Florida Native Plant Society

Council of Chapters Meeting Minutes 05/23/2021
Online Zoom Meeting
taken by Kara Driscoll – past CoC Chair and edited by Melanie Simon – CoC Secretary

Patricia Burgos called the meeting to order at 06:31 PM

In attendance (24) – 21 of 33 Chapters
* indicates proxy or guest

Citrus – Gail Taylor
Coccoloba – Lucy Breitung
Conradina – Martha Steuart
Cuplet Fern – Al Squires
Dade – Kurt Birchenough
Eugenia – David Martin
Hernando – Heather Sharkey
Ixia – Nick Freeman
Lake Beautyberry – Patricia Burgos - CoC Chair
Longleaf Pine – Lizzy Jenny*
Martin County – Dianna Wentink
Naples – Kara Driscoll
Nature Coast – Diane Caruso
Passionflower – Melanie Simon - CoC Secretary
Pawpaw – Karen Walter
Paynes Prairie – Sandi Saurers
Sarracenia – Jeannie Brodhead
Sarracenia – David Roddenberry
Sea Rocket – Elizabeth Bishop
Sparkleberry – Carol Sullivan
Suncoast - Virginia Overstreet
Tarflower – Jennifer Ferngren
Tarflower – Nihal Hafez*
FNPS President – Bonnie Basham

Regular Agenda Items

- **Minutes from previous meeting** (approved at end of meeting)
  
  Kara D. motioned to approve the March 28, 2021 meeting minutes. Karen W. seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Next Meeting June 27th**

- **News/Announcements**
  - Patricia B., our new Council Chair, thanked Kara D. and introduced herself.
  - Thanks were expressed about the Annual Conference – great information, well presented.
  - Plan is to alternate networking (idea sharing) and Council business meetings.
  - Reported Melanie S. is starting to plan some additional workshops – one on member and board participation and one on setting and measuring chapter goals (follow-up to the Ginny Stibolt Outreach Workshop). Now that we have organized and updated CoC orientation information on the website she is also planning to do an orientation video to walk Reps through where to find and how to use the website (and linked) information.
  - Raised the idea of Fall Regional meetings. These could be opportunities to work with sister
chapters to create educational opportunities, get and keep members enthusiastic (maintain passion), increase membership, and funnel members to state-wide positions.

- Florida Native Gardening on Facebook. Admin Gia noted she has over 8k Facebook followers while FNPS has 5k members. She has already promoted FNPS membership in general (results of this contributed to FNPS reaching 5k members). She has also offered to promote individual chapters. If you have a chapter video or do a write up, she’ll share it to the group to promote your chapter. Email her at gia.ekdahl@gmail.com and she will work with you on what you want to post from your chapter.

- 16 Chapters did a video for the conference. If you want the video to play on your website and need help email Valerie at communications@fnps.org.

- Valerie can also be a great resource for chapters wanting to set up YouTube channels.

- Melanie working on three workshop ideas: Participation (in activities and chapter governance), Setting and Monitoring Goals, and a video “tour” of the Chapter Rep orientation information on the website. Other topic ideas would be welcome.

- Bonnie B. summed up a few items from the last FNPS Board meeting:
  - Board is beginning their meetings with good news to start on a positive note.
  - FNPS has now passed 5k members – first time in history.
  - Chapters asked to promote License plate as much as possible. Link to reserve your plate is on the FNPS website and also linked on the Council website home page. Please encourage and advertise this. FNPS gets $25 for every plate, we need to presell a minimum of 3k to make this happen.
  - MCORES has pretty much been killed, a small piece left but will likely be killed off as well. This means DOT will go back to being in charge of judging where roads go instead of politicians.
  - 1st quarter financials – spending a bit more than we should, but expected to right itself towards the end of the year.
  - 2 New committees forming – One is to look at the bylaws, and the other is related to volunteer hour reporting. The volunteer hours committee will look at how we can simplify (pare reporting down to only what is needed for grants or other requirements), make it more efficient, and get the 10-15% of hours we think are missing recorded. Bonnie would like 1 or 2 Council members to participate in this volunteer hours discussion. Melanie is on the committee with Mark Kateli.

