

NEWSLETTER



VillageWalk Garden Club
of Bonita Springs

HURRICANE DAMAGE TO PLANTS



Desiccation of Leaves Starting at the Edges



Browning on the Windward Side of Trees in VW



Green Leaves on the Leeward of the Same Trees in VW

As a result of Hurricane Milton, many plants experienced leaf browning and leaf loss with some plants losing all their leaves. In most cases, the worst leaf damage could be seen on the south to southwest side of the plants because the wind was coming from that direction in Bonita Springs. The reasons for this plant damage are multi-fold.

Strong winds can remove the moisture from leaves (desiccation) faster than the plant can replace the moisture. This phenomenon is often seen as browning that starts at leaf edges and moves inwards. Hurricane Milton was an especially “dry” storm with little rainfall. It picked up salt water from the Gulf of Mexico and blew it onto land, without rainfall that typically follows the storm and rinses it off. Saltwater exposure on leaves can cause leaves to burn while also affecting the overall health of the plant, especially if the plant is salt intolerant.

Plants can shed leaves to conserve energy when exposed to stress like intense wind and saltwater exposure. A notable example of leaf browning and leaf loss were the bald cypress trees that showed this behavior earlier than normal.

A key recommendation for plant care is hosing them down with fresh water to remove the salt from the leaves and soil. Pruning can cause more stress to plants so care should be taken.

Thanks to Renee Wilson of Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary for reviewing and providing feedback on this story.

Important Dates to Remember

- **January 18** (rain date January 19) - Plant/Bake Sale 10:00 - 1:00pm
- **March 29** (rain date is March 30) - Butterfly Festival 10:00am - 2:00pm

KESTREL SIGHTING NEAR THE BUTTERFLY GARDENS



**Kestrel (male) in the
Butterfly Garden Area**



**Kestrel Rescued by
Wingmasters –
Massachusetts**



**European Starling –
Eastside Audubon**



**House Sparrow –
Indiana Audubon**

A beautiful bird of prey called the American kestrel has been seen in the butterfly garden area. These birds are among the most colorful of the raptors, which are birds that generally capture live prey for their diet. The kestrel is about the size of the common mourning dove, so it is a relatively small raptor. Often you will see it in open areas on a perch looking for prey on the ground although it has been known to snatch prey while in flight (aka “on the wing”). Their diet is limited to small prey including birds, rodents, amphibians, reptiles, and insects. Surplus catches are hidden to prevent detection by competing species and for future use. Because the kestrel is a smaller bird, it can also be prey for snakes and larger birds.

Kestrels are used in falconry, the use of birds of prey for hunting purposes. One purpose of kestrel falconry is to reduce the population of non-native invasive birds like European starlings and house sparrows which pose threats to native birds.

In Florida, the kestrel is considered a “threatened species”. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, its population has declined by 82% over the past 70 years largely because of nesting and foraging habitat loss.



BUTTERFLY FUN FACT

The largest butterfly in the United States is the Eastern Giant Swallowtail with a wingspan of up to 7 inches. These butterflies are seen in the VillageWalk butterfly garden.

The largest butterfly in the world is the Queen Alexandra's Birdwing, found in the rainforests of Papua New Guinea. Its wingspan has been known to reach close to a whopping 11 inches!



Giant Swallowtail in the Butterfly Garden



Queen Alexandra's Birdwing – Johan Larson, Shutterstock.com

● FUNDING FOR THE BUTTERFLY GARDEN ●

All residents of VillageWalk should have received copies of the approved budget for 2025. There's a common misconception that there is funding for the Butterfly Garden operating expenses (plants, soil, fertilizer /supplements, mulch, tools, other supplies, extra labor) in this budget. To clear up this misconception, here is an excerpt from the recently completed Butterfly Garden trifold brochure that discusses the budget and funding.

Our Operating Expenses: Approx. \$30,000 per year.

Our Funding: The VillageWalk HOA provides the land and water. The operating expenses are covered by fund-raising activities (plant and bake sales, raffles, and the annual Butterfly Festival) and donations. We greatly appreciate the generosity of our donors.

2024 -2025 GARDEN CLUB MEETINGS

The 2024-2025 garden club meetings will be at **1:00 PM** on Tuesdays.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
December 10, 2024	Fakahatchee Strand
January 21, 2025	CREW Land & Water Trust
February 18, 2025	Hibiscus
March 18, 2025	Microplastics
April 15, 2025	TBD
May 20, 2025	Plant Exchange

**All VillageWalk residents are welcome
Bring a friend!**



● BUTTERFLY GARDEN FLOWERS ●



Variegated Star Jasmine



Bromeliad



Rain Lily



Ruffled Hibiscus



Cuban Buttercup



Pagoda Flower

● DESERT ROSE SPECIMENS AT THE NOVEMBER CLUB MEETING ●

Val Shaha and J.B. Schuetz brought examples of desert rose plants and talked about their care. The desert rose varieties being sold by the Fundraising Committee are exotic varieties that are not commonly found at the local nurseries. These plants are low maintenance with very little care involved. The pre-sale of the bare-root desert rose plants has ended. They have now been potted and are currently being sold for \$20. The price at the Garden Club Plant and Garden Sale in January will be \$25. See the photograph below showing the current potted plants for sale and an example of what the beautiful plant can look like in a few years. One club member in the audience said their desert rose plant grew even larger than the example on the right after about the same amount of time. If you have questions or are interested in purchasing plants, please contact Val. Her contact information is in the Garden Club Yearbook and in the sale flyer that was emailed to all members. You can also send a message to the Garden Club email address (villagewalkgardenclub.com) and we will put you in touch with her. As a bonus, Val will even deliver them to your home in VillageWalk!



