

Nature Notes

...from Sharon

The Necklace Pod is a beautiful, loose growing shrub that grows up to 10 feet tall. These drought tolerant plants are a member of Fabaceae (Leguminosae), the family of peas and beans. It loves to be in full sun and thrives in well-drained sandy soils. It will tolerate some salt spray and is at home on the inland side of the dunes along the beach. This evergreen plant is native to South Florida and found along coastal areas. No wonder it is in abundance on our little island!

These are currently blooming throughout the Preserve. You can't miss their bright yellow flowers that are on long, racemose, terminal spikes. The spikes can be up to 16 inches long. Blooms usually start to open at the base of the spike and progressively open toward the tip. Although there is little to no fragrance, the blooms attract butterflies and hummingbirds for its



sweet nectar. It is a host plant for caterpillars of sulphur butterflies. The flowers also attract warblers and bees. Depending on temperatures, you may see blooms on this plant throughout the year. There is just enough cold in our area that it usually does not bloom during the coldest part of our winter.



New leaves are velvety which gives them a silver-green color. Leaves turn a glossy dark green, becoming glabrous or smooth and shiny as they mature.

After blooming, attractive fruit or pea pods (legumes) also start sprouting at the base of the spike and there may be blooms as well as pods on the spike at the same time. The photo on the right shows the new pods forming. The pods may be from 2 to 8 inches long and, as the peas mature, the pods are compressed between the peas to resemble a beaded necklace, hence the common name necklace pod. Mature pods are shown in the photo to the left.



The necklace pod shrub makes an attractive addition to the home landscape, especially for houses near beaches. Caution: The seeds (peas) are dangerous to eat and contain an alkaloid, cytisine, which is emetic and purgative. They should be kept out of reach of young children.

Necklace Pod

(*Sophora tomentosa* var. *truncate*)

