

NEWSLETTER

VillageWalk Garden Club
of Bonita Springs

HELPING HANDS FOR THE BUTTERFLY GARDENS

To help with the Butterfly Gardens, you don't necessarily need to work with the plants. There are many other ways to contribute. Here are some examples.

- Joan and Chad Dilkey removed, cleaned, and painted the garden number signs.
- Tom Swanson performed maintenance on sprinklers and timers.
- Linda Laughlin and Marlene Stalker assembled binders with educational materials for the Butterfly Gardens volunteers.

At the Trunk or Treat event, Dan Gallagher volunteered to help with non-gardening projects in the Butterfly Gardens. He's going to rebuild the Bee Hotel in Garden 9 that is in poor condition. Native bees lay their eggs in holes that are drilled into the ends of logs that are held in place with stakes and covered by a roof. Dan is planning a new and improved version that should last longer. If any of the Butterfly Gardens need assistance with a non-gardening project, Dan might be able to help. Please call or text Linda Blaise.

Thanks to everyone above for lending a helping hand in the Butterfly Gardens.



Example Bee Hotel

GARDEN CLUB MEETINGS

- Learn from and interact with guest speakers and enjoy treats at our club meetings.
- Make new connections and friends.

Benefits to Joining the Club

- Attend our annual Holiday Dinner Party and enjoy an evening of great food, entertainment and fun.
- Participate in trips and tours to experience the wonderful region that we live in.
- Read our newsletter to keep up with current garden club events and expand your knowledge of gardening, plants, nature, and environment.
- Volunteer in the Butterfly Garden to beautify our neighborhood.
- Help with the annual Plant/Bake Sale and Butterfly Festival to promote a sense of community.

All are welcome!



**This newsletter is by the VillageWalk Garden Club of Bonita Springs Communications Committee:
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JULIA HELICONIAN — AN UNCOMMON VISITOR TO THE BUTTERFLY GARDENS



The [Julia Heliconian](#) butterfly (*Dryas iulia*, often misspelled as julia) is not often seen in the VillageWalk Butterfly Gardens, but recently Amy Swanson, a volunteer in Garden 1, spotted one. The newsletter publishers went searching for it, and sure enough it was there basking in the sun on a wild coffee plant. The Julia is native to the southern part of Florida and is seen year around. It can also be found in the tropical regions of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.

The Julia is closely related to the [Gulf Fritillary](#) (*Agraulis vanillae*) and the [Zebra Longwing](#) (*Heliconius charithonia*), the Florida state butterfly. The Gulf Fritillary and the Zebra Longwing are often seen in our Butterfly Gardens. All of these butterflies are categorized as brushfoots. They have hairs on their legs that look like bristles on a hairbrush. Additionally, these butterflies are considered longwing butterflies because they have more elongated wings compared to other butterflies.

The main food source for Julias is nectar from a variety of native flowering plants including the following examples.

- [Pineland Lantana](#) (*Lantana depressa*)
- [Buttonsage](#) (*Lantana involucrata*)
- [Beggerticks](#) (*Bidens alba*)



Julia Heliconian Butterfly in Garden 1

So here's another benefit of *Bidens alba* that we featured in the November 2025 newsletter. In addition to nectar, they also consume pollen which contains essential proteins.

Like other related butterflies, the Julia utilizes [passionvine/passionflower](#) plants as the host plants for their eggs and caterpillars. Some examples include the following native plants.

- [Corkystem Passionflower](#) (*Passiflora suberosa*)
- [White Passionflower](#) (*Passiflora multiflora*).

**Corkystem Passionflower
Host Plant in Garden 5**



These native species have tiny flowers that are less than one inch in diameter. They are easy to miss. Typical passionflowers sold in local nurseries have blooms that are several inches in size.

There are some introduced species of passionflower that are not suitable (toxic) for Julia butterfly caterpillars. Examples include the red-flowering varieties like [Passiflora coccinea](#) which comes from South America. The female Julia butterfly may not distinguish between native and non-native plants when laying eggs. If eggs are laid on the wrong plant, the caterpillars that hatch from the eggs will perish. Focusing on native species for host plants is a safer choice when looking to establish a butterfly colony.

Hopefully, the Julia butterfly will be a more common sight in the Butterfly Gardens and permanently establish itself there. Amy is now on the lookout for eggs and caterpillars. We'll keep you up to date on her quest.

