

Graduating Students:

Congratulations to the following students who recently completed their graduate studies on exotic pest plants:

Dorothy Brazis, 2002, Master's Degree, University of Florida, Agronomy, "Factors influencing the distribution of *Paederia foetida* (skunk vine): an invasive vine of natural areas of Florida." Major Professor: Randall Stocker.

Kristina Serbesoff-King, 2002, Master's Degree, Florida International University, Environmental Studies, "*Melaleuca quinquenervia* – A review of the taxonomy, biology, harmful and beneficial values, distribution and control of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* in Florida." Major Professor: "Jay" Jayachandran.

New Books:

A Plague of Rats and Rubber-Vines – the Growing Threat of Species Invasions, by Yvonne Baskin, 2002. Island Press: www.islandpress.org

Rare Plants of South Florida: Their History, Conservation and Restoration, by G.D. Gann, K.A. Bradley, and S.W. Woodmansee, 2002. The Institute for Regional Conservation: www.regionalconservation.org

Invasive Aquatic and Wetland Plants Field Guide, by Stratford Kay, 2002. North Carolina State University/ North Carolina Sea Grant: Barbara_doll@ncsu.edu

A Global Compendium of Weeds, by R.P. Randall, 2002. (More than 20,000 entries!) RG and FJ Richardson, Australia: www.weedinfo.com.au/

Education/Extension:

The **Florida Master Naturalist Program** (FMNP) is an adult education extension program developed by the University of Florida and taught in many counties throughout the state. FMNP is for persons interested in learning more about Florida's environment and conservation issues and is appropriate for people of all knowledge levels. The program includes courses in 3 subject areas: *Freshwater Wetlands*, *Coastal Systems*, and *Upland Habitats*. Each subject is taught independently and costs \$200. For more information, go to www.MasterNaturalist.org

NOTES FROM THE DISTURBED EDGE

Chapter 6

This was crazy - she'd been a hostage long enough. She spent her days battling vicious alien intruders, the Sigourney Weaver of the floral kingdom, but now she was cowering in her own home, peeking out through the curtains, hoping that frightening thing out there would just go away. Her faithful and ever-so-patient canine companion alternately peered up at her and stared at the doorknob, leash in mouth and legs crossed - watching her behave like some paranoid freak, fearing she'd finally thrown a rod. She felt like she was teetering on the brink of insanity, and her dog was about to explode.

She knew this would happen, and had spent all afternoon obsessing about it, hoping that he would concoct some magical cure in response to her endless diatribe about the inevitable confrontation that was now unfolding, but she had been left to blaze her own path, flatly refusing to take the low road. "No," she'd told him, "this is someone I've got to see every day. I can't just give her the old 'Oh yeah, they tend to drop some leaves when they're first transplanted, especially in, uh, whatever season this is . . .' line and hope she finds the will to go on after her tragic loss. She'll know I'm lying, or at least I will. No — I just have to talk to her." She knew she did, but certainly did not want to right now.

He'd thought that maybe she could introduce the topic from an obtuse angle, steer the conversation to talk about their work perhaps, but she'd disagreed. "She knows what I do — kind of, I think. I've heard her yelling 'that nice girl next door is an environmental guardian' into the phone," and she'd pre-empted the supposedly witty retort she knew would follow, "and yes, I'm pretty sure she's talking about me because the other person next door to her is an old man..."

In her head she repeated "That which does not kill me makes me stronger," while another part of her mind inquired, "How can I drop this kind of bomb on my neighbor, especially such a nice little lady, without coming off as a self-righteous know-it-all or, worse yet, a blue-booted thug, casting judgment on her neighbor, the legendary tree police?" How do you tell the little lady who waves to you each morning and sends you off with a 'Go save our environment sweetie!' each day, how do you tell her, when you come back at the end of the day, that you just spent 8 hours killing the plants she's

cultivating? How do you tell her that her newly acquired botanical additions are anathema in this climate?

She understood - her neighbor had purchased most of her plants from the local Big Tropical Illusion Garden Center, or whatever that place was called. She'd talked with the friendly garden department folks in their matching aprons and their pruners in substantial leather holsters. They'd sold her hearty, fast growing plants that would add texture, color, and beauty to her garden. She'd planted and coddled and watered and fed them, and they would grow and grow and grow, and then go to seed and set about their work of uncontested dispersal, until the day when that nice girl next door would come face to face with their healthy little progeny, and lay them all to waste, ripping them from the face of the earth, tearing them limb from limb. "Yes, this was quite unexpected, she was always such a quiet girl . . ." How would she explain?

The best way to deal with your fears is to confront them. She was awash in bumper sticker psychology. Winners set realistic goals and achieve them. Losers, well losers sometimes cowered in their own homes. She opened the door; the dog bounded gleefully forth and romped around the yard once, quickly, before heading for a favorite territorial signpost. "Oh hello deary" the little lady smiled, and waved as she looked up from some intense gardening activity, "isn't it a lovely day for a walk? I just love it when..." her polite attention to the friendly conversation was distracted by the realization that her dog was still busy adding new meaning to the term basal bark application — wow that was really a patient pooch. "Just talk to her," he'd said.

She interrupted the continuing stream of good cheer: "Ma'am — can we talk?" and was genuinely surprised by the response. "Oh good, yes I'd like that — it seems you're always in such a hurry. Come on in out of the heat, you've been out working in the sweaty environment all day. I made some cookies this afternoon, and I've wanted to ask you about that other tree — it never did get those new leaves you talked about..." She rolled her eyes and stepped inside, praying that the truth, or at least most of it, would set her free. She'd been a hostage in her own home long enough.

- J.A.

An excerpt from "The Adventures of Hack Garlon and his buxom sidekick Squirt."