



Florida Native Plant Society

Council of Chapters Meeting Minutes 1/28/24

Online Zoom Meeting
taken by Melanie Simon – CoC Chair

Melanie Simon called the meeting to order at 06:34 PM

In attendance (28) – 20 of 32 Chapters

*** indicates proxy or guest**

Cuplet Fern – Al Squires	Passionflower – Melanie Simon – Chair
Citrus – Marcie Clutter	Pawpaw – Karen Walter
Coccoloba – Ben Johnson	Pawpaw – Suze Peace*
Eugenia – David Martin	Paynes Prairie – Sandi Saurers
Ixia – Cate Hurlbut	Pine Lily – Jennifer Adams*
Lake Beautyberry – Tina Mertz	Pine Lily - Dana Sussman
Longleaf Pine – Kimberly Bremmer	Pinellas – Dave Perkey
Longleaf Pine – Lynn Backes*	Sarracenia – Lynn Artz
Mangrove – Laura Soule	Sea Rocket – Elizabeth Bishop
Martin County - Dianna Wentink	Serenoa – Pamela Callender
Martin County – Pete Grannis*	The Villages – Bob Keyes
Naples – Lisa Forman	UCF – Chelsea LeNoble*
Nature Coast – Diane Caruso	UCF – Sarah Knabe*
Palm Beach County – Rebekah Kaufman	? - Karen (no last name)

Regular Agenda Items

- Tabled to next meeting: approval of 11/26/23 minutes
- New Chapter Representatives: Lisa Forman (Naples) and Dana Sussman (Pine Lily)
- Next Meeting February 25th at 6:30pm.

News/Announcements/Reminders

- **Brochure Print Orders**
 - Only 18 of 32 Chapters have submitted brochure orders. Brochures are only printed once a year, so this is the only opportunity to get copies.
 - Order Form link is <https://forms.gle/gexZoDa3c7mgk2HfA>. *You need to fill out the form even if your Chapter does not need any brochures.*

- **Volunteer Hours**
 - An impressive 70,725 volunteer hours (valued at \$2.1 million) were reported for 2023. This reflects well on the engagement and dedication of our members.
 - We would like to see more Habitat Restoration and Conservation & Research activities.
 - Kudos and thanks to everyone who contributed.
- **Membership Management Meeting**
 - The meeting/workshop will be postponed to March.
 - If you haven't already, please send Melanie the names of you Chapter's membership Chair and any other people who should be invited to attend the meeting/workshop.
- **New Member Package**
 - Waiting for input on a few more changes before making final edits. If you have any comments or suggestions, please email them to Melanie.
 - So new members are not overwhelmed, Melanie is working on a short welcome letter that will link to more in-depth information. .
- **National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW)**
 - February 26 to March 1
 - NISAW and UF are organizing a social media collaboration with FNPS starting with a press release on 2/25 – please like, share, and comment on these posts.
 - CISMA (www.invasives.org) is organizing events. Pine Lily and Pawpaw are already teaming with CISMA and there may be other “ready-made” events to participate in. Check the website.
- **Native Plant Definition**
 - We will be having a discussion about updating our native plant definition. Anyone interested in participating in the conversation, please email Melanie.

Chapter Leadership

Chapter Leadership has been identified as the top challenge in all our Council Surveys. In the surveys there is a correlation between participation in leadership and participation in activities (member engagement).

Chapter Experiences/lessons learned.

- **Cate H. - Ixia**
 - Engagement is key. They have a lot of activities at which they pass around volunteer sheets for future activities. This gets people involved in small ways and lets everyone get to know one another. Helps get members and other engaged.
 - It has helped to divide up the work into smaller tasks – volunteering seems less daunting.
 - The nominating committee emails all members about open positions – don't typically get a lot of responses, but that way people feel included.
 - Also approach/ask people they have gotten to know through “small” volunteering.
 - There usually isn't competition for elected positions, but have not had open positions.
 - Officers are limited to 2 two-year terms.
- **Bob K. – The Villages**
 - There are 3,000 clubs in The Villages, so a lot of completion for people's time. While people enjoy the activities, they don't want to dedicate a lot of time to just one club/type of activity.
 - Distance (The Villages is huge) and restricted access limit participation.
 - Many people travel by golf cart (lifestyle), which makes meetings outside The Villages problematical. Becoming even more limiting as The Villages grow.

- Many new residents are from out-of-state, so they are not familiar with Florida native plants. There also isn't a native nursery close by.
- **Jennifer A. – Pine Lily**
 - Osceola is large geographically, but distance and traffic make participation challenging.
 - Have good participation in activities, lower participation in meetings.
 - Have core “doers”. Many are still in the workforce.
 - Approach people individually rather than by email.
 - Retired members are hesitant to sign up for positions with ongoing responsibilities.
 - Thinking about breaking up positions into smaller tasks and also about outsourcing some responsibilities or using interns.
 - Conundrum – younger members have more energy, but more time constraints.
 - Dana Sussman is the new Chapter Representative.
- **Kimberly B. – Longleaf Pine**
 - Joined by Lynn Backes (Secretary)
 - V.P. position has been open for 2 years. They have no term limits.
 - Was able to recruit 2 members to help with programs (not officer positions). People adverse to officer/formal positions, but more open to less formal volunteering.
 - Feels that approaching people individually is more successful than announcements at meetings. Has gotten responses that leadership positions are “too much work”.
 - Working to expand “pool” of potential volunteers. Gaining participation at programs, especially if there a good speaker or field trip. Participating at the local Farmer’s Market, has been successful at generating interest.
- **Al S. – Cuplet Fern**
 - Their President, Mark Kateli, is very good at recruiting.
 - Have to have at least 3 members to have an active committee – spreads the workload. Most of chairs are younger, and older members do the work. Have many committees with limited responsibilities (e.g., Refreshments, Plant Sales) which helps with commitment.
- **David P. – Pinellas**
 - Have open President and Treasurer positions. Past presidents are members of their Board, but haven't been participating much, and younger people have resigned due to time constraints. Health issues and moving jobs has also limited participation.
 - Distance (large County) and travel time (traffic) are barriers. Try to meeting in a central location and have discussed moving the meeting location.
 - Finding a Treasure is a particular concern and they have thought about hiring someone.
- **Lisa F. – Naples**
 - Chapter Secretary and new Chapter Representative.
 - Last election they got someone from Naples Botanical Garden to fill the President position, and she brought in co-workers.
 - Need to advertise how much fun Chapter activities are to increase engagement.

