



January 2021 Newsletter

In This Issue...

- Monthly Conservation Note
- Program of the Month
- Board Member Spotlight
- Upcoming Events
- Recent Events

Monthly Conservation Note

The Choices We Make

Like it or not, every day we make choices that affect which plants live and which plants die. No matter if we are vegetarians or omnivores, what we eat determines what plants are grown and harvested, and how much space those plants occupy. If we eat meat, more plants must be grown to support our diet. We make choices about which plants we grow in our gardens, which to trim, or mow, to let grow, or cut down. Every day we make decisions about the fate of plants, a fact of human life that has been around for as long as we have been humans.

Yet some people take umbrage when restoration practitioners cut, dig up, or otherwise kill invasive exotic plants as part of restoration projects. Some may simply express regret that an exotic plant they like must be removed, while others may question why we have the right to decide what lives or dies. Yet they make plant-fate decisions themselves every day.

One complaint was made about the removal of sisal-hemp (*Agave sisalana*), a plant that is both one of the most important fiber plants in the world and one of the most invasive. In 2018, IRC Research Associate Carlos Trejo and I published a

In peninsular Florida, sisal-hemp is highly invasive and competes directly with our native endemic false-sisal (*Agave decipiens*) and many other coastal plants. We remove it to allow native species to survive and thrive. Our critic wrote "That plant used to flower beautifully. Terrible, now no one will be able to enjoy that beautiful exotic plant." What was not recognized, is that where we are removing nonnative sisal-hemp, we are also planting our native false-sisal, native *Yucca aloifolia*, and other cool plants. To me, the latter are even more beautiful, both aesthetically and philosophically. But because of the extreme disconnect between people and nature, restoration success is only possible if we make as much effort to educate as we do to restore.

George Gann

Founder and Executive Director

[peer-reviewed paper](#) on the origin and history of sisal hemp. Interestingly, this species is a [cultigen](#), or a plant created through deliberate human selection. Without us, it would not exist.

Sisal-hemp was introduced to Indian Key, Florida, in 1833 by Henry Perrine, who was famously killed in the Second Seminole War. From there it was introduced around the tropics and subtropics of the world. Ironically, sisal-hemp became so rare in its place of origin, the Yucatan, that it was not recognized as such until our paper in 2018.



Our Florida native *Agave decipiens*, known nowhere else in the world. It grows from the Florida Keys north along the coasts to Martin and Manatee counties.

Photo copyright by: Karolina Weclawska



Thank you to all who have supported IRC's programs in the last month.

Colleen Boggs, John Costello, John Lipscomb, Gwen Burzycki, Carolyn Metcalf, Allison McGee, Barbara McAdam, and Sandra Bravo.

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IRC has an E-Trade account, so please contact us about giving gifts of stock.

Donations allow us to provide important conservation services such as improving our free online resources, increasing protection of rare plants and animals, restoring native ecosystems, and advocating for better public policy.

Program of the Month

☰ Natives For Your Neighborhood

A Resource to Help Change a Hobby for a Few into a Powerful Conservation Tool of Many.

Here you can learn how to turn simple gardening into habitat restoration by using plants that are native to your specific area. This website will provide you with the information you need to do that. By planting native plants and recreating natural habitats that are unique to your area, you will make a valuable contribution to the conservation and restoration of South Florida's natural heritage!

Find out About the Unique Plants, Habitats, and Wildlife in Your Area.
Choose what you would like to search:

Florida Zip Code
 By County
 Plant
 Animal

Search By Florida Zip Code
Start by entering a 5-digit Florida ZIP Code here:

If you would like to learn more about native plants and the importance of conserving them, or [how to use this website](#), see the topics at right.

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Above: Mobile view of Natives For Your Neighborhood homepage. Simply enter your 5-digit Florida ZIP code and then click on your plant list or select "Advanced Search" for more options (shown below).

IRC Online Resources

Did you know that IRC currently has 5 free online databases full of rich floristic data? In 2020, our online resources had 1,127,000 page views and 123,000 users!

If you are not already familiar with these resources, here is a quick overview of each.