Left: Example Potted Plant Being Sold,
Right: Plant After a Few Years

● NATIVE PALM PRESENTATION AT THE NOVEMBER CLUB MEETING ●



Guest Speaker Tony Mauriello



Sabal Palms without Boots –
Stephen Brown, UF/IFAS



Sabal Palms with Boots -
Pinellas Chapter FPNS

Tony Mauriello, a certified Florida Master Naturalist, gave an insightful talk on Native Palms in Florida. One surprising point that he mentioned was that in some ways palms are more closely related to grasses rather than to trees. It is a topic of current debate.

Tony defined native palms as those species that existed before the Europeans came to the Americas when only the inhabitants were the American Indians. Non-native palms were often brought to beautify the landscape such as Christmas Palms and Foxtail Palms. The problem with non-native plants is that they do not provide the best habitat for native wildlife, and they are not as well-adapted to the local conditions (weather, soil, etc.). For instance, some non-native palm species need supplements such as potassium to promote growth. Some non-native palms are also considered to be invasive species.

NATIVE PALM PRESENTATION AT THE NOVEMBER CLUB MEETING CONTINUED

Palms may grow with solitary or clustered trunks while other palms have underground trunks or no trunk. The leaf stalks of a palm are called fronds and can be palmate (like a hand or fan) or pinnate (like a feather) or costapalmate which includes characteristics of both palmate and pinnate. Palms have a dense mat-like fibrous root system that are not deeply rooted (about maximum of 3 feet deep).

Native palms are present in all hardiness zones in Florida. Currently, many native palms are not commonly found in the wild and are considered Threatened or Endangered. The Needle Palm with needle-like leaves grows in the northern zone. Because it has excellent cold tolerance, Needle Palms can exist as far north as the Long Island Sound. The Saw Palm has sharp spines along the leaf stalks. Its berries are sought after for various health benefits. The Florida state tree is the Sabal Palm (aka Cabbage Palm). It is shown on the state seal and flag. The terminal bud is often harvested and sold for consumption as Hearts of Palm. Heart of Palm is a considered a vegetable and is harvested from the inner core and growing bud of the Sabal or Cabbage Palm. Heart of Palm may be eaten on its own and is often eaten in a salad. Harvesting of the Heart of Palm, however, will kill the plant. Sabal Palms are grown on farms specifically for the Hearts of Palm. Remnant leaf bases called bootjacks or boots along its stem are often trimmed off as they can become projectiles during hurricanes. The majestic Royal Palm is prominent on Village Walk streets. Be careful of a frond falling from this palm as they are heavy and land with a loud "THUD"!

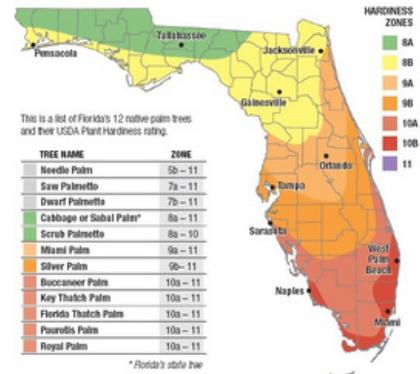
Native Palms are Keystone Species which National Geographic defines as...

A keystone species is an organism that helps define an entire ecosystem. Without its keystone species, the ecosystem would be dramatically different or cease to exist altogether.

The flowers and fruit of native palms are important food sources for wildlife such as insects, birds, and small mammals. Many birds use them for perching and nesting sites. For example, the Crested Cara Cara prefers to nest in Sabal Palms and Royal Palms are the most common nesting sites for woodpeckers. The root systems play a part in soil health and erosion control. The palm fronds create a canopy to protect smaller trees and shrubs.

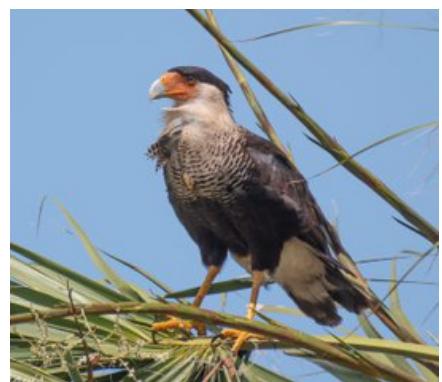


Pinnate and Palmate Palm Fronds
– Mission Palm Trees



SOURCES: EDWIN M. EVERHAM, FGCU; STEPHEN BROWN, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA/IFAS; USDA, FLORIDA-PALM-TREES.COM

Florida Native Palm Hardiness Map
– Florida Weekly



Crested Cara Cara on a Sabal Palm
– Jim E. Davis, UF/IFAS



CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!

www.villagewalkgardenclub.com

Our website is full of information about the garden club, events and sustainability practices.

