



# BROWARD SIERRA NEWS



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## VOLUNTEERISM PAYING OFF

– By Sue Caruso, Broward Sierra Secretary



The Broward Sierra Club has been fortunate to be able to hold our monthly meetings at beautiful Fern Forest Nature Center for free! In return, we have performed monthly invasive plant removal for several years. Ashley Grace, one of the park's biologists, has taken over Ranger Rick's task of outfitting and directing us to areas of the park overrun

with exotic species. Though it may seem that any plant should be acceptable in a native habitat, exotic plants are hardy species that can outcompete and take over an area from the natives. Not only does this disrupt the wildlife that feed on the natives, it also reduces the resiliency of the habitat in times of natural and man-made disasters. Many of the exotic species, such as Brazilian pepper, Australian pine and melaleuca trees, have been brought in by humans for specific purposes that seemed like "a good idea at the time." Unfortunately, once these plants escape into native habitats, it is difficult to control them without constant effort.

The good news is that our efforts in Fern Forest seem to be making a difference. It's harder to find the exotics that flourished in the past. The native marlberry is much easier to spot with less of the shoebuttan ardisia competing with it for resources. The prolific air potato has been successfully removed with the introduction of a pest that feeds only on that pesky plant, demonstrating that biologic controls can be just as, or more effective than chemical treatments. This, of course, reduces the presence of unwanted, harmful chemicals in our environment. Unfortunately, the studies necessary to make sure such pests will not themselves create a problem in their new environment can take up to a decade to complete. Therefore, our continued efforts to manually remove exotics will remain a boost to the park's management and health. Thanks to all of our volunteers whose efforts are making a difference!

**Please note that our final Fern Forest Beautification day this season will be Saturday, April 28th** from 9am to noon. Please let Max know if you'd like to come help out and spend a lovely morning outdoors with some fellow environmentalists. 954-296-3411 or [maxgold@yahoo.com](mailto:maxgold@yahoo.com)



## SOME OF OUR BEAUTIFUL PLACES

– By Ina Oost Topper, Broward Sierra Chair

While we're well aware of our many state, county, national parks, and nature preserves we have in our area, we sometimes forget the more formal garden settings directly at our doorstep. I have lately taken some out of town visitors to some wonderful local places of tropical beauty. Let this be a mini tour on paper, to remind you of what to do on one of those weekend days when you have run out of ideas as to where to go with the family, or a great plan for visitors from out of town.

### Bonnet House:

On rare occasions in the past we have joined the Bonnet House foundation with a special day venture, whether by publicizing their event or simply supplying some of our literature for handouts to the public. The Bonnet House was



given by Hugh Taylor Birch who had bought the site in 1895 as a wedding present to his daughter (yes, THAT Birch, for whom the park next door was named). It's truly a local historic jewel, not only because of the grounds (which even has a nature trail), but also because touring the house brings you back in time to when Ft Lauderdale was established. And, while visiting the house, why not spend a few hours at the Hugh Taylor Birch Park as well? It makes for more than just an afternoon on the beach.

A side note, I didn't previously know that the house and grounds were used for Carl Hiaasen's film, after the book, "Hoot" - a great promotion for saving our burrowing owl!

### Fairchild Tropical Gardens:

The one thing many Broward County residents hesitate to do is to go South to Miami-Dade county and visit one of the most exceptional botanical gardens in our nation. There's plenty of on-site shady parking, and one can take lots of time to walk the huge

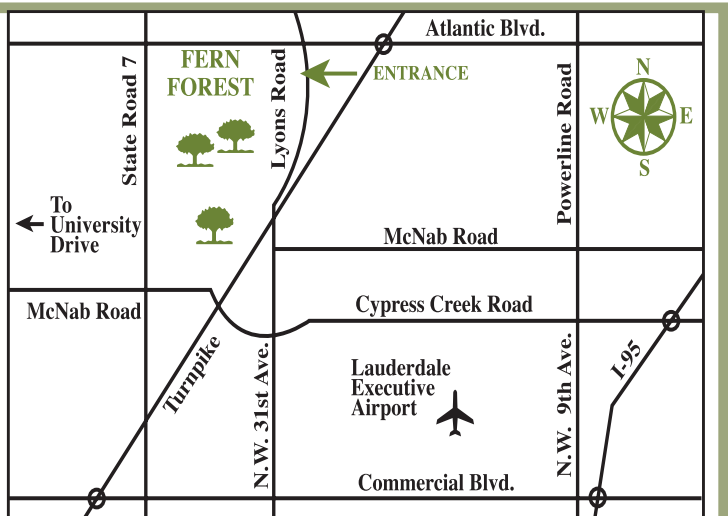
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**Broward Sierra Club's General Meetings - The first Thursday of each month we have committee reports and an educational program on conservation or environmental issues.**

**DIRECTIONS:** Fern Forest Nature Center, 201 Lyons Road South, in Coconut Creek is just south of Atlantic Blvd. on the west side of the street. (From the south, NW 31 Ave. becomes NW 46 Ave., and then Lyons Rd. as you pass under the turnpike.) Committee reports begin at 7:30, and the program follows. The meeting is open to the public at no charge.

