

Plants of the Month

For those of you who, like us, prefer not to have the manual and chemical care and watering of a lawn to add to your list of gardening chores and expenses, here are 2 alternatives.

The first is *Arachis glabrata*, known alternately as peanut grass, perennial peanut, ornamental peanut, or ecoturf. The varieties developed in this country have many advantages over the species form, which is native to South America, and they are ideal for the Florida climate. They are ground-hugging, dense growers that you can walk on. They don't produce seeds in any quantity, and they have a moderate growth rate, so they are not invasive. Once established they need no irrigation, and being legumes, they take care of their nitrogen needs without fertilizer. Unfortunately, perennial peanut is not well known yet, and not easy to find in quantity. The source we finally located is in Jacksonville, but they will ship. Ask Jim or Eric at the next meeting if you're interested. Here's their website:

<http://www.ornamentalpeanut.com/index.htm>



The next is *Mimosa strigillosa*, the sunshine mimosa, a Pinellas County native plant. Also a dense grower and a legume, but not a walk-on ground cover, it has the advantage of being perfectly adapted to our climate. The flowers are quite showy, and attract butterflies. It is best in full sun, and away from stepping stones, as there are some small thorns on the stems.

Both of these ground covers have long bloom seasons, and require minimal care. Good news for busy gardeners!