



Biosphere Buzz

Volume 2, Number 1 Spring Edition
March, April, May 2003



Spring Has Sprung!

What a rejuvenating time this is! Everything seems to be in the process of growing fast. The late cold weather and wet spring have stimulated everything and natural areas as well as gardens are showing a real growth spurt.

One thing is bothering me though. Our butterflies are not appearing as early as they have in the past. Are you experiencing the same? We need to keep track and encourage as many people as possible to landscape with plants that attract and sustain all pollinator insects. We have a new butterfly list and urge you to pass it on to anyone you know who might be interested. If everyone landscaped with pollinator-friendly plants we could make a real difference in populations.

You will also note we have expanded our list of plants for pollinators. We are constantly on the lookout for new species that will work well.

SPREAD THE WORD!

Jim Thomas

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Get to Work !

This is the busiest time of year in the garden. Lots of things need to be planted NOW, weeds are growing fast, everything needs some grooming and fertilizing But don't get discouraged — the weather is beautiful, the days are longer and the mornings are still cool and peaceful. So, enjoy your time in the garden. We have been very busy ourselves and have not had the time to do a spring newsletter so we are a little late in encouraging you to get busy. A good place to start is a visit to Biosphere to see some of our new plants. Or, plan to visit us at one of the spring shows (information in this newsletter or at BiosphereNursery.com).

The butterflies and birds will love you for it.....

Need A Little Help ?

The new schedule is out for the Orange County Extension Gardening Programs and there is something for everyone:

May 13 & 15

Orchids for Beginners—Learn how to buy, grow and maintain these beauties.

June 18 & 25, July 2

Plant Propagation — Learn the techniques of starting seeds, creating cuttings, grafting citrus and more.

July 28 thru August 1

Junior Master Gardener Program
Get the kids involved! This fun program provides a hands-on approach to learning horticulture, environmental sciences, leadership, and life skills.

For registration information on these and other opportunities call (407) 836-7570.

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.

Spring - Time to...

PLANT: For **Pollinators:** all beneficial summer annuals (see recommendations on the butterfly list insert), bush daisy, cleome, coreopsis, cosmos (seeds and plants), wildflower plants (too late for most seeds), seaside goldenrods, all salvias, zinnias, flowering trees (bottlebush, chaste tree, flowering guava, redbud, haw, chickasaw or flatwood plum), buddleia, crocosmia, candy corn, passion-vines, fennel or parsley, Mexican tarragon, rain lily, firespike, pipevines, stokesias and pentas.

For Humans: beans, chayote, cucumbers, eggplant, jicama, okra, peppers, peas, squash, and a few varieties of heat tolerant tomatoes (but not too many — it's getting too late for them).

PRUNE: all freeze damaged plant parts if you haven't already done it, any plants that do not have spring flowers: citrus, crape myrtles, croton, fig, hibiscus, maple, oaks, oleander, plumbago, poinsetta (severe pruning, 12 to 15 inches high) sweetgums, sycamores, thryallis, and tibouchina or "leggy" perennials. Do Not Prune: azalea (unless they have already bloomed), bougainvillea, chaste tree, coral honeysuckle, loropetalum, and magnolias.

FERTILIZE: if you haven't already done so, give everything a light application. Remember, if you are adjacent to a water body, do not apply fertilizer to slopes where it may wash into the water. Use palm fertilizer on all palms and azalea fertilizer on all acid-loving plants.

TREE SALE EXTENDED

In our last newsletter we included an announcement of our annual tree sale. We do this when we get tired of re-potting trees each winter. We have decided to extend the sale until May 31 so make your decisions if you need trees! The last newsletter also included a chart which gave basic information about the species we recommend. If you have misplaced your chart or need additional information just give us a call and we'll be happy to help you make the right choice for your yard. Also, when considering a gift for someone special in your life consider planting a tree for them. It is truly a unique gift that keeps on giving.

Spring Shows -

Mark Your Calendars

Saturday April 26 and Sunday, April 27

The Apopka Art and Foliage Festival sponsored by the Apopka Woman's Club will be open from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM on Saturday and Sunday. This is the 42nd annual festival and proceeds from the sales enable the Apopka Women's Club to continue to support their dedication to community improvements. In the foliage area, a "Plant Doctor" booth will be manned by local specialists to answer questions for shoppers.

