

# NEWSLETTER

VillageWalk Garden Club  
of Bonita Springs

## JANUARY GARDEN CLUB MEETING PRESENTATION – GARDENING FOR SNOWBIRDS



**Jay Herbert**

The first meeting of the new year began with a talk from horticulturist and landscape designer, Jay Herbert. He has been a resident of VillageWalk for 10 years. Over the course of several years, Jay has developed one of the most colorful home gardens in our community. Jay completely overhauled the original garden. The project was done in stages over several years otherwise it would have been overwhelming. His tropical, tiered design includes 17 varieties of palms, shrubs, and many annuals for color. [Coleus](#) is a favorite because it does well in the summer heat whereas other annuals struggle. The annuals are changed several times a year. He incorporates large plants like [Bismarck palms](#) in his garden by using containers and trimming to prevent them from getting oversized. The containers are inconspicuous because they are hidden by other plants.

There are 3 considerations that Jay feels are key to maintaining his garden.

1. **Water** – For most plants, he waters them at least several times a week. Annuals have considerable watering requirements – daily or thorough soakings a few times a week. Container plants are watered daily.
2. **Fertilizer** – He applies it at least 3-4 times a year. In the spring around March is the most important time for fertilizing. Milorganite can be used to fertilize plants and act as a rabbit deterrent. A slow-release fertilizer like Osmocote works well, especially with container plants
3. **Disease control** - Hibiscus is especially prone to pests. He uses a Bayer systemic product and neem oil. The neem oil is applied in the early morning or late evening to prevent burning. Because of the high humidity in Florida, Jay uses fungicide when needed.



**Jay's Home Garden**

Jay shared a wealth of knowledge with the enthusiastic audience, and he answered many questions. He was kind enough to host a pop-up tour for a small group last year and he may host another one in the future.

This newsletter is by the VillageWalk Garden Club of Bonita Springs Communications Committee:  
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Newsletter Team  
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# BUTTERFLY GARDENER APPRECIATION PARTY

An invitation was sent from the Queen Bee (Linda Blaise) to the Hive (Butterfly Garden volunteers).

*The worker bees are gathering to make merry.  
It is a special evening in appreciation for all that you do...  
Because there would be no gardens without you.*

To thank the volunteer gardeners that make the Butterfly Gardens a beautiful part of the VillageWalk community, the holiday party was held at the wonderfully decorated home of Linda and Denis Blaise. It was a lovely moonlit evening for a celebration.

Linda organized an over-the-top celebration with delicious food, live music, and entertaining games (cornhole and hot potato with prizes!). Special guests included several new volunteer gardeners (Barb Bobish, Doug Van Erem, Linda Van Hise, Loretta Romp) and Arlene and Mack Worl, generous benefactors of the Butterfly Garden.

The event would not have been possible without the many volunteers that helped with the set-up, desserts, games, and clean-up. Thanks to Linda for hosting the party and for everything that she does for the Gardens.





## NATURE FUN FACTS – THE FLORIDA STATE WILDFLOWER

In 1991, all 14 species of native Coreopsis were designated as the [state wildflower of Florida](#). The plants are also known as Tickseeds because of the appearance of the seeds. They are annuals to short-lived perennials that thrive in moist, well-drained sites with plenty of sun. Most Coreopsis have yellow, daisy-like flowers. The exception is [Swamp Tickseed](#) (*Coreopsis nudata*) which has pinkish-purple petals. [Leavenworth's Tickseed](#) (*Coreopsis leavenworthii*) is the most widespread. It is also the most common species in south Florida. Leavenworth's Tickseed has the distinction of almost being endemic to Florida because the only other places in the world that it is found in the wild is in two Alabama counties. In addition to being found in wild areas, Coreopsis is widely used in roadside plantings and highway beautification programs in Florida. Coreopsis flowers serve as excellent sources of nectar for a wide range of pollinators.

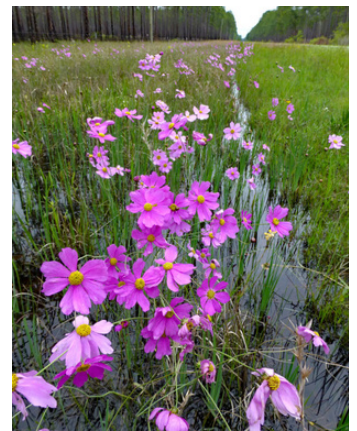
*[Main Sources: Florida Wildflower Foundation, Florida Dept. of Transportation]*



Leavenworth's Tickseed in  
CREW Flint Pen Strand



Swamp Tickseed in NW Florida  
– Eleanor Dietrich/Florida  
Wildflower Foundation



Goldenmane Tickseed in NE  
Florida – Kirk Hutchinson  
/Florida Wildflower  
Foundation

## HUGO



Hugo from Napier Irrigation has returned to his homeland of Guatemala where his friends, family, and girlfriend(!) had been eagerly awaiting his arrival after a long absence. Hugo helped many of us with the irrigation systems and difficult tasks in our home gardens and also in the Butterfly Gardens. We will miss his willingness to help, hard work, and of course his big smile. Thank you, Hugo!