Idea Sharing

What are some of the things you’ve been doing during the past year? What will you carry over to the coming year? What did you think was successful at making your chapter and members enthusiastic, increasing your reach, etc.? (Note: Questions to Chapter Reps are in italics)

- **Lake Beautyberry** (Patricia B.)
  - Had good success with the Zoom meetings. Plan on starting In-person meetings soon (meeting location just reopening), but hope to continue some Zoom meetings as well to perhaps reach non-members.
  - Small groups have been doing and will continue to do different activities outdoors.
  - Will go back to doing the wildflower festival at Green Isle during the fall.
  - **Lake Beautyberry won an award for outstanding chapter this year – what did the chapter do?** Chapter helped write the “Mow Less” brochure, Spanish translation for the membership brochure, coordinated good citizen brochure – these materials are for the benefit of other chapters, not just Lake Beautyberry.
• **Naples** (Kara D.)
  - Ongoing Zoom meetings
  - Site visits are popular. Group visits members’ yards, recommends what to take out, keep or replace, suggests what native plants would work in the yard, and provides a report.
  - Building a partnership with Coccoloba at Cutting Horse Eco Center, learning about how to run plant sales. Coccoloba buys from native nurseries and resells, but Naples would like to start selling more local plants.
  - Planning to expand into native plant propagation with local seeds. Looking into permitting and would be happy to share research with other Chapters thinking about doing the same thing.

• **Sparkleberry** (Carol S.)
  - Has been fairly inactive during COVID.
  - Have had 2 in-person meetings that were fairly successful. One was outdoors in a pavilion with lights and fans attached to the building they usually meet in.
  - Concern is that base group of about 15 is aging out.
  - Problem remains developing an understanding of what makes people come to a meeting. Have done workshops (for example, a seed planting workshop where all materials and instructions were supplied) but haven’t gotten feedback. Know people will show up if food is served. Not sure where to go with the Chapter because not sure about interests. Don’t want meetings to be the attended only because people don’t have anything else to do that night.

• **Eugenia** (David M. in chat)
  - Doing more outdoor meetings has worked. We are now a bit more connected to the Environmental Learning Center at Wabasso.
  - Members were involved in a garden at the local State College (a house was moved from the Environmental Learning Center). The modest old house humanizes a very institutional campus, and so does the garden.
  - Put field trips on a reservation basis.
  - Have not set up Zoom; might be worth considering that for our regular indoor meetings. The usual site is down a dark path. But we can draw a full parking lot.
  - Had a very successful open house at a new retail nursery with a natives section in Vero Beach.

• **Tarflower** (Jennifer F.)
  - Have contactless plant sales set up in a Square store (same system used for in-person sales). Set up store with plants they figured would sell, collected orders for about a week, picked up plants from Green Isle, and loaded ordered plants in cars when people pulled up to pick up location. Will probably continue these as they were successful.
  - *What kinds of plants were people purchasing through square?* Mostly sunny plants (salvia and dune sunflower are popular), but also whatever GIG had for sale. More obscure plants didn’t sell very well.
  - Doing hybrid Zoom/in-person meetings for the last 4 months or so. Meeting location is large room allowing conduct social distancing. In-person attendance has been increasing - 18 people in-person at the last meeting. Will keep doing this as long as people tune into zoom.
  - *What was pre-COVID meeting attendance?* Numbers varied based on the topic. Average 30 people.
  - Started a YouTube channel and will continue to upload videos. Will continue moving forward.

• **Nature Coast** (Diane C.)
  - Zoom has been good with fairly good attendance.
- Some members pushed for in-person meetings in May. First in-person meeting had 38 people!
- Will be starting a YouTube channel (a board member offered to assist them).
- New Chapter president created a new meeting division to include more children and grandparents. Include a fun/interesting activity for kids to participate in during meetings. Planning on targeting it to elementary and middle school kids.
- Chapter did the Dream Garden play during the conference, and the kids who participated were very interested in the feedback they got from the conference.
- March plant sale did well – made a little more than pre-COVID sales. Included a kids activity table, but had to encourage participation.
- Kids also have a column in chapter newsletter (started 3 months ago) where they research a native plant topic of their interest and report on it.
- Chapter is looking for new blood as current members age.