Leadership in FNPS

Chelsea LeNoble and Sarah Knabe from UCF presented on research from other nonprofit organizations and succession planning. Chelsea is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at UCF and Sarah is a Masters student in the Industrial and Organizational Psychology program. They've worked with Cuplet Fern on team-building and leadership and on other FNPS projects.

Presentation slides and a recording of Chelsea and Sarahs' presentation can accessed from the home page of the Council website or by using the link: <https://council.fnpschapters.org/leadership/>

- **FNPS Leadership**
 - Lots of different ways to think about leadership. Difficult to figure out, but what FNPS does (the mission) makes everyone a leadership expert.
 - Leadership takes “ecosystem thinking” – people excel at different things and in different positions. Plant-related knowledge correlates with leadership concepts.

- **Nonprofit Leadership**
 - Research revealed all nonprofits are facing the same challenges right now:
 - “Dues Only members
 - Leader burnout and turnover
 - Recruiting & retaining board members
 - Leadership succession planning (keep the momentum going)
 - Strategies used to overcome challenges
 - Use a Nominating Committee (to put together a slate – more people/more contacts = finding the right person – direct ask reduces the pressure/lack of confidence to step up)
 - Find the “Potentials” (easiest to “convert” to leadership position)
 - Make leadership the “easiest choice” specific to their area. These might be best highlighted in a Chapter welcome letter rather than as a part of the package.
 - “Potentials” strongly agreed with these statements on a survey
 - I could do specific roles that appeal to me
 - I could see the good I was doing
 - It made me feel really good
 - Someone asked me directly
 - Training was provided
 - It was close to where I live
 - It fit my schedule
 - I had set, regular times to volunteer

- **Requirements and Strategies**
 - Leaders need a social support system
 - New leader cohorts (people who start and the same time – support each other)
 - Mentoring or coaching program
 - Leadership development academy (perhaps as part of the conference?)
 - Shadowing & apprenticeship
 - Leadership Training is particularly helpful for nonprofits – Average 30% increase in leadership competencies following a training program, particularly in the following competencies:
 - Strategic thinking skills
 - Ability to articulate a clear vision
 - Ability to constructively manage conflict
 - Skill in leading change
 - Skill in coaching & developing others
 - Capacity to foster collaboration
 - Confidence in the ability to lead
 - Cultivating Your Leadership “Ecosystem”
 - Plan and prepare the garden – foundational structure, guidelines, role clarity, procedural knowledge, resources, support, an upward, visible path toward the bigger mission - personal, chapter & FNPS growth
 - Set up for Success – boosting leadership self-efficacy (confidence) – prior experience in outside world, role models

- **Succession Planning**
 - Process that needs to be ongoing to be successful.
 - Keys to success: Membership involvement, Leadership engagement, Leadership ecosystem, Nominating committee
 - FLORA initiative (See slide for “Learn more” QR code)
 - Find future leaders (gauge member interest and aptitude)
 - Learn members strengths (understand what support is needed)
 - Open the door (communicate opportunities)
 - Render new ability (offer training and development)
 - Appreciate Growth

New Business

- **“No Mow March”**
 - Karen W. and Suze P. from Pawpaw spoke about a campaign to reduce spring mowing.
 - Suze shared pros to less mowing: Help pollinators, especially bees, plus other wildlife. Reduces pollution from mowers and leaf blowers. Helps make your yard a source of wonder.
 - Karen suggested yard signs and graphics to promote.
 - Lynn A. suggested also promoting “shrink the lawn” as a year-round benefit.
- **Plant Sales – Member-grown and protected plants**
 - Laura S. talked about plant sale inspections, especially plants grown by members. Other chapters gather plants in one place for inspections and then transport to the sale site.
 - Are permits needed when plants are on the endangered, threatened, or commercially exploited list ([FDACS](#))? *Note: clarified that Chapter only needs a nursery permit, not a NECE permit.*
 - It was discussed whether plants that are harvested from the wild (not propagated by nurseries or by members) should be sold at plant sales as it conflicts with the FNPS mission to preserve native flora. It was agreed that rescued plants should not be sold.
- **Big Box Stores selling invasive plants**
 - Dave P. noted that invasives that are being sold by big box stores are particularly an issue in coastal areas.
 - Have discussed before that the large stores purchase regionally and there is no effective path to “persuading” them not to sell these plants. Smaller growers at Farmer’s Markets also sell invasives.
 - Al S. noted that the only solution may be a law that prohibits the sale of all Class I and II invasives (only a few plants are currently prohibited). Right now there is no law and the organization that classifies plants as invasive has no way to enforce.
 - Look into doing something (perhaps with our lobbyist) in the future?
- **Nominating Committee**
 - Council elections are in March. We need three members to form a nominating committee

Motion to Adjourn

- Dave P. motioned to adjourn. Cate H. seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:15 PM