*Thank You*

BUTTERFLY FEST 2026

Save the Date - Tell all your Friends



Free Family Event

# Butterfly FEST

Saturday

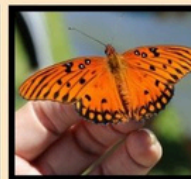
MARCH 7, 2026

Rain Date is Sunday, March 8

10:00am to 2:00pm

Held in front of the Butterfly Gardens  
at VillageWalk of Bonita Springs

- COMPLIMENTARY FOOD
- EDUCATIONAL PLANT & BUTTERFLY DISPLAYS
- KIDS GAMES & PRIZES
- FIRE TRUCK
- LIVE MUSIC
- LEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S
  - ICE CREAM TRUCK
- FACE PAINTING
- GARDEN TOURS
- PLANT SALE
- RAFFLE ITEMS
- SILENT AUCTION
- AND MUCH MORE.....



thank you!  
to our  
sponsors

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- John R. Wood Properties
- Orchid Realty Group
- Berkshire Hathaway Home Service
- Insurance Specialists of SW Florida
- Local Real Estate
- Lee County Sheriff's

# PLANT AND BAKE SALE



The 9th Annual Plant and Bake Sale took place on a beautiful January day. The temperature was comfortably cool and sunny. The great weather and the big effort to publicize the event resulted in a great turnout by the VillageWalk community. While the sale took place from 9am to noon, many of the items were already sold in the first hour! The beautiful potted plant arrangement for the raffle was a great success. At the Membership tent, new members joined the Garden Club and volunteered to help in the Butterfly Gardens. Thanks to Eileen McDonough! It was a club-wide effort involving dozens of bakers, transportation helpers, set-up and tear-down crews, the advertising team, and many others. Here we recognize a few of the many volunteers.



- Baked Goods - Leslie Bischoff and her baking, packing, and pricing crew
- Bougainvilleas - J.B. Schuetz
- Bromeliad Pots and Art Pieces - Kristi DiCecco, Sally Golightly, and Linda Greendyke
- Herbs - Dolores Damiano-Szafran
- Cannas, Color Bowls, Amaryllis, and Other Plants - Val Shaha, Jackie Fegan, and Cheryl Gedris
- Raffle Item - Sally Golightly



## TRY NATIVE PLANTS IN YOUR HOME GARDEN

Native plants are generally considered to be the flora that existed in Florida before the arrival of European explorers and settlers. They are well-adapted to Florida's challenging growing conditions.

- Hot and humid climate
- Rainfall extremes with dry and rainy seasons
- Sandy, nutrient-deficient soils



Once they are established, native plants are easier to care for and have several benefits compared to non-native plants.

### 1. Less water

- Most non-native plants require more water than native plants that have adapted to the annual dry season.
- Water is always a precious resource and conservation is critically important especially during drought conditions like we are currently experiencing.

### 2. Less fertilizer

- Native plants are accustomed to the poor soils that occur naturally in Florida and generally need little to no fertilizer.
- Nutrient run-off from fertilizers into waterways can reduce water quality and contribute to algal blooms like red tide.

### 3. Less pesticides and other chemical treatments

- Native plants have a natural resistance to native insects, fungi, and diseases that was built up over thousands of years.
- Use of synthetic pesticides poses health risks to humans and wildlife.
- Using less chemicals is better for everyone.

Wildlife often prefers and relies more on native plants because they have co-evolved over many years. They are mutually beneficial to one another. Native plants provide food, shelter, and nursery sites for wildlife. Wildlife fertilizes native plants and helps them propagate through pollination and seed dispersal.

A common misconception is that all flowering plants are attractive as food sources to pollinators. According to Michigan State University, "Annual flowers like impatiens are readily available at the garden center, but most have been bred for showy flowers or vigorous growth and do not produce enough pollen and nectar to be good food plants for bees or butterflies."

The [Lee County Government](#), [University of Florida/IFAS](#), and the [Florida Native Plant Society](#) maintain databases of native plants. Occasionally, native plants can be found in the nearby garden centers that mainly carry non-native plants. Garden shows like the Edison Ford Spring and Fall Garden Festivals and Naples Yard and Garden Show are other possibilities. [All Native Garden Center](#) and the [Florida Native Plant Society](#) have nurseries in Ft. Myers that specialize in Florida native plants. [Natives of Corkscrew](#) (Buckingham) and the [SCCF Native Landscapes and Garden Center](#) (Sanibel) are also nearby. The publishers have been to all of these nurseries except Natives of Corkscrew. They have 12 acres of native plants so we might be planning a visit! Of course, there are internet vendors too. Just remember to research the proper growing conditions for the plants. Always keep in mind the #1 Principle from the [Florida Friendly Landscaping™ Program](#) (University of Florida/IFAS) which is "Right Plant, Right Place".