**Thursday, May 3rd:** We will be showing the National Geographic documentary, *Before The Flood*, which premiered last year. The film is a rousing call to action as it follows actor Leonardo DiCaprio around the globe bearing witness to climate change and speaking to experts on what must be done to save our planet.



# LOCAL SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS AND EVENTS

To preserve a place, you must believe in it. To believe in it, you must see it.

**APRIL 28, SAT. FERN FOREST BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT** You know we meet at Fern Forest Nature Center on the first Thursday of the month? Well, it's time to do something for them. We will be helping them get rid of invasive plants and keeping the place looking good for visitors. We will meet in the Exhibit Hall on the first floor at 9:00 AM. Please bring water and help out your local Sierra Club and Fern Forest as well. They will have work gloves, but if you have a pair that you're used to, bring them. They will be supplying water (stay hydrated!). And make sure to wear long pants. Please let Max know if you will be coming. <https://www.meetup.com/Broward-County-Sierra-Club-Group/events/249721880>  
954-296-3411 [maxgold@yahoo.com](mailto:maxgold@yahoo.com).



*Beautiful Places, continued from previous page*



garden, while being educated on some of the rarest flowers, plants, trees and bushes that adorn the grounds. For instance, this is also the place where you find that rare infamous plant, the Titan Arum, which only flowers every few years, filling the air with a most revolting smell of rotting carrion! (It's true! Not a visitor goes past it without a kerchief covering their noses.) And, not to forget the famous Victoria water lilies in one of the garden's ponds, boasting the largest leaves of any plant, be it water- or other plants. I remember in other gardens

around the globe these floating leaves always being mentioned as "big enough to hold a baby, or even a toddler".

The best time to visit the garden is on one of its special weekend occasions, during a mango or orchid festival. But what's been a great added bonus in recent years is its very extensive butterfly exhibit. By far one of the largest on the continent. I know, we have Butterfly World here in Broward county, but why not combine such a feature with the magnificent gardens, and then, a stone's throw North of here, take your guests for a walk or a quick bite into Coconut Grove. An unforgettable (long) day for the out-of-towners, who'll be forever grateful.



Or, The Kampong, the estate of Dr. David Fairchild, his private home and grounds acquired in 1928. Somewhat smaller than the botanical gardens and official admittance by prior reservation. But frequent musical events at the Kampong make it a great deal for a visit - especially during moonlit nights. (There's a tradition to feature their musical performances when there's a full moon.)

## The Deering Estate in South Miami:



One of Florida's early pioneers, Charles Deering's cottage style home dating back to 1900 surrounded by what's the last remaining original tropical hammock on the East coast. Sometimes a visit can be combined with a musical evening, often held during the cooler times of the year.

## Pine Crest Gardens:

In earlier times, it was known as Miami's Parrot Jungle. Due to its less accessible location, it was moved to Watson Island, near downtown Miami. It still has exceptional floral beauty, with its enormous banyan and sausage trees and a unique



cactus garden. This is perfect when the day needs to be shorter, or a Coconut Grove dinner visit is the main purpose of going South.

## Morikami Museum & Japanese Gardens in Delray Beach :

The Japanese Gardens provide that unique feature of what Japanese gardening is all about: immaculately manicured trees, bushes, and the art of decorative gravel and large stones. Interestingly, the history of the gardens goes back way more than what one would expect!



Well over a hundred years ago, a group of young Japanese farmers brought to South Florida by an agricultural sub-venture of Henry Flagler's railroad project, built the gardens as a permanent tribute to their homeland. Named for its main founder, George Yamato, the gardens are an oasis of tranquility, more appreciated on a weekday perhaps, when there are hardly any visitors. The Museum, built as a Japanese residence with its slanted gabled roof, houses a remarkable collection of Japanese art objects. If going on weekends is more of an option, check to find out about special events, like the Japanese spring festival the Hatsume Fair, (held yearly, in April) or one of the evenings of a Japanese lantern festival

## Flamingo Gardens:



Of course, we all know about it, and have probably visited. But have we ever taken the time to truly educate ourselves by reading all the placards and signs in front of the many trees, rare palms and other plants?

Or instead of taking the tramride, take a leisurely walk. Several times a year Flamingo Gardens holds a great plant sale in its parking area, not requiring any admission to the gardens. And nearby along Flamingo road you'll find many nurseries where great deals are to be had!

Yes, we've gone the commercial route this time instead of promoting the many nature preserves. But we're combining a bit of Florida's history with some of the more formal flora-assets we have in our area. A caveat: yes there's often an admission to be paid, and in some instances quite steep (like \$20 per person). But seniors, students or military personnel get discounts, and for many hours or even a whole day of outdoor enjoyment it's not so bad compared to a movie night with sodas and popcorn.

Besides, almost all of these estates and gardens are on the National Register of Historic Places, so we're talking history lessons as well, for the whole family.