
Sabal minor Volume 22, Number 4 July-August 2020: Palmetto Award Winners and Legislative Session Wrap-Up

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A bi-monthly newsletter for the members of the Florida Native Plant Society

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Valerie Anderson is the Sabal minor editor. Please send your suggestions to make this newsletter more valuable to you and, by **August 15**, submit articles for the September-October issue to sabalminor@fnps.org. Please also [email Valerie](#) if you would like to be reminded about Sabal minor submission deadlines.

Chapters are encouraged to print copies of the newsletter to have on hand at their monthly meetings for members who do not have email addresses



Message from the Executive Director

Juliet Rynear

It's been a hot and busy summer! So far, we have put nearly 20,000 plants in the ground on 4 different restoration projects and we have about 4,500 more plants to add to their new homes in the weeks to come. Thank you to everyone who has helped with these projects - all the FNPS volunteers, Facebook fans, and staff from Green Isle Gardens, The Natives, U.S. Forest Service, FWC, and DEP at the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway.

Our TorreyKeepers project is also moving right along and we have surveyed many private properties. A huge thank you to our TorreyKeepers Coordinator Lilly Anderson-Messec, our dedicated FNPS volunteers, and our contractor Florida Environmental and Land Services. It is not the best time of year to survey for *Torreya taxifolia* but with over 20,000 acres of unsurveyed private property out there, it is important for the conservation of the species that we do everything we can while we have the resources available to do this work!

I hope you are enjoying our "Lunch & Learn" series on Fridays (exclusively for FNPS members). If you miss a presentation, you can always check out the videos on our YouTube channel. Since these are members-only, you can find the links to these non-public videos in the emails we send out on Mondays, below in the Lunch and Learn Archives section of this issue of the *Sabal minor* or in our [members-only Facebook group](#).



Left: Silver Glen Springs restoration in the Ocala National Forest; Right: Marion Big Scrub President Deborah Curry checks out one of the plantings at the Cross Florida Greenway, Ross Prairie Tract



A Message from the President

Bonnie Basham

I'm excited to have the opportunity to work with you and your chapters to conserve, preserve and restore Florida native plants and plant communities. I want to thank those of you who attended our first FNPS virtual annual membership meeting on June 6. Thanks to Valerie Anderson, our Communications guru, for linking all of us together. Although this was a great success, I'm sure we all are looking forward to returning to our in-person meetings.

On that note, I hope you have been able to participate in a virtual meeting of your chapter or another chapter and our Friday Lunch and Learn series. You can access past Lunch and Learn videos using the Lunch and Learn Archives section of this issue of the *Sabal minor* below. Those of you who attended the Annual Membership meeting were able to meet Andee Naccarato, President of the Naples Chapter and Mark Kateli, President of Cuplet Fern to the FNPS Board of Directors as Directors at Large.

We've had a unique opportunity this past six weeks to partner with the US Forest Service and Florida State Parks to plant over 14,000 native plants along the edge of Silver Glen Springs and surrounding a new visitor path. This project is designed to control the erosion from the parking and upland area to the spring. The restoration area will also serve as a native plant demonstration "garden" for those who enjoy the springs. Silver Glen State Park Volunteer Coordinator Antoinette Davis worked with us and has created signage to let spring bathers know about this project.

At the same time, we also have been working on a restoration project at the Ross Prairie section of the Cross Florida Greenway near Ocala with natives suitable for restoration along the trail. When the Greenway is complete, it will stretch 110 miles across Central Florida and follow the route of the old Cross Florida Barge Canal from the St. Johns River to the Gulf of Mexico.

Earlier this month, the Governor and the Florida Legislature gave environmentalists four victories which you helped us obtain with your supportive letters to Governor DeSantis. This many victories in one session is rarely enjoyed by conservation supporters. Chief among these positive actions is the renewed funding for Florida Forever. Given the state's financial crisis in the face of the Coronavirus this was a great win for the environment.

Second, Governor DeSantis vetoed a bill that would have allowed counties to dictate how cities regulate their growth and development. The ability of a community to conserve locally significant natural resources, including the native plant species and native plant communities that FNPS seeks to conserve, was just one facet of authority the bill would have eliminated. In addition, the Governor signed a water bill which starts the process of protecting Florida's waterways. It is a good first step and we asked the Governor to let us help him continue this path to protecting our waterways.

The Legislature also enacted a bill granting FNPS our own, unique license plate! Watch our website for news about how you can purchase one of these plates and further support our mission. My thanks to Gene Kelly and the Policy Committee and our top-notch lobbyist Sue Mullins for these victories.

