



NEWSLETTER

VillageWalk Garden Club
of Bonita Springs

WHAT'S A BRACT?

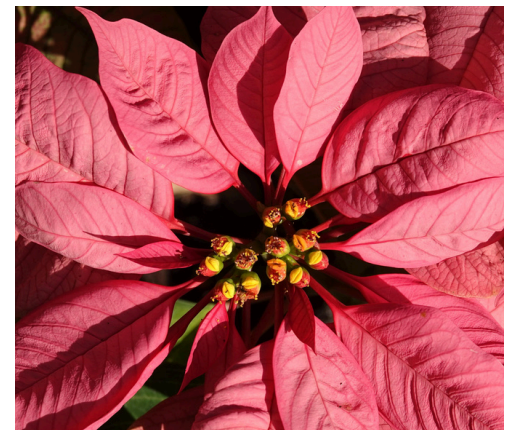
A bract is a specialized leaf often mistaken for a flower petal. Why is a bract not a flower? The bract is separate from the flower structure because it grows from the base of the flower. Braceates are plants that have bracts.

You've seen bracts on many familiar plants. The beautiful showy bracts of bougainvilleas, poinsettias, shrimp plants, and heliconias surround the smaller flowers. The bracts attract pollinators to the bougainvilleas, poinsettias, and shrimp plants. For heliconias, the flower is hidden inside the large bracts thus allowing only certain pollinators to have access to the nectar-bearing flowers. In some cases, bracts are not the showiest part of braceates. Florida tickseed ([Coreopsis floridana](#)), a native plant, has petals that are larger and more colorful than its bracts. It has three layers of striped bracts that are underneath the flower to provide support.

(Main Sources: Florida Wildflower Foundation, UF/IFAS)



[Bougainvillea](#) with magenta bracts and white flowers



Poinsettia ([Euphorbia pulcherrima](#)) with red bracts and yellow flowers



Florida Tickseed with striped bracts under the yellow flower – Mary Keim, Florida Wildflower Foundation



Lobster claw heliconia ([Heliconia rostrata](#)) with red/yellow bracts and yellow flowers – PlantVine.com



THANK YOU MARY AND BEST WISHES!

On a chilly January morning, a group of volunteer gardeners met in the Butterfly Garden for Mary Freeh's last day working in the gardens before moving away from VillageWalk. Mary has been very active in the Garden Club as the leader of Butterfly Garden 5, the main host in the Native Plant educational tent at the Butterfly Festival, a member of the Sustainability Committee, and a volunteer for the Holiday Party. It's been a joy having her as part of our gardening family and we wish her well on the next chapter in her life. Thank you, Mary, for all that you've done for the VillageWalk Garden Club and Butterfly Garden!



Mary with the gardeners and her gifts of Prosecco and butterfly jacket/beret



BEE FUN FACT

Did you know there were no honeybees in North America until settlers brought them to Jamestown, Virginia, the first permanent English colony, in 1622? (As an aside, the Roanoke colony was established earlier, but it was abandoned and did not survive.) These non-native bees are more aptly called the European or Western Honey Bee ([Apis mellifera](#)).

The colonists brought these bees over from Europe for many reasons including:

- Pollination of food crops
- Honey to sweeten foods and beverages, preserve fruits, make cement, furniture polish, and for medicinal purposes
- Beeswax for use in candles, shoe wax, lipstick, and for coating and waterproofing wine bottles and barrels

A popular alcoholic beverage at the time was mead which is fermented honey and water with other ingredients like spices and herbs to add flavor.

Main Sources: National Honey Board,
[LocalHiveHoney.com](#))



European Honey Bee on a tropical milkweed ([Asclepias curassavica](#))

PRESIDENTIAL HEROES OF CONSERVATION

At the visitor center of the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, individuals are honored as Heroes of Conservation with the following dedication.

Through their words and actions, these individuals and many others have helped protect wildlife. Their dedicated efforts have led to the preservation of millions of acres of habitat and have saved many species from extinction. These pioneers have inspired a conservation ethic across America.

