



Biosphere Buzz

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Are We Sustainability Yet?

Did each of you define and think about environmental sustainability like I asked you to do last month? Did you also ask what this has to do with gardening? Well, let me tell you that if we don't pay closer attention to the issues and facts governing sustainability, we won't be doing much gardening (or anything else that has to do with a quality life)! If we don't do more to educate more people about the serious condition of the environment and what we can do to help balance our utilization of resources, starting with everyday activities, we will see more rapid and continual decline. We must start with our children and include everyone, especially our world leaders (those few who are educable).

I have selected the definition of sustainability I like best, "The ability to meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the needs of future generations". Nature has given us a marvelous set of cycles that enable us to do just that, if we pay attention to the importance of each step and if we can find ways to address the problem of concentrating many people into one area. Just study the carbon cycle alone and you will understand the importance of sequestering carbon ions in plant growth and leaving the carbon already held in the fossil fuels instead of releasing it into the air as carbon dioxide.

I have collected all the reports from the recently held World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and I had planned to report on this for the newsletter, but the whole process made me so angry, I was unable to provide an objective report. That whole conference, with more than 100 "world leaders" attending, was unnerving and embarrassing. Can you believe, the U.S. fought a resolution to use new technologies for alternative energy sources to account for 15 percent of the world's energy production by 2010 and argued for ONE PERCENT? CAN YOU BELIEVE Don't let me get started!

I'm going out to chop the hell out of some invasive plants.

Jim Thomas

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Some Environmental Opportunities

Want to learn more about ecologic restoration and provide a valuable service? The Oakland Nature Preserve still needs groups or individuals to adopt-a-plot, to remove exotics and plant natives. We will train you on our Saturday workdays and then you can work alone if you choose. Upcoming work dates are; Saturday, November 9, December 7 and January 18.

Boardwalk at The Oakland Nature Preserve



Orange Audubon Society meets at Leu Gardens on the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 P.M. and has interesting programs and field trips. The Tarflower Chapter of the Native Plant Society meets at Leu on the first Tuesday at 7:00 P.M. and they also have interesting programs and field trips.

The College Park Growers and Arts Market will begin the new season this month and will be going every Thursday evening from 6-9:00 P.M. in Albert Park. The Market features locally grown organic produce and numerous other worthwhile items. Look for us there this year.

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.

Get Those Wildflowers Going!

Now is the time to get wildflowers started for maximum color this spring. We have fresh seeds available at the nursery or you can order by mail (see our insert from last months Buzz or download one from our website). We will have limited numbers of 4-inch pots available by mid-November.

October - Time to...

Prune: Continue to "dead-head" wilted or dried flowers from annuals to prolong the blooming period.

Plant: WILDFLOWERS (see last months Buzz for directions). The best season for planting is October—December. We have a good variety of fresh seeds at the nursery. See the list and order form from last months newsletter or you can find them on our website at biosphenenursery.com. It is also time to plant cool weather vegetables including broccoli, carrots, cabbage, celery, collards, endive, arugula, lettuce, mustards, onion, radish, strawberry and turnip. Cool season nectar plants for butterfly garden include ageratum, chrysanthemum, cornflower, dianthus, lobelia, snapdragon and sweet peas.

Fertilize: Florida's sands don't hold large quantities of nutrients and the most successful method of fertilization is one using small quantities at frequent intervals. Apply one to one and a half pounds of 6-6-6 at three to four week intervals during the growing season. You can still give citrus some fertilizer.

Fertilize palms using a palm special which should be 3:1:3 ratio with main trace elements, especially magnesium and manganese. Large established trees require 5-8 pounds of fertilizer per application per year. A good formula is calculate 1/2 pound of fertilizer per two feet of overall height.

Whiteflies and aphids may still be a problem. If you miss seeing them, you will probably note a black sooty mold which grows on the secretions from these pesky insects. Use an insecticide soap to control them.