Through a generous donation from an FNPS member, a new grant source has been created. The grant is named in honor of Cornelia McNamara who included FNPS in her will with a very substantial donation. The purpose of the grant is to advance the study of Florida's native plant species and habitats and to encourage data collection typically unsupported and unfunded by traditional academic institutions and funders. We expect the grant to be advertised during the autumn with an award or awards made in the early spring. Watch the FNPS web site as well as that of the Council of Chapters for more details. Preference will be given to FNPS members as well as FNPS chapters.

Recently, I was privileged to sign an MOU between FNPS and the Florida Wildflower Foundation. Our goal is to identify county roadways where a large variety of Florida native plants grow to work with local governments to develop a roadside mowing regime that will protect these species.

I am looking forward to working for and with you these next two years. Please contact me if you have questions or ideas for projects we should consider undertaking (president@fnps.org). I look forward to meeting you as I travel the state and visit chapters once we can have in person meetings again.

New Board Members



Andee Naccarato

Andee Naccarato grew up in Naples, FL exploring the slash pines and bald cypress around her childhood home. Andee received a master's degree in Environmental Science from Florida Gulf Coast University in 2011. She continued getting to know Florida's native plants by going on countless plant hikes and writing over 100 "Meet the Native" articles for the Fort Myers News-Press. Currently, Andee serves as President for the Naples Chapter of FNPS, with past chapter roles in membership, education, and conservation. She is employed by Naples Botanical Garden as Horticulture Volunteer Coordinator. One of Andee's favorite pastimes is wading into cypress strands in the rainy season.



Mark Kateli

Mark started out at the Treasurer of Tarflower in 2013 and became president of Cuplet Fern in 2018. He has turned Cuplet Fern into an incredibly dynamic chapter, winning the 2020 Chapter of the Year award. He has been an active central Florida native plant advocate for over ten years.

Palmetto Award Winners



Craig Huegel - Mentor Award

Craig Huegel is a member of the Nature Coast Chapter and is renowned for his knowledge of plant-animal interactions and the design of wildlife attracting landscapes. Craig lectures widely across the state on the use of native plants with his dynamic delivery and entertaining speaking style. He has received numerous state and regional awards from public agencies and private conservation groups for his ongoing environmental education, restoration and preservation efforts.



Cuplet Fern Chapter - Chapter of the Year

Cuplet Fern Chapter serves Seminole County and is named after the native, State Endangered fern *Dennstaedtia bipinnata*, which is vouchered only in Seminole, Brevard, and Palm Beach Counties. Recently, Cuplet Fern has become a major environmental presence in Seminole County. 2020 is Cuplet Fern's 10 year anniversary.



Karina Veaudry - Silver Palmetto

Karina Veaudry is the President of the Pine Lily Chapter and has been a dedicated member of the Florida Native Plant Society for 32 years. Throughout that time, she has volunteered in various capacities and served as Executive Director from 2006-2012.



Deborah Curry - Silver Palmetto

Deborah Curry is a third-generation Floridian and currently serves as the President of the Marion Big Scrub Chapter. She learned gardening from her father and her mother's father. She has established food forests in every single house she's owned or rented. She retired from 34 years of teaching in 2017. Deborah's current project is learning and enthusiastically teaching about hurricane tree survivors, native trees that live through hurricanes.



Gail Taylor - Silver Palmetto

Florida native Gail Taylor grew up in Miami and always dreamed of living out in the woods. When their youngest child left home, she and her husband moved from South Tampa to Crystal River. They originally bought a home on 5 acres for the amazing property and have increased their land holdings to 17+ contiguous acres. Gail has diligently learned about native plants over the last 20 years and she enjoys sharing her knowledge and love of native plants with chapter members and others. Gail is the past President of the Citrus Chapter (2016-2018) and is currently the Chapter Rep. to the Council of Chapters. She is also a volunteer on the Membership Task Force.



Wendy Poag - Silver Palmetto

Wendy Poag is a longtime volunteer for the Land Management Partners Committee and is on the Florida Native Plant Society Board as the Education Committee Chair. Her day job involves environmental education and public land stewardship so her life is rewarding both inside and outside of work. Restoring one acre at a time matters! Of vital concern is the rate of loss of regional genetic diversity among native plant species, including common ones.



