the few ways they differ from most ducks is the ability to perch in trees. One of the most interesting facts is the ability of the young to leave the box the day they hatch. It is not uncommon to see the whole brood jump 30 to 40 feet to the ground with no apparent damage. **\$ 24.95**

**Platform Feeder** – World’s simplest feeder. Great for hanging from trees or securing to the top of fence posts. **\$ 9.95**

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(30% post-consumer waste)  
With environmentally friendly soy ink

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