THE FOUNDING OF FNPS

A Short History

by Don Lantz

The Florida Native Plant Society is ten years old this year—this summer, in fact. The Spring Conference in May in Miami was the Tenth Annual FNPS Conference. At that conference, Dick Workman presented a slide show of scenes from past conferences. Then Steve Farnsworth presented Certificates of Recognition to those Founding Members who were present. Other FNPS Founders who are still members are being mailed their certificates.

In the summer of 1980, William Partington, the Director of the Florida Conservation Foundation (FCF) in Winter Park, was asked by a number of interested environmentalists around the state to take the lead in forming a native plant society in Florida. Two preliminary organizing meetings were held: at the first meeting in August, it was agreed to proceed and 11 people joined the new FNPS via FCF. A second meeting was held in September, and 15 more people paid dues to FNPS/FCF; five more people joined in December 1980.

At the beginning of 1981, plans were being made to publish a state newsletter, and to hold a native plant conference in the spring. FNPS was gathering momentum, with 23 people joining in January and another 18 people joining in February.

Peggy Lantz appeared on the scene, and in February the first issue of The Palmetto was published—eight pages long. Soon membership began to accelerate, with 38 new members in March and 39 new members in April, for a total membership of around 150.

In late April 1981, the first Spring Conference was held at Rollins College in Winter Park. An Interim Board of Directors was elected; these 21 people were to draft policies, objectives, and bylaws for FNPS. An Establishing Resolution and By-Laws were produced at a BOD meeting on June 27.

The By-Laws were adopted at the first FNPS Fall Members Meeting at Highlands Hammock State Park on September 19th. At that time Bill Partington was elected as the first FNPS president, with Terry Mock as vice president. Seven District Directors were elected, as were seven Directors at Large.

Chapters in existence in the winter 1981-82 were Big Pine Key, Central Florida, Gainesville, Naples, Palm Beach, South Brevard, and Tampa Bay.

The second FNPS Spring Conference was held in mid-May of 1982 at Gainesville on the University of Florida campus. The Dade and Cocoloba chapters were formed sometime during 1982. By this time The Palmetto was a 12-page magazine. The second Fall Members Meeting was held at Crystal River in mid-November, 1982. At that time the board decided to elect officers thereafter at the Spring Conference, rather than at the Fall Meeting.

The third Spring Conference was held at Naples in late April, 1983, at The Conservancy. Richard Workman was elected president, with Dorie Karl as vice president. Bill Partington was appointed to the new post of executive director. There were now only four Directors at Large, but 12 District Directors.

New chapters formed in 1983 were Martin County, North Florida Chapter in the Tallahassee area, and Heartland Chapter in Polk County. Suncoast (formerly Tampa Bay) was also admitted to FNPS. The third Fall Members Meeting was held at Tallahassee in late October 1983.

The fourth Spring Conference was held at Boca Raton in early May, 1984, on the campus of Florida Atlantic University. Sherry Cummings was elected president, and Carol Lotspeich became vice president. There were now seven Directors at Large and 14 District Directors. The Palmetto magazine was now 16 pages long. FNPS published a 100-page book, Wild Things, which included many color illustrations.

In 1984, the North Florida Chapter changed its name to Magnolia, and the Central Florida Chapter changed its name to Tarflower. New chapters admitted in 1984 were Serenos (Sarasota) and Uniola (Fort Pierce). There was no Fall Members Meeting in 1984.

The fifth Spring Conference was held at Winter Park in early May, 1985, at Rollins College. Sherry Cummings was elected to a second term as president. The North Brevard Chapter was organized in
mid-1985, and The Palmetto magazine had its first full-color cover.

The fourth Fall Members Meeting was held at Upper Tampa Bay Park in mid-October, 1985. In November, the board decided to leave the Florida Conservation Foundation and become a completely independent organization. Crow-Segal Management Company in Winter Park was hired to handle the membership and financial business of the society.

The sixth Spring Conference was held at Tampa in early May, 1986, on the campus of University of South Florida. Terry Mock was elected president, with Ralph Ranney and Dick Wunderlin as vice presidents. It was at this conference that the annual Green and Silver Palmetto Awards were started. In January, the board decided to change to a unified dues system, whereby chapters did not assess dues but shared in the dues paid to the state FNPS.

In 1986, the Charlotte Harbor Chapter and the Morning Glory (Northeast Florida) Chapter were admitted to FNPS. The Paynes Prairie Chapter was organized to replace the defunct Gainesville Chapter.

The seventh Spring Conference was held at Lakeland in mid-May, 1987, on the campus of Florida Southern College. Dick Wunderlin was elected president, with Ralph Ranney continuing as vice president. The board decided to change from having District Directors to having each chapter designate one member to the FNPS Board of Directors.

The eighth Spring Conference was held at Gainesville in early May, 1988, on the campus of the University of Florida. Dick Wunderlin was elected to a second term as president, with Steve Farnsworth and Blaine Williams as vice presidents. FNPS published a 24-page booklet, Planning and Planting a Native Plant Yard.

In February 1988 the board decided to terminate the contract with the management firm, and convert to administrative services provided by paid FNPS members. The South Brevard Chapter changed its name to Conradina, and the Broward Native Plant Society was readmitted as a chapter of FNPS.

The ninth Spring Conference was held at Fort Myers in early May, 1989, at Edison Community College. Steve Farnsworth was elected as president, with Pat Chellman and Rick Joyce as vice presidents. The North Brevard Chapter changed its name to Sea Rocket.

The tenth Spring Conference was held at Miami in mid-May, 1990, on the campus of Florida International University. Steve Farnsworth was elected to a second term as president, with Blaine Williams and Rick Joyce as vice presidents.