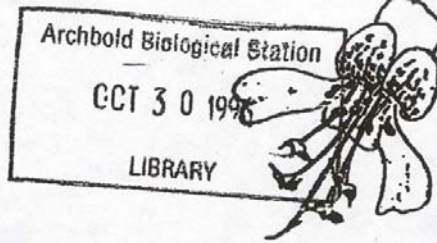


The

# Dicerandra



Newsletter of the Dicerandra Chapter of FNPS, Highlands County Vol.7 No.1 October 1996

## Revering our Scrub Landscapes

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There is an old Swedish saying that 'the forest is the poor man's cloak'. It is an apt simile for the scrub communities of the Lake Wales Ridge, as a mantle of cloth, cloaked over the rolling dunes. Strip off that cloak, down to the naked sand, and we have thrown away much. Who would be so ill-prepared as to go through life without a coat? Keep the scrub cloak and we retain protection, warmth, security, a rich garment, cover, and all that is enveloped within. Life on the Ridge without a scrub covering is an impoverished affair. Life on the Ridge with a scrub cloak is one of preparedness, of completeness, of adaptation.

Our scrub cloak is one of the most glorious Technicolor coats. I have just spent the last two to three weeks with Kevin Main, the Land Manager at Archbold, working on a vegetation map for the Lake Placid Scrub site, just north of the Station, off Route #70. The landscape rises behind Lake Placid, in a complicated series of low finely-modeled ridges, replete with oaks and hickories. The hickory makes the fine masses of color in Florida's fall scrubs, its sweet nuts a great focus for squirrels and bears. Interspersed are green shining meadows of cutthroatgrass and sedges and radiant rosemary balds. In the black and gray ashes and charred twigs of last summer's burn, a hopeful multitude of wiregrass and palmettos are pushing up through the cinders. On the bright days of September the flowers dance together in the scrub; *Palafoxia feayi*, *Polygonella polygama*, *Agalinis fasciculata*. I am reminded that there are many ways of getting to know biodiversity.

Of course there are simple practices to reveal biodiversity, such as hanging it over

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10,000' mountains, for all to see and understand! Such bold fashions are not for Florida. Here we would rather use the subtle and gentle folds of our landscape, to quietly impart its inspirational qualities. Around every slight rise we can lavish admiration on the great flower wonders of the scrub, for their beauty, color, curiosities, and great abundances.

Just as many notable authors reveal much of human nature, while moving in a small and local circle of family and friends, so we can uncover many of the riches of biodiversity in the intimate details of our small scrub corner of this planet. It is only with this appreciation, this knowing and understanding, this reverence, that we have the confidence and the assurance to go out and convince others of the value of the scrub. Threadbare and patched though it is, the scrub cloak of the Lake Wales Ridge is one of the most important drapes of biodiversity in North America, and one to which we must cling.

H.S.