Additional Information call (407) 886-6970.

Visit Our Booth!

Saturday May 17

Butterfly and Perennial Festival sponsored by The Seminole Springs Antique Rose & Herb Farm will open from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM. Owner Traci has quite a schedule planned for this year:

10:30 Wae Nelson, Florida Gardening Magazine, will give a talk on "*How to Grow in Florida*". If you haven't heard Wae speak you are in for a treat — his witty presentation makes learning fun.

12:00 Leslie Wilbur, Florida Division of Plant Industry will offer advice on "*Butterflies and the Florida Garden*". A good opportunity to learn what to grow where.

1:00 Scott Sater, Ponds of Reflection, dives into water gardening with his lecture "*Make a Splash in Your Garden*", an interesting topic that has become very popular.

2:00 Our own **Jim Thomas**, Biosphere Consulting, teaches "*Bioscaping*" a term Jim coined for landscaping to: enhance habitat, conserve water, decrease maintenance, and limit the use of pesticides.

Additional information call (352) 357-2643 or log on rosesandherbs.com.

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

Featured Plants of the Month

For the Native Landscape: Virginia Sweetspire or Virginia Willow (*Itea virginica*) This attractive native shrub grows as a transitional species in the wild but adjusts well to typical landscape treatment. It's spikes of white flowers are very attractive and the fall colors shown by the leaves are also striking. We now have two cultivars which are very attractive. (Do you know what a cultivar is)?

For the Butterflies: Lion's Ear

(*Leonotis species*)

In the past we have sold a commonly-occurring annual Lion's Mane (*L. nepetifolia*), which shows a series of spiky globes along a central stalk with tubular orange flowers protruding from the spines. These are also used for dried flower arrangements and produce many seeds. We now have a perennial from Africa that is spectacular during a long flowering season, with balls of bright orange flowers along a central stalk. This species is often called Lions Head, (*Leonotis leonurus*). Butterflies and hummingbirds are attracted to the constantly opening new flowers.

For The Hummingbirds: Coral Honeysuckle

(*Lonicera sempervirens*)

No landscape is complete without at least one coral honeysuckle. This woody vine has attractive foliage, tubular red flowers followed by bright red fleshy berries. It is evergreen in Central Florida and even the tender new growth seems to be unaffected by frost. The flowers are irresistible to hummingbirds and butterflies and the berries are attractive to a wide variety of birds and small mammals. In our nursery it also seems to be a favorite nest site for mockingbirds and cardinals. It is native to north and central Florida and will tolerate poor soils and drought. It will also tolerate some shade but blooms best in full sun. Several cultivars are now available including a pure yellow form which we also grow.

Have You Missed A Newsletter?

Remember, all our past newsletters are available on our website:

BiosphereNursery.com

Those Spectacular Salvias

The sages, in the genus *Salvia*, make up a very large and valuable addition to the pollinator garden. The genus, in the mint family, includes about 900 species worldwide, including both annuals and perennials and a wide variety of sizes and colors. All are characterized by square stems, opposite simple leaves and 2-lipped flowers and some have very aromatic foliage.

Several native species are attractive enough to include in your garden, including Lyreleaf Sage (*Salvia lyrata*) which forms a groundcover and Azure Sage (*Salvia azurea*) which has a small brilliant blue flower.

We grow the following and recommend all of them for your butterfly garden:

Scarlet Sage (*Salvia coccinea*) - an annual that grows 12" - 24" with brilliant red flowers, blooms throughout the year and produces many seeds.

Coral Nymph Sage (*Salvia coccinea* 'Coral') - a cultivar or color phase of scarlet sage with pink flowers which also reseeds every year. (Once you get them you will never be without them).

Pineapple Sage (*Salvia elegans*) - a fast growing perennial with very fragrant pineapple scented foliage which can be used in fruit salads or iced tea. Red flowers are borne on the bushy plants beginning in mid summer and continuing throughout the fall. Very attractive to hummingbirds.