**Sarracenia** (David R.)
- Maintained a degree of continuity during time of COVID. Worried about losing members due to lack of in-person meetings, but have maintained membership by continuing meetings and contact to keep Chapter visible.
- Zoom meetings started in May 2020, and have been going ever since.
- Maintained contact through email. Have 450 contacts on MailChimp.
- Managed to have 3 field trips: 1 in September (limited to 10 people), 2 in spring. Last trip was a joint trip with Sweetbay and Sarracenia with 25+ participants.
- Interested in restarting yard consultations, started doing them 2 years ago (called the “house call”).
- Produced a virtual field trip last October. Have a filmmaker in the chapter that helped produce it. Feature of January Chapter 2021 meeting and now uploaded to YouTube channel. Produced a 2nd virtual field trip (also Apalachicola National Forest) in April. Featured it at their May chapter meeting. Soon will be on YouTube.

*When you say a virtual field trip, does someone go to place and films it for you and then uploads it? Small band of Sarracenia members do the field trip - go in with appropriate levels of excitement and find plants while being filmed. Music added. Filmmaker is professional. Last film was 38 minutes long.*

- A number of members have been a major part of an establishing a native plant garden that was awarded a native plant landscape award (institutional category) of excellence! They have signs advertising their chapter in this garden.
- Average pre-COVID meeting size was 35, hoping to see that number when in-person meetings resume in September.
- Sarracenia purchased plants from a wholesale native plant nursery. Order in advance so we are assured of plant availability. Have a sale-for-resale certificate from the Dept. of Revenue and report sales and remit the sales tax to the state (Bonnie B.).
- Took member-propagated plants to a local festival and gave them away. Got donations and ideas on what plants to offer next time (Jeannie B.).

**Conradina** (Martha S.)
- Have technical support in chapter, so started doing Zoom board meetings and Streamyard when in-person stopped (public Library where they meet is still closed).
- Continued with “keep Brevard beautiful” grants. Have multiple landscaping jobs that have continued with members interested in doing so.
- Had first in-person plant sale in April - plants from a local nursery. Owner donates a portion of sales.
- Did a chapter YouTube video for the conference.
- Have continued doing a monthly newsletter.
- Will have annual yard tour event in-person this year. Last year (October) was virtual.
- Do you charge for yard tours? Yes, we do for in-person. $10 dollars a person. (Villages charge $25)
- Sell books at in-person meetings and plant sales. Books on edibles sell well. Also sometimes resell native plant-themed items from thrift shops.
- Where do you get your books? We get them from a local book wholesaler. We pay wholesale price and then resell them.
- Always have food at in-person meetings – maintain a sign-up sheet at meetings and people can sign up to bring food and drinks.
- Have not lost membership, in fact, it may have increased.

- Citrus (Gail T.)
  - No in-person meetings since last year. Have been doing meetings with Streamyard.
  - In March had a plant and seed swap – 20 members attended
  - Earth day event at a local nursery with native plant section. Chapter had two programs with quite a few people there for those programs. Nursery sold quite a few plants.
  - Did not have a spring plant sale but are planning one for the fall.
  - Planning to go back to in-person meetings in the fall.
  - At the beginning of in-person meetings we have a member who does a 30 minute presentation on native gardening called Barbara’s Bits. This is a major draw for people coming to meetings. Then a 15 minute break for refreshments, a brief business meeting, the main program speaker/presentation, and a plant drawing. Usually have about 60 attending.
  - Plant drawing tickets are sold at the beginning. Anyone there for the first time gets a free ticket. Members get 7 tickets for $5. Non-members get 5 tickets for $5. New members get first pick. Can have 40-50 donated plants for the drawing, which can make meetings run long, so they sometimes combine plants (two for one).
  - Main disadvantages of the long meeting (6:15 to 8:30 or9:00) is that some people leave early as well as limited time for socializing.
  - How do you do plant swaps? Invites are sent out to members, also posted it on our Facebook page. anyone can show up. Majority of plants and seeds were provided by members. We did it in one of the HOA community centers. It was a very popular event because is a great way for members to engage each other. Also gives Board a chance to talk to and get to know members.