If you are looking for guidance and inspiration, check out [“Attracting Birds to South Florida Gardens”](#) by James Kushlan and [Kirsten Hines](#). The newsletter publishers heard about this book at a [talk](#) that Kirsten gave at the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel. A similar [slide set](#) is available on Youtube. Based in Miami, she is a wildlife biologist, author, photographer, and conservationist. She along with her husband who is an ornithologist (scientist specializing in the study of birds) transformed their home garden from a “wildlife desert” into a wildlife oasis. All of the original landscaping was removed. Native plants were introduced alongside non-native species to create a wildlife-friendly habitat. Now there are many more birds. On occasion there are “clouds” of butterflies and dragonflies. In total, there are about 100 wildlife species that come to the new garden. She recounted the story of a baby owl that she rescued while on her way to yoga class. After rehabilitation and training, the rescue organization suggested that the owl be relocated to an owl box in Kirsten’s home garden because it provided a great habitat. For a while, it lived in the owl box. Now it lives in the trees in her garden. How cool is that to have an owl friend that resides in your yard?

So why not give some native plants a place in your home garden? They are easy to care for once established and are beneficial to us and the environment.

***[Main Sources: IFAS/University of Florida, Florida Native Plant Society,]***



**Kirsten Hines’ Garden Before**



**Kirsten Hines’ Garden (notice the native baby turtles in the person’s hand)**

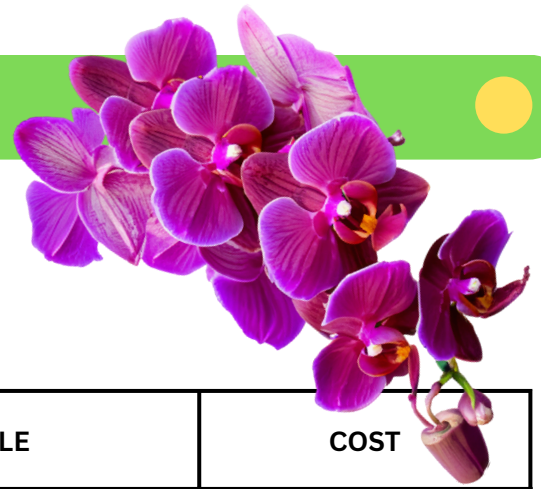


**Eastern Kingbird on a Native Lignum Vitae in Kirsten’s Garden**



**Eastern Screech Owl Like the One in Kirsten’s Garden**

## TRIPS & TOURS



TRIPS/TOUR	DATE	SCHEDULE	COST
<a href="#">Bonita Springs Historical Society Guided Walking Tour</a> (Handicap Accessible)	March 3, 2026	1) Meet: (Bocce Parking Lot) 2) Depart by Carpool: 9:15 a.m. to McSwain Home Museum, Downtown Bonita Springs 3) Tour: 10:00 a.m. (45 min.)	Members and Non-Members: \$20 (BS Historical Society Members: \$15) (max 10-15 people)
<b>Annual Collier County Agricultural Bus Tour (NOT Handicap Accessible)</b>	<b>March 18, 2026</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>	<b>NA</b>
<a href="#">Sundance Orchids and Bromeliads</a>	March 26, 2026	TBA	\$20 per person (max 10 people)
<a href="#">Naples Botanical Garden</a> – Guided Orchid Experience	April 16, 2026	1) Carpool from Bocce Parking Lot: 9:00 a.m. 2) Tour: 10:00 a.m. (90 min.)	Members: \$55 Non-Members: \$75 (min 10 and max 20 people)



More details on the above Trips/Tours are available at the Garden Club meetings and in email announcements. 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 (Eileen Rowell & Rita Pignato, Co-Chairs; Jackie Fegan, Gail Brinley, and Leslie Bischoff). Please direct your questions to them.

# IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE 2025-2026 SEASON



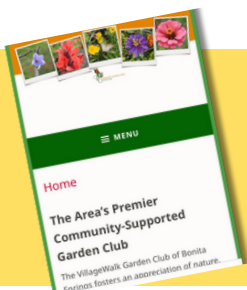
**\*Note that all the Garden Club meetings are on Tuesdays except the one on April 23 which is on a Thursday.**

MEETING/EVENT	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Garden Club Meeting	Feb. 17, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
<b><i>Butterfly Festival</i></b>	<b><i>Mar. 7, 2026</i></b>	<b><i>10:00 AM - 2:00 PM</i></b>	<b><i>Butterfly Gardens</i></b>
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

## Area Events

AREA EVENTS	DATE	LOCATION
<a href="#">Spring Garden Festival</a> (large garden show with plant vendors, food trucks and live music)	February 14-15, 2026	Edison and Ford Winter Estates (Ft. Myers)
<a href="#">Naples Orchid Society Annual Show and Sale</a>	February 20-22, 2026	Naples Botanical Garden

***To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul.***  
*- Alfred Austin, English Poet*



**CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!**

[www.villagewalkgardenclub.com](http://www.villagewalkgardenclub.com)

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

