Did you know...

…the purple queen (\textit{Tradescantia pallida}) is called a spiderwort? \textit{Tradescantia} (spiderworts), is a genus of 75 species of perennial plants in the family Commelinaceae, native to the New World from southern Canada south to northern Argentina including the West Indies.

**History**

The name of the genus (\textit{Tradescantia}) honors English naturalists John Tradescant the Elder (1570s – 1638) and John Tradescant the Younger (1608–1662).

**Characteristics**

Spiderworts are weakly upright to scrambling plants, growing to 10-20 inches tall, and are commonly found individually or in clumps in wooded areas and fields. A number of the species flower in the morning and when the sun shines on the flowers in the afternoon they close, but can remain open on cloudy days until evening.

Although sometimes considered a weed, spiderwort is often cultivated as a ground cover plant and also used in containers. Where it appears as a volunteer (accidentally dropped seed), it is often welcomed and allowed to stay.

The cells of the stamen hairs (pollen-producing reproductive organ of a flower) of some \textit{Tradescantia} are colored blue, but when exposed to sources of ionizing radiation such as gamma rays, the cells mutate and change color to pink; they are one of the few tissues known to serve as an effective bioassay (determination of the biological activity or potency of a substance) for ambient radiation levels.

**Web Site (and E-Group)**

For more details about wildlife on the Bay Colony Club property (as well as Fern Forest and Anne Kolb Nature Centers), see:

http://southfloridawildlife.weebly.com