A Southern Dogface butterfly and several Progressive Bee Flies take advantage of a Gayfeather (Liatris sp.) blooming in September of 2020 in the Triangle of the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, one of our Longspurred Balm (Dicentra canadensis) monitoring locations. Photo by Valerie Anderson.
It was a busy summer of plant rescue and restoration plantings and now we look forward to our equally busy season of monitoring, grant reporting and October Native Plant Month.

My biggest news is that I will be retiring in January 2022 (to Vermont) and will be staying on with FNPS through the end of this year to assist with the transition to a new Executive Director. As you will read in this issue, our Board of Directors is currently working on hiring a new director. I will deeply miss you all!!! We have had so much fun and enjoyed great camaraderie—annual conferences, fieldtrips, meetings, and of course sweating buckets together while rescuing, planting and monitoring Florida’s wonderful native plants.

There are so many of you to thank! While I can’t list you all here, I will at least try to acknowledge a few mentors and role models. Thank you to those outstanding Florida botanists and ecologists who helped me learn about Florida’s amazing plants and plant communities. Anne Cox and Nancy Bissett have always been so generous with their time! Eric Menges, Carl Weekly, Paul Schmalzer, Edwin Bridges and Steve Orzell—their research has set the standard and has informed so many of us in the work we do to conserve our rare plant species. Shirley Denton— I can’t thank you enough for everything you do and for your patience and generosity!

Thank you to everyone who has slaved by my side under extreme conditions: Marlene Rodak, Jackie Rolly, Todd Angel, Deborah Curry, Theresa Lutz, Lois Smith, Wendy Poag, Patricia Burgos, Annie Schmidt, Gene Kelly, Marjorie Holt, Maria Bolton, Susan Carr, Jim Buckner, Willy The Losen, Linda Duever, Marc Godts, Terry Piper, Catherine Bowman and so many others! What adventures we have had together—often while our flesh was burning and we were sweating buckets! Thank you for all you do and for being amazing partners in conservation!

Words are inadequate to express my gratitude for my fellow employees and our contractors who together keep this organization running every single day! Valerie Anderson, Lilly Anderson-Messec, Cammie Donaldson, Emma Haselow and Kim Zarillo. I have been so blessed to work with you and couldn’t ask for a better group of people to collaborate with at the end of my career! You are that enviable “dream team” that so many people desire to be a part of but rarely experience. You meet challenges head-on—Covid-19, no problem! You are smart, talented, dedicated, passionate, kind, honest, supportive and collegial. I am weeping as I write this. I will dearly miss you but am so happy that I was given this opportunity to work with you!

Executive Director Search | Ann Redmond, Vice President of Finance & Search Committee Chair

As we’ve all heard, after three productive and exciting years at the helm of FNPS as our Executive Director, Juliet Rynear is moving to Vermont and leaving her position as our Executive Director. The Society’s loss is Vermont’s gain! While we’re excited for her future there, we’re also sorry to see her leave us. FNPS President Bonnie Basham has appointed a Committee to search for our next Executive Director. That Committee has begun to meet and is now advertising for Juliet’s replacement. We are working to have the new Executive Director in place as soon as feasible. Here’s a synopsis of the search process.

The search committee was formed from the FNPS Executive Committee and representatives of Standing Committees and At-Large Directors.

- Executive Committee
  - Bonnie Basham  
  - Mark Kateli  
  - David Martin  
  - Ann Redmond  
  - Susan Carr  
  - Jacqueline Rolly

- Committee and At-Large Representation
  - Patricia Burgos Chair, Council of Chapters
  - Mary Ann Camacho-Viera Director at Large
  - Shirley Denton Standing Committee Chair (Communications Committee)
All of these individuals have indicated their willingness to serve on this committee and work with the following ground rules:

- Agree that the Committee’s goal is to hire the individual who would best meets FNPS’ needs
- Search will be posted externally to appropriate organizations and job boards
- Search will be open to any candidate who wishes to apply
- Strict confidentiality
  - Committee deliberations are confidential and not to be shared with friends, staff, or Executive Director (ED)
  - Candidate names, resumes, references, etc. are confidential
- Committee members prohibited from applying for the position
- It’s work, but let’s have some fun while we’re at it!
- As engaged by the Chair, Committee may engage ED and staff as needed to augment its understanding of how FNPS operates
- Good faith effort to complete assigned tasks
- Members must remain engaged and informed
- If a member’s other life obligations take precedence, they agree to step down rather than leave gaps in the committee’s progress
- Assume good intentions