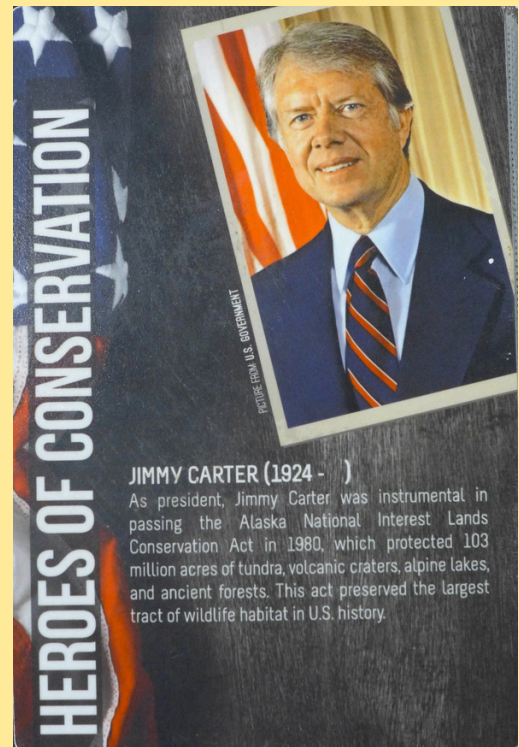
Among the illustrious group are two U.S. presidents – Theodore Roosevelt and the recently deceased Jimmy Carter.

Here are a couple of memorable quotes from President Carter on nature and the environment.

I learned early on, if we take care of the land, it will take care of us.

We must safeguard our land so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy freshwater, clean air, scenic mountains and coasts, fertile agricultural lands, and healthy, safe places to live and thrive.

(Main Source: [Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Georgia Conservancy](#))



Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge

TRIPS AND TOURS

[Shangri-La Springs](#) - Historic tour and organic gardens, February 27, 2025

[American Farms](#) - Tour of two farms providing annual & perennial flowers from Orlando to Miami since 1991, March 2025

[Island Walk Littoral Plantings](#) - Lakes tour & lunch at the Island Walk restaurant, April 2025

The trips depart from the Bocce parking lot.

Important Dates to Remember

- **February 18 - Garden Club Meeting** 1:00 pm VW Town Center
- **February 27 - Shangri-La Spring**
- **March 18 - Garden Club Meeting** 1:00 pm VW Town Center
- **March 29 - Butterfly Festival** 10:00am - 2:00pm (rain date is March 30) Butterfly Garden
- **April 15 - Garden Club Meeting** 1:00 pm VW Town Center
- **May 20 - Garden Club Meeting & Plant Exchange** 1:00 pm VW Town Center



PLANT AND BAKE SALE

The 8th annual Plant and Bake Sale was held on January 18. It is the largest fundraising activity for the Garden Club. It was a beautiful day compared to the chilly weather last year. Thanks to the many volunteers who helped make the event a success.



Thank
you!



CREW LAND & WATER TRUST TALK

Piper Jones, the [CREW](#) Education Coordinator, gave an informative and enthusiastic overview of the CREW and Water Trust. CREW's 70,000 acres of nature preserves is part of the greater [Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed](#) (CREW) which also includes [Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary](#). There are four trails (40 total miles) that are on the CREW properties in Lee and Collier Counties: [Corkscrew Marsh](#), [Cypress Dome & Caracara Prairie Preserve](#), [Bird Rookery Swamp](#), and [Flint Pen](#) (across from VillageWalk on Bonita Beach Road). The importance of this Watershed cannot be overstated as it plays vital roles for both wildlife and humans.

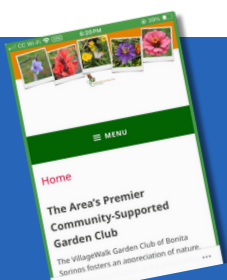
- Wildlife refuge
- Water filtration – vegetation and soils filter the water that slowly flows across the land
- Watershed - retains water during storms to mitigate flooding

There are several different habitats on the CREW preserves which provide suitable environments for a variety of wildlife.

- Pine flatwoods – gopher tortoise, red-cockaded woodpecker, Florida bonneted bat
- Seasonal marshes – wading birds and snail kites
- Oak hammocks – Big Cypress fox squirrel, monarch butterflies, black bears
- Pop ash sloughs – orchids, air plants, Everglades mink, panthers
- Cypress domes – ghost orchids, alligators, giant leather fern

Interestingly, different animals use the long (up to 40ft) gopher tortoise burrows for shelter and protection. Animals can also reside in alligator burrows especially during the dry season.

In addition to hiking on your own, there are many other activities including talks, guided walks including night hikes, camping, and horseback riding. There are special members-only events, and the membership fees help support preservation, maintenance and various programs including free nature education for kids. More information is available at their website, www.crewtrust.org.



CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!

www.villagewalkgardenclub.com

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