[Main Sources: Florida Wildflower Foundation, Florida Museum of Natural History, iNaturalist]



**Pineland Lantana Nectar Plant
in Garden 1**



**White Passionflower Host Plant - USF
Libraries, Atlas of Florida Plants/John R. Park**



**Buttonsage Nectar Plant in
Garden 6**

WILDFLOWER CORNER – SOUTHEASTERN SUNFLOWERS GALORE

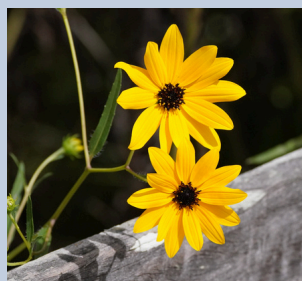
For a few weeks in the Fall, South Florida is treated to the annual blooming of the Southeastern Sunflower ([Helianthus agrestis](#)). It is nearly endemic to Florida because the only other place they are found is a small area in Georgia. Southeastern Sunflowers thrive in sunny, open fields of moist pinelands, savannas, and ruderal (disturbed areas) habitat where they can reach heights of 5 feet and higher. Like other sunflowers, they release toxic allelopathic chemicals that suppress the growth of other plants around them. This defense mechanism allows them to form large areas of plants.

According to a volunteer with Collier County, there weren't many sunflowers last year at their Pepper Ranch Preserve because it was an usually wet summer rainy season. This year there was a "superbloom". The conditions were especially favorable because there were no major storms before the blooming season, and the rains were sufficient and not excessive. The weather conditions were just right for a spectacular display.

In our area, Southeastern Sunflowers can be found at the [Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary](#) and the [Conservation Collier Pepper Ranch Preserve](#) where there are masses of these golden beauties. At the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, the sunflowers are easily accessible at the beginning and end of the boardwalk near the visitor center. You will be engulfed by them! For about one week in the Fall, Pepper Ranch Preserve has sunflower viewing days. There are fields and fields of sunflowers there. Be warned that the roads at Pepper Ranch are not paved. When it rains, the roads can get muddy. Boots are often the best choice for footwear in these conditions. If it's muddy, you will need to wash your car afterwards like the newsletter publishers did! Don't be dissuaded by the unpaved roads and mud. Experiencing the sunflowers at Pepper Ranch is worth getting a little dirty!

Because these flowers are so beautiful and particularly abundant during superblooms, it might be tempting to pick them. However, the picking of Southeastern Sunflowers is protected by law on public lands like Pepper Ranch Preserve and Corkscrew Swamp. So just enjoy the view and take photos so that Southeastern Sunflowers can continue to thrive in the future.

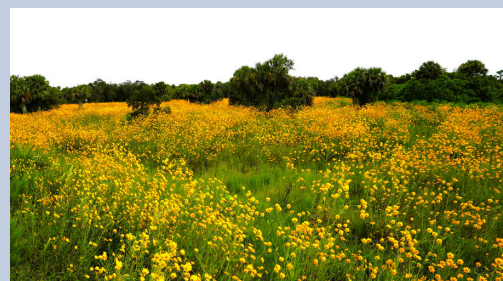
[Main Sources: Conservation Collier Pepper Ranch Preserve, Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, Florida Wildflower Society, Gardening Know How]



Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary



Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary



Pepper Ranch Preserve

NATURE FUN FACT – JULIA BUTTERFLIES AND REPTILE TEARS

In South America, Julia butterflies have been observed sitting on caimans and turtles where they appear to be drinking their tears. What is going on with this unusual behavior? In the November 2024 Garden Club newsletter, "[puddling](#)" was discussed in which butterflies congregate in mud puddles and other damp areas to absorb salts and minerals that are essential to their health. Something similar is happening when the Julias drink the reptile tears because the tears contain salts, minerals and proteins which are difficult to obtain from their main food source namely nectar from flowers. It's like nutritional supplements for butterflies!

Latin for tear is "lacrima" and Greek for eating is "phagos" thus we have the term for "tear-feeding" which is lachryphagy. Other insects (e.g. butterflies, moths, bees, and flies) also tear feed on reptiles and other animals. This phenomenon is not harmful to the animal which is the source of the tears.

