

January Field Trip to House of Refuge @ Gilbert's Bar

Beautiful plants, extremely harsh conditions! The salty ocean water often rains down on the House of Refuge gardens, says master gardener Ann McCormick, our guide for the trip January 5. Situated atop the Anastasia rocks of south Hutchinson Island, just east of Stuart, FL, it is the last of the early rescue shelters along Florida's east coast.

Our group marveled at the size of the Sea lavender, and its silver green leaves and small white flowers. A black Mangrove skipper was also attracted to it. Ann was attracted to the site after taking the master gardener course and wondering about the plants that can grow along the coastal beaches and dunes.



Ann has perfected propagation techniques for several of the coastal species. A tour of the site will bear close inspection, and a copy of her [plant list](#). A wide variety of plants which attract pollinators that can take the conditions on the lee side of the building are part of the butterfly garden.

Over the new planting bed that had previously been the tanks where Ross Witham had raised baby turtles for release back into the ocean during the seventies, Ann has planted dune plants: Seashore dropseed, a fine textured grass; Beach elder (*Iva imbricata*); Sunshine mimosa (*Mimosa strigillosa*); Sea purslane, plus the rare endangered, *Scaevola plumeiri* (Inkberry).

Along the porch facing the ocean furies was a Bay cedar, one of my favorites. In normal garden circumstances the Bay cedar is soft and fuzzy to the hand. Here at the beach it was hard, thin and determined!

Hooray Ann for populating this tough site with some of the best native plants Florida has to offer.

Air-layering technique (taught by Ann McCormick @ MCFNPS Jan 8, 2013 meeting)

Choose a branch on a healthy plant.

Score the outer layer of "bark" about 1.5 inches high strip away that covering layer.

Wet sphagnum moss (not too much as it could rot), lay it around area stripped of covering layer.

Use PRESS and SEAL with sticky side in against moss, wrap tight just above and below the stripped area. Be sure top & bottom are tightly wrapped.

Next use Heavy Duty Aluminum Foil, shiny side out, squeeze tight at top and bottom.

If you used too much moss it will look like a baked potato. MAKE IT A SMALLER AMT of Moss

In time small white "bumps" will form at the top part of covered area, roots will grow from these.

OK to open and look... Ready when sufficient roots developed (roots will fill the moss area),

Cut the new plant just below the new roots. Trim off any seeds and most of the upper part of the plant to let roots be the most active growth part.

Keep it shaded; Mist frequently; Keep foliage moist and humidified.

This technique used on the Sea lavender to excellent results. Ann said, she plans to try the technique on the Bay cedar this spring.

Plants in the House of Refuge at Gilbert's Bar Gardens

The overall view to Sea Oats waving in the breeze against a backdrop of Sea Grapes, but if you look closer you will find the rest of the complex community that nature intended to keep everything in balance. Most are native plants, several chosen for this site to display sources of food that might have been used by the Keeper, shipwreck survivors, and previous inhabitants of the island. These coastal plants are drought tolerant, well adapted to the hot dunes and drying winds. Some are larval food sources for unusual butterflies, others have blossoms with sweet nectar to attract them. Exotic plants that are known to be invasively altering the habitat of our native flora have been removed. Several native plants that might be classified as weeds in a formal garden remain, as their purpose here is to hold and stabilize the soil, preventing erosion. The plantings are scattered throughout the gardens and one or more representative specimens of each are labeled with plant markers. A few may be dormant during your visit but will reappear at another time during the year. Marine plants - algae and seagrasses - found on the beach are used as mulch. At sea they are important in the marine food chain. After they arrive on the beach their energy and nutrients contribute to the growth of plants on the beaches and dunes.

Plant List:

Bay Cedar, <i>Suriana maritima</i>	Pineapple, <i>Ananas comosus</i>
Beach Creeper, <i>Erosola littoralis</i>	Pink Apple or Annonnif Tree, <i>Chios ramosa</i>
Beach Elder, <i>Iva imbricata</i>	Prickly-Pear Cactus, <i>Opuntia spp</i>
Beach Morning Glory, <i>Ipomoea impatiens</i>	Railroad Vine, <i>Ipomoea pes-caprae</i>
Beach Sunflower, <i>Helianthus debilis</i>	Rain Lily, <i>Zephyranthes atamisco</i>
Beach Verbena, <i>Glandularia maritima</i>	Sand Cherry, <i>Physalis americana</i>
Blanketflower, <i>Gaillardia pulchella</i>	Sand Cordgrass, <i>Spartina bakeri</i>
Blue Petterwood, <i>Stachys spicata jamaicensis</i>	Sand-dune Spurge, <i>Chamaesyce cumalicola</i>
Bluntwood, <i>Casuarina erectus</i>	Sea Palmchess, <i>Scaevola repens</i>
Cabbage Palm, <i>Sabal palmetto</i>	Scrub Palmetto, <i>Sabal oleria</i>
Coast Spurge, <i>Euphorbia meibomiaefolia</i>	Sea Daisy, <i>Borreria frutescens</i>
Coconut Palm, <i>Cocos nucifera</i>	Seagrass, <i>Coccoloba ovifera</i>
Crotophaga, <i>Clypeolobium scaco</i>	Sea Lavender, <i>Mallotonia gnaphaloides</i>
Croton, <i>Zamia floridana</i>	Sea Oats, <i>Uniola paniculata</i>
Coral Bean, <i>Erythema herbacea</i>	Sea Parslane, <i>Scirpus portulacastrum</i>
Corky-stemmed Passionflower, <i>Passiflora suberosa</i>	Seashore Dropseed, <i>Sporobolus virginicus</i>
Cupid's Shaving Brush, <i>Emilia fobergii</i>	Seaside Heliotrope, <i>Heliotropium curassavicum</i>
Day Flower, <i>Gomphocarpus exilis</i>	Sensitive Plant, <i>Mimosa strigillosa</i>
Fiddlewood, <i>Cathartocarpus frutescens</i>	Seven-year Apple, <i>Coccoloba cuneifolia</i>
Firibush, <i>Hamelia patens</i>	Snowberry, <i>Chiococca parvifolia</i>
Inkberry, <i>Scorvia plumieri</i>	Simpson's Stoppel, <i>Myrsine fragrans</i>
Jamaica Capet, <i>Capparis cynophallophora</i>	Spanish Bayonet, <i>Bacca alopiifolia</i>
Marlberry, <i>Andisia escafontoides</i>	Spider Lily, <i>Hymenocallis latifolia</i>
Muhly Grass, <i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i>	Tropical Sage, <i>Salvia exoniensis</i>
Nacklace-Pal, <i>Sophora tomentosa</i>	Tickseed coreopsis, <i>Coreopsis gladiata</i>
Pencilflower, <i>Stylisanthes hamata</i>	White Indigoberry, <i>Randia aculeata</i>
	Wild Coffee, <i>Psychotria nervosa</i>
	Wild Poinsettia, <i>Poinsettia cyathophora</i>