



Lowcountry Master Gardener Association

www.LowcountryMasterGardeners.org

A Hidden Treasure

Pinckney Island Natural Wildlife Refuge



Between the bustling towns of Hilton Head Island and Bluffton lies a pristine wilderness area called Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge. It is home to a variety of birds, mammals and reptiles. The Lowcountry Master Gardeners and the Pinckney Island Refuge volunteers, under the leadership of Michelle Baldwin, work to encourage a variety of butterflies to make Pinckney Island their home.

If you walk about a mile on the unpaved road that serves as a walking path, you'll see areas of dense vegetation as well as areas with panoramic views. On the right, you'll come upon a beautiful sunny garden that was created by the refuge volunteers and a local school and is maintained by these Master Gardeners. In keeping with the natural environment, native plants are used to provide nectar and to serve as host plants.





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On this Spring day, the Master Gardeners Michelle Baldwin, Kathy and Bruce Allen, Robert Draper and Tony Talerico are checking on the progress and needs of the plants while looking for signs of butterflies in any stage of their life. They find two butterflies, a Monarch and a Painted Lady and a chrysalis on the bark of tree. If the Master Gardeners need a reminder of why they work on this project, these signs of life serve this purpose.

This garden provides the butterflies' basic needs of food, water, cover and space. Their food is comes from the planting of host plants such as Butterfly Weed, Cassia, Dill, Fennel, Passion Vine, and Milkweed and the



toothache tree. The nectar plants include Aster, Butterfly Weed, Coreopsis, Goldenrod, Lantana, and Purple Coneflower. The rock and puddling area serve as the butterflies' water and space source. The butterflies sit on the warm rocks to warm their bodies before becoming active. Cover is provided by the Toothache Tree (*Zanthoxylum clavaherculis*) and the shrubs in the garden.

The Master Gardeners maintain the garden through regular visits, every 2nd and 4th Wednesday March-Nov.

Please visit the garden and enjoy the fruits of the Master Gardeners' labor and the possibility of seeing a stage in the life of a butterfly. The best time to visit the garden is Sept – Oct, after 10am, when the butterflies are most active.



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