

Franklinia alatamaha



Friends of Mead Garden

Go for the Flow

Editor's Note: Infrastructure is a less than sexy subject to read about, but substantial underpinnings are laying the groundwork for our future enjoyment of Mead Garden. This very important discussion is adapted with permission from Tim Egan's report in the "Winter Park Waterways" newsletter, plus a Q and A session with him.

Last year Winter Park applied for and received a federal EPA grant for \$270,000 to construct stormwater improvements in and around Mead Garden. The grant is administered through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The project, currently being designed, includes three separate phases that will improve the quality of stormwater entering Howell Creek as it flows through MG. The phases also will help restore the hydroperiod and habitat value of the large wetland in the north section of the Garden:

1. The first phase will create more stormwater storage in the "clay pit" area near the western end of the park by Denning Drive. Improvements will include construction of low berms to allow water to stage up (store before it flows) and debris to settle out during rainfalls; building of boardwalks and trails; and reforestation of the pit with native wetland species.
2. Phase two will involve the installation of a low weir on the outfall of the large northern wetland to create a more natural hydroperiod for that area.
3. The final phase involves the construction of a sediment removal system for stormwater entering the wetland from the area around the intersection of Pennsylvania and Melrose avenues.

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People Count for the Birds

by Dexter Richardson

Editor's Note: The peak spring migration happened in April in Central Florida. On a gorgeous Saturday at 7:45 a.m., a crowd of birders arrived in Mead Garden to watch a host of migrants rest and find food and water on their long, winged journeys from south to north. Dexter Richardson and Bruce Anderson, who have birded in Mead Garden for decades, shared their expertise and led the bird lovers through the park. MG was alive with happy sights and sounds, while bird residents built their annual homes for child rearing. Love was in the air. Dexter updates the MG birding activity which began 1 1/2 years ago:



MG bird photos by Andrew Boyle

The first year of the Mead Garden bird survey was completed last October and, as I knew we would, with a quick vote after that October survey, we unanimously decided to continue. And so we have.

We counted 123 species in our first year. In February and April we saw the most species. There were other high counts in March and October. High February showed the number of birds wintering here. April and October reflect peak migration time. March has wintering birds and some early migrants. The most birds seen in a month occurred in December, January, and March, showing the large flocks of Cedar Waxwings, American Robins, and American Goldfinches that winter here. Lowest numbers of species and total birds occur in summer.

Month	Species	Total Birds
Jan.		586
Feb.	56	
Mar.	49	541
Apr.	56	267
Oct.	47	
Dec.		635

We are already six months into year two of the bird survey, so we now have data to begin comparing months. This winter, the number of species has increased in the first three months, which tells me that we are getting better at finding birds. But, there are fewer total birds, for two reasons. The northern US has had a mild winter; thus fewer birds are wintering in Florida. Also, the diversity of habitat in Mead has diminished due in large part to the hurricanes and, to a lesser degree, to some necessary clearing. April had fewer species (50) than last year but more total birds (325), i.e. more flyovers and residents. More years of data will give us better conclusions.

With a master plan that will allow us to preserve the natural beauty, and some bird/animal friendly things we can do, Mead Garden will continue to attract the array of birds that has made it famous.

These "friendly things" include preserving habitat by not clearing brush and dead wood, planting trees and shrubs that attract birds, and installing moving water bird baths. Habitat in the wetland (boardwalk) area was more diverse before its canopy was lost to the hurricanes, and other plants grow there now. This loss can be improved with appropriate tree planting. Ironically, the obnoxious skunk vine is a food source for Cedar Waxwings. Last year at the March count, 200 Waxwings were feeding on



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“...the cluttering of reposeful park grounds with activity-oriented “focal points”—is lamentable and perplexing.”

In Defense of Open Space — How “focal points” and pavement are ruining America’s parks
BY CHARLES A. BIRNBAUM — www.nationaltrust.org/magazine/archives, Oct 2005

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Fresh from the Garden

Come, Enjoy Nature

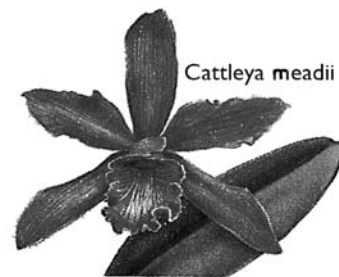
by Beverly Lassiter, President, Friends of Mead Garden

"Remember to stop and smell the roses along the way." Many of us have learned to follow this adage as we race through life ever more swiftly. And what better place to celebrate the dwindling respite in our beautiful world than Mead Garden, our tranquil wetland and woodland garden on the edge of bustling Winter Park? Mead Garden, a space for contemplation and relaxation, a natural place to bring your family for picnics and play, an oasis to observe birds, wildlife, and more. Come, enjoy its natural beauty.