- Longleaf Pine (Lizzy J. in chat)
  - Focused on developing content for the website during the past year. Biggest additions included:
  - Propagation manuals
  - Native landscaping plant lists
  - Virtual native garden photo tours
  - Worked to increase virtual presence with Zoom, spotlight plant profiles and social media.
  - Resumed monthly field trips during the winter.
  - Had a plant swap in conjunction with a field trip in March.
  - Will return to hybrid Zoom meetings next month.
  - Have increased advertising of monthly speakers resulting in new people joining us this month.
• **Coccoloba** (Lucy B.)
  - Cutting Horse Eco Center, a native plant sale and propagation area, is a huge moneymaker. They have excellent native plant labels which make it easier for customers to choose plants and also makes it an educational place.
  - Have had several great site (yard) visits where we meet with the homeowners to learn about what they planted and why, problems they have had, and advise them on their native gardening. It’s a great way to meet with our members and prospective members. We do not charge – members only.
  - Not currently meeting face to face, but planning to do so in the fall. Usually have a 30 minute social with snacks prior to the meeting.
  - Board meetings have been on Zoom - next board meeting will be in-person.
  - In-person meetings had a plant auction at the end of the meeting, which were fun for our members.
  - I like the idea of doing a plant swap as a separate activity!
  - Conference presentation was great. Presentation mentioned that when you print out the square receipt, it has the plant name and information. How do you do that? Can you share that with the Council? Lucy will look into it and send information to Patricia to distribute.
  - Conference presentation also mentioned you do not grow your own plants – they are bought from a wholesale nursery and resold because the nursery grown plants look better? Mostly true, but we do some propagation and sell those plants when they look good.

• **Ixia** (Nick F. in chat)
  - Chapter is doing well.
  - Monthly virtual meetings followed by field trips have been well received.
  - We’ve done some invasive plant removal field trips at local parks.
  - Plant sale this year was outstanding and had record sales. Hope to have a second one this fall.
  - Added a conservation chair that sends out weekly news and action updates which members enjoy.

• **Miami-Dade** (Kurt B.)
  - Started monthly virtual meetings in June of last year. Tried a few platforms and are currently using Streamyard (simultaneously sends to YouTube). Concurrently running meetings on Zoom for the live chat function – start the Zoom meeting early to allow people to talk. Received feedback from members that the opportunity to chat and catch up made it feel more like an in-person meeting.
  - Started field trips in the fall last year. Limited to 9 people, with preference for members.
  - Typically have an annual native plant day in March. Cancelled last year. This March, we did a native plant field day where we had 8 different field leaders lead trips with up to 8 people over one weekend. Did morning and afternoon. Had over 100 participants over the weekend.
  - Definitely interested in Spanish translated brochures and can help if needed.
  - *Dade Chapter won an award for outstanding chapter. What did the chapter do that was so outstanding?* Much of it was due to being online thru the pandemic, as well as the field trips. Trips took a significant amount of coordination (needed customized directions for each of the 8 field trip sites) and several board members were instrumental in making this successful.

• **Martin County** (Dianna W.)
  - Chapter is replanting a small park with natives.
  - Having a Fundraiser with a small restaurant in July (Board member contacted a friend who owns a restaurant). Restaurant offered to sell Yaupon Tea in July and donate proceeds to MCFNPS. Also planting natives around the outside of the store.
  - Pop up plant sales were very successful. We go to the parking lot at the local library every few
months. Members bring plants which can be exchanged or sold. Always surprised by amount of donations.

- Hoping to attract new members by writing about our chapter on Florida Native Gardening Facebook page.
- We are rescuing plants from sites under development.
- We are helping with plant inventories in County and State Parks.
- We partner with Master Gardeners Arbor Day sale for our plant sale.

**Hernando** (Heather S.)
- Have been doing Zoom meetings. Only a small group attended since we have an older membership (not all were comfortable with the technology) and fairly rural (connection issues).
- Have used pre-recorded presentations and it allowed us to branch out.
- Returning to in-person meetings in July. Have always had a garden party in July where members share what they’ve been doing in their yards. Hoping to expand this with a plant swap.
- *Comment from David Martin:* In Vero Beach we have found that yard tours that turn into yard parties that are marvels for socializing. It does not require an elaborate yard, spacious does help.
- Have always bought and resold from a nursery for plant sales, letting local nurseries keep the profits (to support native nurseries and get native plants out there). Often got stuck with excess inventory. Contactless (online pre-order sale) plant sales have allowed us to better manage plant inventory and make more money. Keeping online ordering window short has allowed them to minimize the number of plants no longer available by the time they order from nursery.
- Value was added by links for plants on the online order form to the FNPS plant database so purchasers could easily check soil, light/water, zone, etc. information.
- *Comment from Gail Taylor:* Citrus started (and continues) doing plant sales by doing pre-sales. It has sort of backfired on us. People purchase the plants in advance, and then about 20% of the purchased plants might not be available when orders are placed. Creates a lot of extra work to contact purchasers and tell them plants they bought are not available and offer alternate selections. On the pick-up day we offer a voucher for a refund or to select plants from a table with excess plants.