Grace Howell - Silver Palmetto

Grace Howell of Paynes Prairie Chapter is a Florida Native Plant Society board member and the Chair of the Land Management Partners Committee that works with FDEP's Division of State Lands to provide native plant experts for land management reviews on public land throughout the state. Grace has worked as an environmental educator, land manager, biologist and Certified Prescribed Burn Manager and is currently the Conservation Programs Coordinator for Alachua Conservation Trust, where she works with the conservation easement program and the prescribed burn team. In her free time she enjoys hiking, paddling and exploring Florida wild lands and roadside botanizing in her favorite ditches! She can often be found working in her native wildflower garden and restoring her small patch of upland hardwood forest near the north rim of Paynes Prairie.



Gail Fishman - Silver Palmetto

Gail Fishman was the President of Magnolia Chapter from 2014 to 2017 and has been growing plants for the chapter's plant propagation program for many years despite not having a strong background in plants. She has three rescue cats, a sixteen year old dog and a new dog that was found in the woods by our next award winner, Scott Davis.



Scott Davis - Silver Palmetto

Scott Davis was the President of the Magonia Chapter from 2017 to 2019. He is a biologist at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, where he serves as coordinator for a federal Milkweed-Monarch Conservation Initiative. He is also VP for the Friends of Wakulla Springs, VP for the Florida Wild Mammal Association, and is a committee member for the FWC Great Florida Birding Trail and Black Bear Stakeholders. He also owns a native plant nursery and is an officer of a non-profit agency on urban forest conservation.



Neta Villalobos-Bell - Green Palmetto for Education

Neta Villalobos-Bell is a Lake Beautyberry Chapter member and was Cuplet Fern's membership chair from 2016 through 2018. She is a fixture in the Central Florida community and a well-known local environmentalist. In 2018 she won the Cox Conservation Grant Award and donated the entire proceeds to an FNPS chapter.



Marion Crim - Green Palmetto for Service

Marion is serving her last term as a Cuplet Fern Chapter board member at-large and has been integral in the running of the chapter for many years. Cuplet Fern is very grateful for her enthusiasm and consistency in welcoming people to meetings, organizing chapter literature, creating name badges, and creating professional-quality business cards for the chapter. She's also known for her heat-tolerance at garden work days.



Susan Angermeier - Green Palmetto for Service

Susan Angermeier has been a member of Cuplet Fern chapter and its treasurer since its inception. She has also been Cuplet Fern's treasurer for ten years. Susan has been the principal figure in getting Cuplet Fern to finally comply with charitable reporting as required by 501(c)(3). Without Susan's steady character, the chapter would be at a serious operational loss.



Kathleen Poole - Green Palmetto for Service

Kathleene Poole is a longtime Cuplet Fern Chapter member and has been the editor of *The Frond Forum*, the chapter's newsletter, for the past five years. Kathleen is a Florida native and holds a Bachelor's degree in Educational Media from the University of Central Florida and a Masters degree in Library & Information Science from the University of South Florida.



Jackie Sward - Green Palmetto for Service

Jackie Sward has been a member of the Florida Native Plant Society and a member of the Tarflower Chapter since 1998. Ms. Sward was elected Treasurer of the Chapter from 2006 to 2007, and Publicity Chair from 2008 to present. Her extensive knowledge of the Federal and Florida tax laws, Charitable organizations, and banking requirements has served the chapter well. She saw the chapter through all the non-profit (GEL) requirements, and complicated tax payments as the chapter grew and taxes become a monthly submittal.



Theresa Lutz - Green Palmetto for Service

Theresa Lutz has been an active member of the Conservation Committee since joining FNPS. She participates in numerous committee projects including monitoring rare plant populations, monitoring introductions and restorations, performing plant inventories at rescue sites, collecting seeds for restoration projects, and working with Lake Louisa State Park as the FNPS representative for groundcover restoration at the park. The annual FNPS grants for conservation and Dan Austin are now under Theresa's care. She compiles the datasheets from each reviewer, helps review the proposals, and submits the final review for the Conservation Committee and Board of Directors.



Jan Allyn - Green Palmetto for Service

Jan became a member of the Pinellas Chapter of FNPS in 2000, and hit the ground running. She has been the Chapter's webmaster almost every year until 2020, when she finally hung up those shoes. She has also served as Chapter Secretary, Chapter Representative, Newsletter Reporter, Sales and Merchandise Chair, Special Events/Festivals Chair, Social Media Chair, and Landscape Tour Chair. She became Pinellas Chapter's President in 2012-2014, then stepped back up again from 2015-19. Jan is the Content Manager for the USF Water Institute.