The City of Winter Park, in partnership with Friends of Mead Garden, anticipates having a master planning firm on board by May 1. This MP will solicit ideas from the community for the

Garden's future, provide research and site analysis, then develop a conceptual Master Plan. A Master Planning Committee, composed of the selectors who evaluated the finalists in the master planning selection meetings, and others, will oversee the entire process. The final Master Plan should be completed in six to eight months.

On behalf of the Board of Friends of Mead Garden, I want to thank our partners: the City of Winter Park, City Commission, advisory boards of Parks & Recreation and Lakes & Waterways, Winter Park Garden Club, and John Holland and staff of Parks & Recreation for their work to revitalize Mead Garden.



Cattleya meadii

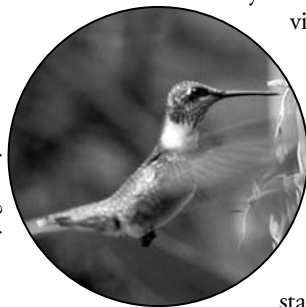
Mead Morsels

- There now are 22 full camperships for kids at the 3rd annual Nature Summer Camp in MG, and they're climbing. We are very grateful for community interest in MG's wonderful natural world lessons. Orange County Public School teachers will lead the camp; selected high school students will be volunteer counselors. In the two weeks before regular camp, OCPS will conduct its own camp sessions.
- Groups of students at Winter Park 9th Grade Center used MG as an ecosystem site to study and monitor soil, water, and acid rain test samples. They identified invasive plant species, and on school grounds planted a garden of Florida native plants. Keep Florida Beautiful donated \$1,000 to the project which will launch students toward more environmental responsibility.
- William Bartram, the second world famous American natural botanist (his father John was the first) returned to Florida through interpretation by J.D. Sutton, actor and playwright, in many venues. Sutton presented a colorful portrayal of William's 1774 botanizing travels through our green and exotic state, and made Puc Puggy come alive.
- If you have a **Franklinia** tree, discovered and rescued from extinction by the Bartrams, contact Dr. Charlotte M. Porter, a professor at UF's Florida Museum of Natural History, for instructions on how to harvest and mail fresh leaves for a scientific experiment. (352) 392-1721 x 494 or cmporter@flmnh.ufl.edu
- Watch for the date of a June Bartram Bash to celebrate WPGC's new Bartram Trail Marker (see p. 4).

People Count for the Birds

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this invasive along the boardwalk; this year, six. The marked fall reflects the clearing of the plant pest, and the nomadic nature of Waxwings which may appear on another



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day. Of course, getting rid of skunk vine is a priority. Other vegetation will be planted to attract these birds.

On a March Saturday, a birder looked over the Butterfly Garden and the wetland beyond, toward a three pronged dead tree trunk standing starkly against the now visible condominiums next door. He saw a female pileated woodpecker busily flitting in and out of a large hole in one bare branch. Red crest flaming, the big bird visited some of the numerous other holes in the limbs, but favored this one. Was it feeding? Checking out the site? Nesting? Periodically incubating eggs? Bruce, who co-authored an encyclopedia for Florida

birds and edits two publications, advised watching for progress.

On that day one male and two female purple martins circled the BG. They had left the Amazon River on an afternoon. Guiding by starlight, tucking wings, catching a tail wind, they could have arrived at the BG the next morning. The male landed on a row of white gourds hung on a pole and peered into half of them. It flew up to the females, then back, then up again. One female departed; the other followed the male down and landed on a "unit." Is that gourd their nesting place this year? Time will tell.

Bob Stephens, co-chair of the BG and former Disney advisor in butterfly gardens and birds, has noted a steady decrease in the bird population as trees are lost to development. For example, cavity builders such as woodpeckers, owls, bluebirds can't find enough trees to build in, or are often chased out by other cavity builders. He agrees with Dexter: instead of cutting down any dead tree, save it if not dangerous, or top it out and leave it standing.



Kathy Groninger, Petra Tanner, Alice Mikkleson -- Master Gardeners

Master Gardeners Serve

These happy Master Gardeners graduated from an advanced course in gardening offered by the University of Florida through the Orange County Cooperative Extension. They provided volunteer consults at "Nature's Bounty," Winter Park Garden Club's annual public horticultural day. For their training, graduates give back 50 hours of service to community projects coordinated through the county office. This year for the first time new Masters received credits for volunteering at MG and WPGC public events. More new Master Gardeners and volunteers are needed. Interim Coordinator Tom MacCubbin, now succeeded by new Coordinator Ed Thralls, taught the course.

Go for the Flow (Q and A with Tim Egan)

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Q. Please explain the more natural hydroperiod you are striving for.