Autumn Sage (*Salvia greggii*) - a perennial shrub with small leaves and several color phases ranging from white to pink to red.

Purple Majesty (*Salvia guaranitica*) - a fairly cold-hardy perennial growing 3' - 5' high with very dark purple flowers. Native to Texas and the Southwest.

Black and Blue Salvia - a color phase of *Salvia guaranitica* that has spectacular royal blue flowers (on black calyxes).

Sapphire Salvia - another color phase of *Salvia guaranitica* with spikes of deep blue flowers.

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How to get to Biosphere

We Have A New Interchange!

Heading west on the East-West Expressway (408) go to the end to the Florida Turnpike, take the first exit (429) toward Apopka and C.R. 535, take an immediate left to C.R. 535, turn left at the signal and go about one mile to Tilden Road, make a right on Tilden and the nursery will be on your left. Biosphere is open every Saturday from 9:00 AM until 3:00 PM

If you try calling first and don't get an answer not to worry — on Saturday we play outside.....

Those Spectacular Salvias cont.

Salvia X Indigo Spires - a hybrid between *Salvia farinacea* (Mealy Blue Sage) and *Salvia guaranitica*, this is a must for any pollinator garden. It grows fast and blooms constantly with long spikes of deep blue flowers and gray green foliage. It responds well to pruning and all butterflies love it.

Mexican Sage (*Salvia leucantha*) - this beautiful plant features fuzzy grayish to silver leaves, growing 4' - 5' with many wooly purple bloom spikes. It is also drought tolerant.

Little - Leaf Sage (*Salvia microphylla*) - a dense shrub, this is a fast growing perennial with attractive foliage and red flowers. It can be trimmed to form low full borders.

Forsythia Sage (*Salvia madrensis*) - a very fast growing sage, up to 6', with large square stems and soft yellow flowers on 12-inch spires.

Belize Sage (*Salvia miniata*) - this sage has shiny green to bronze leaves and very dark red flowers.

Blue Salvia 'May Night' (*Salvia nemerosa*) - a low growing (18" - 24") sage with spikes of blue-violet flowers.

Sinaloa Sage (*Salvia sinaloensis*) - a striking low mounding plant with dark, purplish foliage and brilliant cobalt-blue flowers. This one is often called Black Sage and needs good drainage.

Bog Sage (*Salvia uliginosa*) - this perennial grows 3' - 5' tall with light green leaves, a funky smell and many small sky-blue flowers. It will grow anywhere but particularly likes wetter areas.

In addition to the above, several varieties of annual salvias (*Salvia splendens*) are very good in gardens but we do not grow them. The classic cooking sage, *Salvia officianalis*, can do well in any pollinator garden also and we plan to start growing this one soon.

You can actually combine your butterfly garden with your cooking herb garden, making borders of parsley and chives and combining Mexican Tarragon, sage, rosemary and others for color and for nectar flowers.

What Is A Cultivar?

A cultivar is a special horticultural variety of a plant species that is produced from a variation which is developed through continued propagation in a nursery. Nurserymen look at plant species to discover differences which may occur through mutation or "sports" and then selectively bred. There are no special rules for identifying them and nurserymen apply their own names, often unusual ones. Some examples: *Itea virginica* 'Henry's Garnet' or *Lonicera sempervirens* 'Sulfureus'.

Stokes Aster

One of the plants we recommend this month is Stokes Aster (*Stokesia laevis*), chosen as a Plant of the Year by the Florida Nursery Grower's Association. The wild type has large purple asters and we now have a white-flowered cultivar. It is native to central and north Florida and likes moisture.

We sell Stokes Aster at the nursery, which is opened to the public every Saturday from 9:00 AM until 3:00 PM, but if you are not able to make it to the nursery, we will be bringing them with us to the shows in one-gallon containers for \$4.95.

If you are interested in learning about other plants that were named Plant of the Year you can find them on the FNGA website at fnga.org.

Printed on Recycled Paper
(30% post-consumer waste)
With environmentally friendly soy ink

U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 13
Oakland, FL 34760

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