Martha Steuart - Green Palmetto for Service

Martha Steuart has been a member of Conradina Chapter for 28 years and is an integral part of the chapter. She excels at selling native plant books, which she curates, stocks, and transports to every chapter meeting. She also willingly shares her vast knowledge of native plants and keeps the Conradina Board up to date with the latest native plant news.

2020 Landscaping Awards

This year FNPS received 6 applications for Landscape Awards all of which were private residences demonstrating the use of native plants, adding visual interest, increasing awareness, and providing habitats. Five of these residences are in central Florida and one is

in Palm Beach; all are within neighborhoods. Most of these designs demonstrated significant replacement of fairly typical non-native plants dominated by turf grass with HOA oversight. In the past we have often seen incrementalism where native plantings are established and increased over time. This category requires at least an 80% area of native planting within the landscape and this can be difficult to verify, however, this year the conversions are approaching 100% with some of the designs.

Native plant communities to be preserved were absent as were invasive exotics requiring removal. These are criteria that we as a Society have used in the judging process for many years, however it may well be time to adapt to these new designs that are occurring in established residential neighborhoods to recognize added value to replacement of non-native landscaping, which is already inherent, if not quantified.

In the absence of existing native plant communities on or adjacent to the site, research into current or historical soils on site inform the designers regarding the plant community that may have been on site, and may remain the basis for specifying plants. One applicant used the presence of a mature trees and a preserved off-site area to inform them concerning plant assemblages.

Residential - Award of Excellence - Skilling Residence



Residential - Award of Merit - Harding Path



Residential - Award of Merit - Ramsey-Quilin Residence



Residential - Award of Merit - Burle Residence



Residential - Award of Merit - Wheeler/Buckovic



Legislative Session Wrap-Up

by Eugene Kelly and Sue Mullins

The beginning of July signaled the end of Governor DeSantis' main signing period for legislation passed during the 2020 session that ended in mid-March. That means we can provide a fairly definitive wrap-up of the session by summarizing the primary successes and

failures of the Florida Native Plant Society's advocacy. We use the qualifier "fairly" because during a year when the coronavirus pandemic slammed economies around the world, there is certain to be a large shortfall in the revenues needed to fund the budget the Governor just signed. It is widely expected the legislature will convene a special session—probably in November after the elections have been completed and new leadership has taken the helm—to address the impending budget shortfalls. This despite the Governor already vetoing \$1 billion in spending, including \$225 million intended for affordable housing, when he signed the budget. To say Florida will be facing some very painful decisions in the coming months is an understatement!

Regardless of uncertainty created by the pandemic-related hit to Florida's budget, we have some successes to celebrate. Let's start with a success that is entirely FNPS-centric. HB 1135 would create a new "Florida Native" specialty license plate! Although the bill has not yet been signed by the Governor, passage of the legislation marked a huge turning point for FNPS and increased our visibility in Tallahassee and statewide. Assuming the bill becomes law, and FNPS is able to broker the required three thousand "pre-sales" for the plate to go into production, the proceeds generated by the license plate will be dedicated to advancing our mission. The bill is not considered controversial, as it passed the House and Senate unanimously, and its approval would not add to our budget woes since specialty plates are "self-supporting". So we are optimistic there will be Florida Native plate available and we hope our members will showcase their support for native plant conservation by trading in their current plates for a new "Florida Native" license plate. The specialty plate will feature only native Florida plants and is being designed by the Martin County Chapter's very talented Marjorie Shropshire.

The real highlight of the approved \$92 billion budget is the \$100 million allocated to the Florida Forever land conservation program. FNPS submitted a letter to the Governor asking him to retain the funding for land conservation, and we were very pleased it survived the \$1 billion cut from the budget by his veto pen. Also retained in the budget was \$625 million for Everglades and springs restoration. These actions show an encouraging commitment to natural resource protection by both the Legislature and Governor. We are grateful to the FNPS members across the state who contacted their legislators and the Governor to express support for Florida Forever.

Approval of HB 1061 created the 400,000-acre Nature Coast Aquatic Preserve along the coastlines of Citrus, Hernando and Pasco Counties. These counties encompass the southern end of the Big Bend coastline, which is home to one of the largest contiguous expanses of seagrass meadows in the world! The designation will help ensure the health of the seagrasses, salt marshes, and other superlative aquatic resources of the area will be preserved. The annual summer scallop season is just starting, and the seagrasses of the region draw thousands of recreational scallopers every year. The bill was sponsored by Representative Ralph Massullo, whose district includes all of Citrus County and part of Hernando. While FNPS was supportive of this legislation, we did not actively advocate for it; however, working in support of the Pew Charitable Trusts, Sue was one of the primary forces behind writing the legislation and moving the bill through the legislative process.