A. The wetland in Mead Garden has been channelized to let high water run off quickly to Howell Creek.

The result is that water does not get as high as normal or stay in the wetland as long as it naturally would. We can't practically raise the high water level due to surrounding development, but we can keep water in the wetland through most of the wet season by constructing a weir across the channel that drains to the creek.

The weir, with walls formed of aluminum or vinyl sheets, will be mostly hidden by walkways. It will keep the wet season high water level at about where it is now and stop water from running out quickly when rainfall tapers off....the transition from wet to dry will be more subtle, much longer than it is now. The weir will allow us to restore the hydroperiod---the seasonal timing and duration of high and low water levels in a wetland---more closely to the Garden's natural conditions. These conditions are estimated from statistical data of yearly water levels, and from natural indicators such as soils, vegetation types, and topography.

Q. How will the berms be built?

A. They will be earthen walls that form three "containers" in descending stepwise order across the bottom of the clay pit area and will hold water from rainfalls. The topography of the pit will not be altered.

Q. How do the berms work?

A. In a rainfall, they will hold back most of the stormwater runoff, although some water will flow through. A "bleed down" mechanism designed into the berms will control the rate of water outflow with two results: it mimics a natural flowing wetland that normally leaks water downstream at a low rate, and it allows us to recover storage volume for the next storm. Slowing of the flow provides treatment.... sediments fall out, and biological activities remove nutrients or convert them to less available forms.

Q. How will all this improve habitat?

A. The clay pit was altered by human activity, and now has a large amount of non-native vegetation. We will replant with native trees and shrubs; the species chosen will match the hydrologic conditions we will create with the berms. Within the wetland, the extended high water time will prevent loss of wetland soils to oxidation, thereby improving the health of canopy trees and reducing their high wind susceptibility. The increased wetness will reduce some of the exotic plants now growing in profusion.

Q. What trees do you have in mind?

A. We envision a full canopy of cypress and bay trees, keeping the bays that are growing there now. The camphor trees at the bottom of the pit will be removed or left as roost trees. They most likely will die with changes in water levels. For the most part, trees on the slopes will not be affected.

Q. What will be the stormwater retrofits?

A. All of the above projects are stormwater retrofits:

*The clay pit to store more water and remove pollutants;

*The outfall channel in the wetland with a weir to extend high water conditions;

*The existing stormwater pipes outside the park to remove sediments and debris before rainfall runs into the wetland and creek.



Non-native overgrowth

Friends of Mead Garden is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization chartered July, 2003.

In partnership with the City of Winter Park, our purpose is to restore and enhance Mead Garden.

(407) 599-2800
1300 So. Denning Drive

The land that became the 55 acre park was explored in 1937 by Dr. Edwin O. Grover, VP of Rollins College, and former student John Connery. Mead Garden opened in 1940 as a tribute to the life work of horticulturist Theodore Mead.



Cattleya meadii
Mead's 1991 Singapore Stamp

Mead Garden

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www.meadgarden.org



Linda Locky carries her bounty from the plant sale of "**Nature's Bounty**," Winter Park Garden Club's annual horticultural day held at its clubhouse in MG. Speaking at this increasingly popular public event were *Marc C. Minno*, Ph.D., Supervising Regulatory Scientist for the St. Johns River WMD, re caring for butterfly gardens; naturally oriented nursery owner *Cathy Brown*, specializing in bird and butterfly habitats and native plants; and *Elaine Pawlikowski*, prominent award winning Rosarian, on growing outstanding roses.

Calendar

Sign Up for Summer Camp Now!

Call 407-599-3334 (Travis) to register for a unique, hands-on learning experience for children grades 1 to 5. Campers explore natural wonders in Mead Garden guided by Orange County School teachers. The cost is \$160 per camper per week. Campers must bring a sack lunch.

Additional camp information is available through the OCPS Environmental Education Center in Mead Garden (407-628-0995).

June 12 - July 14	9 AM - 2 PM	Summer Camp (5 Sessions)
May 24	8:30 AM	FMG Board - WPGClubhouse
June 21	8:30 AM	FMG Board - WPGClubhouse
Third Saturdays	7:45 - 10 AM	Bird Watch & Count in MG
Every Sunday	2 - 4 PM	Weed Warrior Volunteers
Every Thursday	8:15-10:15 AM	Butterfly Garden Volunteers

For more details check www.meadgarden.org or call (407) 599-2800

WPGC is preparing for another horticultural and historical achievement. Its long awaited **Bartram Trail Marker**, the 24th in Florida, has arrived. This major American standard will stand tall and elegant as visitors drive along the brick road into the Garden. It marks the 1774 travels through East, West, and our part of Florida by world renowned natural botanist and artist William Bartram.