**Cuplet Fern** (Al S.)
- Doing virtual meetings through Zoom, as well as virtual classes. Our most recent class was on Oak ID.
- Maintaining the garden at the Extension Service office and also doing remedial work at Lake Helen in Volusia County.
- Had plant sales in October, March and April. Leftover plants from the April sale (held at Lake Helen) were donated to replace plant material removed.
- We do pre-sales for members only from a list. A statement on the list states that all plants may not be available. Members get a discount. Found plant sales are a great opportunity to meet members.
- Hope to have face-to-face meetings again in July.
- Mark is working on the possibility of having occasional meetings at the Lyonia Preserve in Deltona because they have members in that area.

**Passionflower** (Melanie S.)
- Continued to do programs on Zoom monthly, although attendance has been lower than at in-person meetings. Many focused on home landscaping to help people doing gardening during the pandemic.
- Did a Plant ID program on Zoom where we identified “mystery plant” pictures submitted by members.
- Will resume in-person meeting in the fall when our meeting location (library) reopens.
- Separated business meetings (also on Zoom) from program meetings.
• Continued to do maintenance and improvements at the Lake Louisa State Park garden once a month.
• Continued to do newsletters – monthly email and quarterly print newsletters.
• Working on increasing social media presence – Facebook and Instagram – to attract young people.
• Last year and this year have been participating in plant/seed rescues at local development sites. Also helped with land management tasks at the Warea Tract conservation area.
• Just set up a YouTube channel and are transferring our Zoom programs.
• Membership stayed pretty level thru COVID, but unable to increase without in-person contact.
• Did our first outreach event earlier this month, and added some members as a result. Gave away plants donated by members in exchange for email addresses.
• Planning a yard tour/party this fall. One of our members won the FNPS residential landscape award.
• Did a plant swap event last October in the parking lot at a local park – everyone went trunk to trunk to choose plants. Although masks were mandatory, it was a great way to interact.
• Will resume plant sale with a Lake County Wildflower Festival in October (with Lake Beautyberry).
• Just did first field trip since COVID.

• Suncoast Chapter (Virginia O.)
  • Been having virtual meetings for a year now, averaging 20 people a meeting (usually the same people). Having trouble with older members because they aren’t comfortable with technology or cannot hear.
  • Want to do in person meetings but these take place in public buildings which haven’t reopened.
  • Like virtual board meetings for their convenience and will continue these online.
  • Still having field trips, but have been limiting them to members only. Will reopen to public.
  • Have been a vendor at the USF Botanical Garden spring and fall plant sales. Did not have them in 2020. In November and last month USF opened the garden with waived fees just for the chapter to have 1 day plant sales. Garden opened at 9 with 25 people at the gate! Made $1,400 in 5 hours.
  • Generally did plant auctions at our meetings making $30-$40 per meeting.
  • Had a plant swap at a member’s garden in March. It was a lot of fun with lots of socializing.
  • July is annual joint meeting with Sierra and Audubon (alternate speakers).
  • Maintaining native gardens at 4 county parks.
  • Continuing to do newsletters. Trying to stay relevant with Facebook – getting help from professor at UCF (responded to notice in newsletter) and will also set up Instagram.
  • Have a core group of people who do all the work. It’s difficult for us to find new people to take up different roles.
  • Net membership hasn’t changed much.

• Pawpaw (Karen W.)
  • Chapter had a successful plant sale using plants grown by members as well as plants from Green Isle.
  • People liked our bargain priced member plants.
  • Have maintained field trips by using reservations to limit the number of attendees.
  • Zoom meetings have been popular, but have lost some non tech members. Plan to resume hybrid, in-person and Zoom in Sept.
  • Have had an annual plant swap among members in August.
  • Our biggest member draw has been a new email. We get a lot of questions and people have joined our meetings and field trips.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:32 PM