- **[Natives For Your Neighborhood](#)** - our most popular online resource with 76,000 users in 2020, this user-friendly conservation tool is designed to help you take simple gardening and turn it into habitat restoration. Simply search for native plants by entering your ZIP code or dive deeper by doing an advanced search, searching by [habitat](#), or searching for how to support [pollinators](#) in your area.
- **[Floristic Inventory of South Florida](#)** - this resource provides data on more than 2500 vascular plants in the 10 southernmost counties of Florida. Search by plant, conservation area, county or habitat to learn more. 2021 is the **20th Anniversary** of the launch of the Floristic Inventory of South Florida!
- **[Floristic Inventory of the Florida Keys](#)** - this project under the Floristic Inventory of South Florida provides data on more than 1000 vascular plants in the Florida Keys.
- **[Plantas de Puerto Rico/ Plants of Puerto Rico](#)** - this bilingual, botanical website aims to help people learn about and conserve the plants of Puerto Rico. There is also a corresponding highly interactive [Facebook page](#) moderated by IRC Research Associate, Carlos Trejo.

Native Plants

• Click below to obtain a list of native plants that are recommended for 33441, and to see photos and learn more about them.

Whether you are just beginning a new native plant project, or will be introducing native plants into an existing garden, this is the place to find out which native plants are right for your specific area.

Get your plant list for 33441 !

Advance search for plants

Habitats

• You can try your hand at ecological restoration in your yard or

To take gardening with natives a step further, you can learn about the plant and animal habitats that are native to your area. Here you can also learn more about native habitats and ecosystems, and get a list of



- **Plantas de Mayab (Yucatan)** - this Spanish-language botanical website provides data on plants of Yucatan, Mexico. It also has a corresponding [Facebook page](#) moderated by IRC Research Associate, Carlos Trejo.



"Meet Our Team" Spotlight

IRC Board Member - John Campanola

John Campanola is a long-time Florida resident who is active in local activities and events. He is a graduate of Leadership Delray, and is very involved in the Greater Delray Beach Chamber of Commerce where he is a long-term Ambassador and a member on many of its committees and organizations. He was named the Greater Delray Beach Chamber of Commerce 2018 and 2013-2014 Ambassador of the Year and was a winner of the 2013-2014 Ken Ellingsworth Community Service Award. He is also very involved in Boynton Beach where he is the Chairman of the Boynton Business Professionals leads group. He is the winner of the Boynton Beach Chamber's 2017 New Member of the Year Award.



Mr. Campanola is an established Financial Services Professional for the New York Life Insurance Company. Prior to that, he

was Global Product Manager at General Electric where he managed several security software products from a global P&L perspective, and Director of Strategic Business Planning at Verizon. Mr. Campanola has also held various Director and Management positions at Adelphia and other leading firms in the fields of Security, Wireless, and Telecommunications. He has an MBA from New York University.



Mr. Campanola joined the IRC Board in 2015. He and his wife, Lydia, have been active volunteers in our Green Delray and Restoring the Gold Coast programs. He has also helped us secure funding for Restoring the Gold Coast through New York Life.

Upcoming Events

Be on the lookout on our Facebook page, website, or next newsletter for upcoming events for our Pine Rockland Initiative, Restoring the Gold Coast Program and Green Delray Program!

Recent Events

Delray Municipal Beach Restoration

IRC recently continued adding diversity to the dunes at Delray Municipal Beach. We added a variety of hardwoods and herbaceous plants, including Common snowberry, Blolly, Varnishleaf, Beach verbena, Seaside goldenrod, and Marinevine.

This work is part of our Restoring the Gold Coast program, which aims to restore native coastal biodiversity.

Thank you to Neglected Plants, Coastal Growers, and our watering volunteers!



Dune Field Trip with Beach Property Owners' Association



George Gann led an interactive teaching tour for the Beach Properties Owners' Association (BPOA) at the Delray Beach Municipal Beach on January 23rd, 2021, highlighting IRC's restoration activities. Only 12 members were allowed to attend to minimize the disturbance to the dunes and the fragile native plants that are just now taking root. Participants learned how native plants were added in areas where sea grapes had been trimmed as well as in areas where undesirable invasive species were removed. The benefits of biodiversity were described and shown in the middle of the dune system, which opened several eyes and minds.



The BPOA is a non-profit organization for residents of Delray Beach's barrier island. Their mission is to tackle environmental and lifestyle issues that benefit residents and visitors alike.



We are a nonprofit conservation organization exempt from taxes under the
U.S. Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)3.

The Institute for Regional Conservation | [Website](#)

