



Biosphere Buzz

Volume 1, Number 4

June-July, 2002



Our Environmental Future...

Urban man has lost touch with the earth. Even many of those who live in the suburbs with land around them do not usually spend any time appreciating the many pleasures that come from growing, encouraging, observing and understanding the complex relationships between living things. Worse yet, children are not being taught this appreciation and they are the environmental decision makers of the future. From kindergarten through college they receive most of their environmental education on the computer where complex reports can be produced with one click. At home in the yard there are landscapers who plant basic foliage and sterile green lawns, maintenance people who cut, trim and haul away —then spray toxic chemicals to prevent pests and fertilize to make everything grow.

One of the goals at Biosphere is to educate and encourage people to make their landscapes living, interesting areas. Everyone, from small children to the very elderly, can learn to appreciate a habitat that continues to change and improve as it is developed. For households with children this is particularly important. Recent studies have shown that most environmental sensitivity and conscience are developed by the sixth grade.

The future quality of life is at stake! Now get out there and do something to help make a difference!

Jim Thomas

Some Environmental Opportunities

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We spend considerable time each month volunteering for environmental causes. We have found this extremely rewarding and want to encourage everyone to do the same. One of our most interesting projects has been the Oakland Nature Preserve, a 103-acre site on the shore of Lake Apopka, a big project accomplished entirely by volunteers. We now need help in the restoration of the upland portions. These were citrus and planted pine plantations for many years and we are now restoring these areas to longleaf pine—turkey oak communities. We need a lot of help to plant the desirable species.

We have established a program

where individuals, families or groups can adopt a plot and help maintain it and eventually help re-plant it. It is simple work and after a brief training program it can be done on your own schedule. You will be learning a lot and providing a great service. Our next training program will be Saturday, July 13 at 9:00 A.M. at the ONP interpretive shelter on the West Orange Trail.

The other opportunity is for the purchase of a board on our 3,000 foot boardwalk project. We have already begun work but need more funds. One board costs \$ 25.00 and donors will be listed on a plaque. We include an insert to make it easy for you .

**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.

It's Too Hot

This is a summer newsletter. It is too hot and humid to do a lot in the garden but there are some things that are necessary. We will combine June and July suggestions here and hope for enough rain this summer to make our fall gardening easier! In the meantime, work outside early in the day, don't overheat and spend some time making your fall garden plans.

June and July. Time to...

Prune: Check for any dead or weak tree limbs and remove. Hurricane season begins this month. If you haven't pruned azaleas, gardenias, poinsettia or other flowering perennials, this should be done by the end of June. Dead-head declining annuals like zinnias or other similar plants.

Plant: Replace declining cool-season flowers with summer color. In the butterfly garden, use zinnia, vinca, yellow cosmos, Mexican sunflowers, partridge pea, gaillardia, rudbeckia, goldenrod and salvia.

In the **vegetable garden**, you will be limited to a few things: beans, okra, squash, cucumbers, eggplants and southern peas. This is also a good time to begin getting a garden space ready for fall gardening. Add compost, till and cover with plastic for eight weeks. The heat will cook all the little beasts!

Fertilizer: Shrubs and palms should be given a light application at this time. If you haven't already done so, start your compost pile now so you won't have to use much fertilizer.

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

Know Your Bugs

We are seeing an abundance of ladybugs (ladybird beetles) this month, attracted by aphids. We also have an abundance of aphids on our milkweed. Be sure you can recognize a ladybug larva before you spray or wash the aphids. (Remember, I told you not to use an insecticide but try a light detergent solution if you insist on spraying).

The increased production of Ladybugs may be worth tolerating the aphids.



LADYBIRD LARVA

This is the time of year where we are also seeing some of our most potent stinging caterpillars which you should also learn to recognize. (I can not draw them or photograph them so you will have to go get yourself a good Florida insect book). The four common ones we have in Central Florida are: the puss moth caterpillar, saddleback caterpillar, Io moth caterpillar and the hag moth caterpillar. These caterpillars have very painful stings so learn how to recognize them.

In case you get stung by one of these caterpillars, immediate first aid should be given. Suggested treatments include ice packs, a solution of household ammonia and bicarbonate of soda soaks. None of these are especially effective but should give you some pain relief. If any allergic reactions are noted or if symptoms are severe, seek medical treatment immediately.

Slugs are also active now and can cause considerable damage to tender plant parts. (Slugs aren't bugs, I know, but still cause problems). Be careful if you use toxic baits. Pets and children can get them before the slugs do. The best bait is a shallow pan of beer which attracts them and they drown. (If your time has come it may not be a bad way to go!)

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 is on the left.