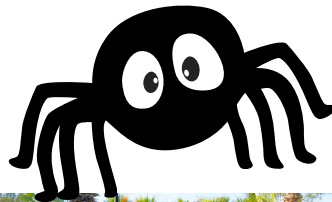
[Main Sources: Science, Science News, ScienceNewsExplores, Ecotone]



Julia Butterflies on a Turtle in the Amazon – MindSpark

TRUNK OR TREAT

Butterfly Garden volunteers participated in the annual VillageWalk Trunk or Treat event on Halloween to recruit more volunteers for the Butterfly Gardens. Hours were spent designing and decorating a golf cart and car. They both looked fabulous and it was a fun activity for all those involved. Not only were there goodies for the many kids that showed up at the event, but there were also treats for pets. There were some great costumes as you can see from the photos. Can you recognize Linda Blaise in her amazing Queen Bee outfit? Amy Swanson in her frog costume was a great hit with both the kids and the dogs! Thanks to all the volunteers that participated in the event and for others that came out to support the cause.





NOVEMBER MEETING PRESENTATION: BOUGAINVILLEAS BY J.B. SCHUETZ



J.B., the Bougainvillea Master



Colorful Bracts and White Flowers

J.B.'s educational and professional background in horticulture and passion for bougainvilleas makes him a highly qualified and enthusiastic speaker on these colorful plants. His talk encompassed the history, culture, best gardening practices, pests, diseases, variety, and beauty of these plants.

While on a sea-faring expedition, a French botanist discovered the plant in South America. However, it was named for the expedition commander, Admiral [Louis-Antoine de Bougainville](#), and not for the botanist. In the February 2025 Garden Club Newsletter, it was discussed that the colorful part of bougainvilleas are specialized leaves called “bracts”. Bracts surround the small flowers which are usually white. There are many varieties of bougainvilleas with different bracts and leaves.

Here are a few highlighted varieties.

- [Barbara Karst](#) is possibly the most popular variety. It has magenta red bracts. To flourish, it needs to be allowed enough space to grow large.
- The magenta-pink bracts on stems of [Torch Glow](#) have the appearance of a flaming torch.
- Multi-colored varieties exist with different colored bracts on the same plant. A favorite dwarf variety is [Helen Johnson](#) which has pink bracts and is a slow grower.
- Bougainvilleas with double bracts are not as clean because they do not easily drop their spent blooms.
- [Raspberry Ice](#) has raspberry pink bracts and variegated leaves.

All bougainvillea have thorns to varying degrees. As a result, they can be used as a protection hedge - lovely but dangerous!

JB gave each member a “cheat sheet” on the care of bougainvilleas. Here are some key points.

- Choose the location carefully as they require 6+ hours of sunlight when in full sun and 8 hours they are in a patio area.
- Short days and night-time temperatures below 70F during October through April promote blooming. Artificial lighting at night can lengthen the “day” and cause a less vibrant display.
- Well-drained soil is a requirement. For in-ground, sandy soil works well with some acidic organics for lowering the pH of the naturally occurring high pH soil.
- For containers, 60% soil and 40% perlite is a recommended mixture. “Dome” the drainage hole to prevent the roots from growing through it.
- Fertilizing is well-documented in the “cheat sheet”, but care should be taken with iron-containing chemicals like Super Iron Plus which can stain surfaces such as concrete and stucco.
- Bougainvilleas are fast growing plants and heavy trimming can be done during the months of May to June.



SHOREBIRDING ETIQUETTE



A Black Skimmer with Royal Terns

The winter months are a great time to see shorebirds at the beaches in Southwest Florida. Many of these birds have migrated a great distance from their breeding grounds that may be as far away as the Arctic Tundra. Some of these migrating birds spend the winter in our state. In other cases, Florida is a stopover before they fly further south for the winter. While wintering, the shorebirds rest and recover before making the long journey back to their northerly breeding grounds in the Spring.

The newsletter publishers photograph these birds on their own and with Audubon of Southwest Florida as part of their Shorebird Stewarding Program. It's great fun seeing and photographing these beautiful birds at the beach, but it is also important to practice good shorebirding etiquette while doing so. Here's a quote from the Florida Shorebird Alliance.

Each time a bird is disturbed and forced to fly off while it is feeding or resting, it uses important energy reserves needed for survival, migration, and future breeding. Due to the widespread decline of shorebird populations, it is especially important to let the birds feed and rest without causing disturbance that could pose additional threats to their survival.

Some regularly occurring examples of unnecessarily disturbing shorebirds include 1) people getting too close with their cell phones when taking photographs and 2) children running through and adults walking through a group of birds. It is often easy enough to walk around birds instead of through them. In both cases, the birds will often flush (take flight) and move to another location on the beach. Unfortunately, this routine can be repeated to make for a very exhausting day for the birds.