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BiosphereNursery.com
407-656-8277

Jim Thomas, President
Zen Silva, Contributing Writer
Mona Phipps, Editor

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Bird Gardening

Few things add interest to your landscape like a variety of native bird species that provide color, song, movement and pleasure. They will also provide benefits to your landscape maintenance program as they eat weed seeds and insects. By planning your landscape correctly, you can provide the basic needs for birds as well as other native wildlife: food, cover, water and nesting areas.

In addition to the large number of native species which live and breed here in Florida, we also get the advantage of seeing many species of migratory neotropical species (birds that breed in the U.S. and Canada and winter in Latin America and the Caribbean). The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center has researched the on-going declines in the numbers of many neotropicals and determined that one of the major causes in the destruction of habitat, not only in their breeding areas but, probably more significantly, in the tropical wintering sites and along the migratory routes. This makes Florida particularly important since many species stop over here for re-fueling before beginning the long over-water flight to their wintering grounds. All this indicates the real value of the homeowner who landscapes to assist these beautiful animals instead of installing the usual sterile lawn and exotic shrubs.

Most birds require dense cover to hide from predators. For many, a hedge becomes a covered highway and some will not nest unless the shrubbery offers them complete protection. Some species prefer thorny plants like Cherokee rose, while others seem to like vines like coral honeysuckle or passionflower. Creating a brush pile in some obscure corner of the landscape also provides excellent cover for some species.

Water is a real necessity and may be the primary attractant. Use a shallow bird bath as well as a large, shallow saucer on the ground. Bird baths should not be slick porcelain or have steep sides, since the birds must feel secure if they step into the water. All water dishes should be cleaned routinely, using bleach to sterilize.

Feeders should be installed to help attract and support large numbers of birds, especially in the spring and fall as migrants pass through. The greater the variety of foods you have available the greater the variety of species you will attract. Menus may include standard bird-seed mixes as well as cracked corn, sunflower seeds, peanuts, raisins and sliced oranges. Many birds depend on insects, especially during breeding season, so great care must be taken with pesticides, herbicides or fungicides to prevent poisoning them. (Better yet, just grow things that don't need any of these things.)

Continued

“Bird Gardening” continued

Some species do not build open nests but depend instead on cavities in trees for nesting spaces. This may be a limiting factor for many populations since manicured landscapes rarely leave dead limbs or trees.

Artificial cavities should be made available but these must be built to specific dimensions for each species. Biosphere now produces a variety of these boxes for species common to the Central Florida area and these should be hung by January. Each box has instructions about heights and locations that are ideal. Providing these boxes may make it possible for viable populations to thrive, even in urban areas.

To increase your interest and knowledge get a good bird identification book and keep a record of each species you see. You will learn a great deal more and your landscape will become far more interesting to you.

There are many plant species that will provide the necessary supply of food year round in this area. These include:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| American Beautyberry | Hickory |
| Hackberry | Yellow Haw |
| Parsley Haw | Loquat |
| Fig | Dahoon Holly |
| Southern Red Cedar | Southern Magnolia |
| Chinese Mulberry | Blackgum |
| Red Bay | Swamp Bay |
| Chickasaw Plum | Flatwoods Plum |
| Oaks (all) | Elderberry |
| Pokeberry | Simpson Stopper |
| Eleagnus | Blueberry |
| Virginia Creeper | Partridge Pea |
| Rouge Plant | Walters Viburnum |
| Coral Honeysuckle | Shining Sumac |
| Wax Myrtle | Sunflowers |
| Persimmon | Sweetbay |
| Cherry Laurel | Black Cherry |
| Swamp Dogwood | Hercules Club |

Note: Some of these plants, such as pokeberry, elderberry and blackberry may be weedy in appearance but you can hide them in the other shrubbery.

Featured Plants of the Month

For the Native Landscape: Seaside Goldenrod

(Solidago sempervirens)

Of the 15 –20 species of goldenrods native to Florida, this is one of the most beautiful. It is an erect, stout perennial which stays low to the ground with thick basal leaves, until it sends up a 4-foot bloom spike in the fall. It is found primarily along coastal dunes and tidal marshes but may be found inland. We have found it on the shores of Lake Apopka. It is an excellent source of nectar and attracts many butterflies. It forms viable seeds and spreads in a clump from underground rhizomes.