The letter we submitted asking the Governor to retain Florida Forever funding also asked him to veto or redirect the \$117.5 million budgeted for the M-CORES toll roads. We have to take the good with the bad. It was not surprising the M-CORES funding also survived the veto pen because even if the Governor had been inclined to veto that spending, it would have been virtually impossible since the \$117.5 million was thoroughly embedded within FDOT's approved Work Plan. That means there was no "line item" the Governor could have

chosen to surgically extract it from the budget. It was only through deep digging by Sue that we found the M-CORES funding in the Work Plan, i.e., the hiding place where the funding had been secreted away, safe and sound and immune to a line item veto. That does not mean it will be immune from the Legislature's scrutiny. As we advocate for retention of Florida Forever funding during the presumptive special session, we may also have another opportunity to recommend that M-CORES be defunded. As our letter to the Governor noted, it would be obscene to withhold or reduce funding for critical and pressing needs while allowing a purely discretionary project like M-CORES to advance. It was recently announced that up to \$738 million will be spent on M-CORES over the next five, simply for planning and engineering. With actual road construction folded in, it's been estimated M-CORES would cost Florida residents as much as \$21 billion for roads that would not meet any projected transportation need. To learn more about M-CORES, you can review articles posted in recent editions of the Sabal minor.

We also submitted a letter recommending a veto of SB 410, which was a growth management related bill. We all know growth management had already been cut to the bone, but the unrelenting surgeons in the legislature passed a bill that would have cut into some of the remaining fragments. We're pleased to announce Governor DeSantis did veto this bill. Pretty much every other conservation organization, and many advocates for local governance (e.g., the Florida Association of Counties), had also requested a veto. The bill would have removed local governments' ability to regulate land use and decide how, and where, they want their communities to grow. The ability of a community to conserve locally significant natural resources, including the native plants and native plant communities that FNPS seeks to conserve, is just one facet of authority the bill would have eliminated.

We submitted a third letter asking the Governor to accept SB 712, a.k.a. the Clean Waterways Act, as simply a first-step towards addressing our water quality woes in the event he signed it—which he did. A number of our fellow conservation organizations recommended a veto; we essentially asked for a “signing statement” acknowledging much more needs to be done to address nutrient pollution and related algae blooms. Sue reiterated these points during a meeting with the Governor's staff. When he signed the bill, Governor DeSantis said there is still “plenty of work to be done”, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Noah Valenstein described it as a “historic step forward”.

The Clean Waterways Act was certainly weakened considerably during the course of the session, but it was the first legislation in a long time that attempted anything truly meaningful. It addressed the conversion of polluting septic tanks to municipal wastewater collection systems and improved the regulation of sewage biosolids applications. It was a virtual certainty the bill would be signed into law after the Governor's promises to restore our degraded waters. We believe we ended up in the right place on this legislation, which puts us in a good position next session to push for more progress. We all need to put on your thinking caps to identify what we might mean by “more progress”. We'd like to zero in on some positive things to propose for “next steps”, starting with some of the recommendations included in a [consensus report](#) completed by the Governor's Blue Green Algae Task Force.

There were some good bills that never made it to the Governor's desk, including one that would have dedicated at least \$100 million a year to Florida Forever. While we will continue to push for the restoration of historic funding levels of \$300 million per year, it would be helpful to have legislation passed that would establish a minimum annual commitment to land conservation. There were several bills signed into law that are problematic – like one that makes it more difficult for citizens to successfully put proposed constitutional amendments on the ballot (SB 1794), and one that further erodes home rule by stripping Key

West of its ability to implement an ordinance restricting the use of certain sun screens in order to protect coral reef systems. On a more positive note, HB 579 became law and will require any state-financed construction projects in the coastal area to complete a Sea-Level Impact Projection Study.

Now for a bit of a reality check. Governor DeSantis vetoed “only” about a billion in spending, and the hole in Florida’s budget will almost certainly be much, much larger than that. It is considered very likely the legislature will reconvene for a special session in November—just after the election—to discuss more cuts at a time when making them won’t hurt reelection bids. That’s also when new legislative leadership will be in place. So, we may have another opportunity to push for cutting that M-CORES funding. And another opportunity to jump to the defense of Florida Forever funding.

Lunch and Learn Archives



Past issues are available [here](#). Please consider submitting an article to the Sabal Minor, [email](#) the editor to discuss your story ideas.

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