Recently at Bowditch Point Park beach, the publishers were talking to two park rangers that were searching for man and his dog because the dog was off leash and chasing the shorebirds. The head ranger said that 1) dogs are not allowed on the beach (signs are posted) and 2) people don't realize that many of these birds have traveled thousands of miles to get to Florida, and they are tired and hungry. Be aware of beach regulations before bringing dogs there. Being off leash is not normally allowed unless it is specifically a "dog beach". (The Bowditch Point incident happened this morning and we felt that it was important to include.)

There are a few additional recommendations during the nesting season.

- Nesting sites are often marked. Remain behind these posted areas.
- Birds sit on their eggs to keep them warm so that the embryo can develop. Do not get too close so that the parent bird leaves its nest.
- Birds are very protective of their eggs and babies. Staying too long viewing them (greater than 10 min.) can cause undue stress because they may perceive you as a threat.

The beach is a shared resource for people and wildlife. Let's be kind and considerate to our feathered friends!

[Main Sources: Florida Shorebird Alliance, Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation]

TRIPS & TOURS

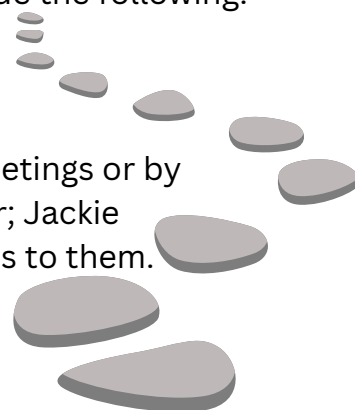


TRIPS/TOUR	DATE	SCHEDULE	COST
Everglades National Park Boat Tour of the Ten Thousand Islands	January 28, 2026	Meet: 8:00 AM at Bocce Parking Lot Depart: 8:30 AM bus leaves Return: 2:00 PM	Members: \$60 Non-Members: \$65 (Max 25 People)
Bonita Springs Historical Society Guided Walking Tour	February 2026 (exact date TBA)	TBA, (Carpool from Bocce Parking Lot)	TBA
Annual Collier County Agricultural Bus Tour	March 18, 2026	TBA (Carpool to Collier Co. Fairgrounds for bus, lunch provided)	Members: \$100 Non-Members: \$120 (Max 10 People)
Naples Botanical Garden – Guided Orchid Experience	April 16, 2026	TBA, (Carpool from Bocce Parking Lot) Tour Time: 10:00 AM	TBA

More details on the above Trips/Tours are available at the Garden Club meetings and in upcoming email announcements. Other trips are being considered include the following:

- Kaleidoscope Flora and Wolfmoon Cafe
- Jade Orchids

Signing up for the Trip/Tour can be done at the monthly Garden Club meetings or by getting in touch with the Trips and Tours Committee (Linda Musick, Chair; Jackie Fegan, Gail Brinley, and Leslie Bischoff). Please also direct your questions to them.



IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE 2025-2026 SEASON

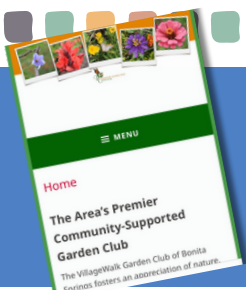
***Note that all the Garden Club meetings are on Tuesdays except the one on April 23 which is on a Thursday.**

MEETING/EVENT	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
<i>Holiday Party</i>	<i>Dec. 4, 2025</i>	<i>5:00 - 9:00 PM</i>	<i>Town Center</i>
Garden Club Meeting	Dec. 9, 2025	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
Garden Club Meeting	Jan. 20, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
<i>Plant/Bake Sale</i>	<i>Jan. 24, 2026</i>	<i>9:00 AM - 12:00 PM</i>	<i>Bocce Parking Lot</i>
Garden Club Meeting	Feb. 17, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
<i>Butterfly Festival</i>	<i>Mar. 7, 2026</i>	<i>10:00 AM - 2:00 PM</i>	<i>Butterfly Gardens</i>
Garden Club Meeting	Mar. 17, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
Garden Club Meeting*	Apr. 23, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
Garden Club Meeting and Plant Exchange	May 19, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center



Bake Sale - Help Wanted!

At the November Garden Club meeting, it was announced that Leslie Bischoff has stepped up to chair the Bake Sale that is scheduled for January 24, 2006, but she is still up north. Ellen and Walt Hintz who coordinated the Bake Sale for many years will be providing guidance, but Leslie will need additional help. Please consider being a co-chair or joining the organizing committee. Also, many bakers are needed. The combined Plant & Bake Sale is the main fundraising event for the Garden Club. Let's work together to make it another great success.



CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!

www.villagewalkgardenclub.com

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