For the Butterflies: Lemon Bacopa

(Bacopa caroliniana)

There are three native bacopas that occur in Florida. (*B.caroliniana*, *B. monnieri*, *B.innominita*) In the wild, bacopas are usually found in wetlands and moist areas where they form dense mats. Lemon Bacopa is the most attractive of the three with olive to bright green foliage and bright blue flowers. It is very aromatic when the leaves are crushed , giving off a pleasant lemon order. This plant is also the larval food for the White Peacock Butterfly. This butterfly is white with dark lines and yellow shading. Three black dots mark the wings, which can span to almost 2”. The larvae are black with tiny white dots and black spines. In the garden they can be easily grown in a pot with no drainage holes to simulate a wetland. We recommend placing a teaspoon of 6-6-6 fertilizer in the bottom of the pot and burying the pot with the plant. It will form a dense mound of foliage.

Order Your Nestboxes Now!

Think about giving nestboxes as Christmas gifts! You can kill two birds with one stone (Oops— Sorry!). The birds get a gift as well as your Uncle Harry. See the insert order form and call us if you have questions. You may order by mail or pick them up at the nursery.



Bring this coupon and come to visit us at the nursery and we will give you 10% off your purchase price. It is a one time offer and all sales must be at the nursery.

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.

Featured Plants of the Month

For the Lakefront: Duck Potato

(Sagittaria lancifolia)

This perennial herb makes a great addition to any aquascape. It can be easily recognized by its lance shaped leaves and sprays of flowers which are three pedaled, and white with yellow centers. It can reach heights of three to three and a half feet. It normally grows at the edge or emerged in shallow waters or lakes, ponds, ditches and marshes. The seeds and underground tubers are relished by waterfowl. Bare-root plants can be easily transplanted.

Biosphere grows most of the native wetland herbaceous species as well as the wetland and transitional shrubs. Call for our price list or check it out on our webpage: biospherenursery.com.

The Fight Against Invasives: Air Potato

(Dioscorea bulbifera)

This extremely invasive vine from Africa was introduced into Florida in 1905 and has become one of the most aggressive invasive vines here. It quickly grows to 60-70 feet and can canopy over and shade out native trees. This member of the yam family produces aerial tubers that are potato-like called *bulbils*. They grow only on the sides of the stems, beginning in late summer and eventually fall off and grow into new plants. The mature plant dies back in the fall while the underground storage tuber remains to form new plants in the spring.

Control should begin by removing all *bulbils* since even the smallest ones sprout into new plants. It is almost impossible to remove by hand so herbicide treatment is most effective, especially if applied in summer, before *bulbils* form. Use Garlon 4 in a 10% concentration to treat stems at the base. Watch the emerging plants in spring and wait for the stems to form mature leaves, then treat it again. This will be an on-going process for some time if you are to eradicate this awful plant. Good luck with your killing!

Cats In The Landscape

Since we have an article on birds we need one on cats. I have to be very careful here, however, because Cat People are very sensitive about any criticism of their bloodthirsty killer pets. Cat People stick together and they can be very vindictive.

So how can I state the research that shows that domestic cats kill more than a million songbirds PER DAY in this country alone, that a single cat can kill as many as 1000 small animals per year and domestic cats are contributing to the endangerment of several species of birds? How can I try to convince people they should keep their beasts indoors at all times and help get rid of feral cats? How can I be diplomatic in saying that cats even provide serious competition with native predators?

Maybe I better just forget this subject.....

Mount Dora Plant & Garden Fair

Mark your calendar to come and visit us at the Mt. Dora show on November 2 -3 from 9:00 -5:00. It will be held in Simpson Cove (just about one block from historic downtown Mt. Dora). For information call Christine Cole (352) 357-4116. In the meantime, remember **Biosphere** is open to the public every Saturday from 9:00A.M. to 3:00 P.M.

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