Featured Plants of the Month

For the Native Landscape (and for the Birds):

Hackberry

The hackberry tree (*Celtis laevigata*), also called the sugarberry, will make a great addition to your landscape. It is a medium sized tree usually growing to heights of 40 to 60 feet. Hackberry makes an excellent shade source as well as providing food for three native butterflies, the Hackberry Butterfly, Snout Butterfly and the Tawny Emperor Butterfly. In the wild it is usually found in mesic to wet areas but is very adaptable to more dry conditions. The bark is a gray/brown color and makes small clusters of white flowers. The fruit is orange/yellow and leaves are oblong and lanceolate. The Hackberry has a range from Texas to Florida and up to southern Virginia.

For the Butterflies: Hercules Club

The Hercules Club (*Zanthoxylum clavaherculis*) serves as the host plant for the Giant Swallowtail Butterfly (*Heracles cressphontes*) and this may be the only reason you might choose to bring this tree into your garden. In the wild, the tree is frequently found in the edges of hammocks and along fencerows where the seeds were dropped by birds. The tree has stout spines along the trunk and on the leaves and grows to a height of 30' to 40'. It is deciduous but drops leaves late in the season, often at the same time new leaves are appearing. The leaves are dark green and shiny. In the wild the trees frequently grow in well drained soils and the foliage is sparse. When they receive some

fertilizer and water in the garden, however, they respond quickly with lush foliage and fairly rapid growth.

The flowers are borne in terminal clusters in early spring and the fruits are ovoid and dark-colored, each bearing a single shiny black seed. It ranges from Virginia through Florida and West through Texas.

One interesting feature of this plant is the occurrence of powerful analgesics in the leaves and bark which will actually numb the mouth like a shot of Novocain. Early settlers and Native Americans used it to treat toothaches and it is often called the Toothache Tree.

The Giant Swallowtail butterfly may also be attracted to citrus, wild lime, torchwood, wafer ash, box thorn (*Severina buxifolia*, a common hedge plant) and occasionally the herb rue, but seems to prefer Hercules Club. Some people grow the related Wild Lime (*Zanthoxylum fagara*) for the butterflies but we have found it freezes back most years. It is native to South Florida and the keys.

The butterfly larvae eat large amounts of the leaves, analgesics and all, and grow rapidly. The larvae look very much like bird droppings and also have large red fleshy osmentaria which protrude from behind the head if the caterpillar is disturbed and these exude a very foul odor. (unattractive as they are, they produce large beautiful, black and yellow adults)!

This tree is a must for your butterfly garden but place it out of traffic areas.

We are still hoping to hear from you! And, we know how it is living a busy life. If you haven't had the time to drop us a line please don't hesitate to do so now or just give us a call at (407) 656-8277. If you enjoy the newsletter we sure don't want to drop you from the list!!

Yes! Please continue to mail me your free newsletter!

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

E-Mail _____

Featured Plants of the Month

For the Lakefront: Bulrush

There are about 13 recognized species of *Scirpus* (*Scirpus* sp.) found in Florida. All are believed to be native. These perennial herbs form clumps, or colonies in fresh and brackish waters. The ones most used for lake and pond restoration are Giant Bulrush (*Scirpus californicus*) and Soft-stem (*Scirpus validus*). You can easily recognize them by their narrow green sheaths coming out of the water. These two species look very similar. Giant Bulrush can reach a height of 10 feet and the Soft-stem variety reaches heights of 8 feet. Bulrush provides excellent fish habitat and serve as a buffer by removing phosphorus and nitrogen from lawn runoff.

The Fight Against Invasives: Chinaberry

The chinaberry tree, (*Melia azedarach*), an Asian native, was introduced many years ago as an ornamental landscape tree and was widely used throughout the state. It is an attractive tree with large, dark-green compound leaves. It bears clumps of lavender flowers in early spring and masses of large berries in the summer. The berries are quite poisonous but relished by birds so are spread easily. It is listed as a Category I invasive plant by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council which means that it has been documented as a species that invades and disrupts native plant communities. (A lawsuit was filed in Kissimmee last year by the family of a man who ate berries from a tree outside a hotel and died within 12 hours. The only other recorded deaths are of children in India where the tree is common).

The best way to fight the tree is by using a basal bark treatment to kill the whole tree. This can be done safely by using a paint brush or small sprayer and applying the herbicide in a 6-inch band all the way around the tree. We recommend Garlon-4 in a basal bark oil using a mixture of 10% to 20% Garlon. If you need a commercially mixed ready-to-spray product, use Pathfinder II. We will be glad to help you if you decide to kill!



Chinaberry Fruit and Foliage

Pesticides

While we do not recommend using any pesticides unless absolutely necessary, we would caution that, if used, all instructions should be followed carefully. All pesticides are poisons. Read the entire label before opening the container. Do not apply to crops to be eaten unless the insecticide has been approved for this use. Store pesticides in their original labeled containers out of the reach of children, irresponsible people and pets, preferably under lock and key.

Try some safer approaches such as insecticidal soaps before you make the decision to go with the toxic stuff.

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

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

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