As a team we began a series of tasks to identify and hire FNPS’ next ED. We have completed the Job Description and have posted the announcement and application instructions on the [FNPS website](http://www.fnps.org). Juliet provided us with a detailed draft of the position responsibilities and that has been instrumental in informing the parameters of the Job Description. Committee members have taken on tasks related to the ultimate compensation package, benefits, budget impacts to the Society, etc. We are also defining a process for developing, interviewing, and selecting candidates, and then short listing from the applicant pool. We’ll be briefing the Board of Directors as we proceed and obtaining their approvals at critical points in the process. The committee has begun to develop information for when we make an offer to the selected candidate. Finally, the committee will develop a transition/on-boarding plan so this transition is as seamless as possible. If we continue to proceed at the pace we’ve set, it will be feasible to have the selected candidate overlap with Juliet’s departure, greatly easing their transition into the position.

As you saw in the Ground Rules, this is an open search. Please share this with any friends, colleagues or acquaintances who may be interested. They can check our website for the posting. As noted in the Ground Rules, we’ll be posting in a variety of places. The task of identifying those places is underway.

We’ve had a wonderful three years under Juliet’s leadership. She is leaving Florida as your Board of Directors is about to approve an update to our strategic plan. So, while it’s sad that she’s leaving, there’s lemonade in the specific timing of her departure. The Search Committee is excited about this process and where our next Executive Director will lead us!

If you have any questions about the search process, please email me at finance@fnps.org.

**Message from the President | Bonnie Basham**

As gardeners, we have all learned that “to everything there is a season.” Sadly, that is true of the tenure of our Executive Director, Juliet Ryner. Juliet and her husband are moving to Vermont. (You can read a Search Committee report by Ann Redmond, FNPS VP for Finance on page 2.) I’m sure you will join me in wishing Juliet a safe journey. To recap some of the highlights of Juliet’s tenure with FNPS: she was hired by the FNPS board as the first staff member and fulltime Executive Director and she has set a high bar for the next and future Executive Directors; our membership is at an all-time with over 5,000 FNPS members throughout the state and we are partners with US Fish and Wildlife Service as well as the Florida Forest Service and the Atlanta Botanical Garden in order to further our mission of “preserving, conserving, and restoring Florida’s native plants and native plant communities.” You can write her at executivedirector@fnps.org to tell her how much her leadership has meant to you.

Don't forget to order your FNPS license plate at fnps.org. You can order online once you are on the FNPS website. We must sell 3,000 by October 2022 for the plate to become one of the license plate options offered by the state of Florida.
FNPS News and Notifications

Remembering Loret Thatcher | Jenny Welch & Ginny Stibolt

Loret Thatcher, aka Loret Setters, was a transplant from New York, and one of the first things she did to learn about our Florida native plants was to join the Florida Native Plant Society Pine Lily Chapter. She joined with great determination, enthusiasm, passion and eagerness to learn. She began as Pine Lily’s newsletter editor. She went on to do an amazing job with publicity.

She started a blog called “What Florida Native Plant Is Blooming Today?” chronicling what was blooming in her own small yard. This was followed by “Tales of a Central Florida Wildlife Garden” and “Central Florida Critter of the Day”. All of them wildly successful and followed by people around the world. In addition, she was a member of two team blogs: Beautiful Wildlife Gardens and Native Plant & Wildlife Gardens along with top garden writers around the country.

Her excellent photography of native plants, butterflies, and insects have been everywhere including Alabama Butterfly Atlas, Earth and Space News, The Humane Gardener, and others. Her photography was also on exhibit at the Palm Beach Photographic Centre for 3 months for the Going Native exhibit.

Loret was a local activist against putting a road through Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area. She was also a local activist against putting coal ash into Osceola County landfill. She was a local activist against political corruption.

Loret was a private person and did not talk much about her past or her disability of severe scoliosis or her long battle with colon cancer. She did share her love for her dogs, mostly elderly setters that she adopted. Her name on Facebook, Loret T. Setters, illustrates both her desire for privacy and her love for her English Setters.

Articles

Pitcherplants in the Pines | Lilly Anderson-Messec, Director of North Florida Programs

I saw a peacock in the pines. What had begun as an exasperating morning shifted at the sight of this exquisite bird and the remainder of the day unfurled into one of the most magical experiences that would alter the course of my life.

Several years ago, a friend shared their excitement of having found a spot in the Apalachicola National Forest that was filled with carnivorous pitcher plants and dwarf cypress trees. I was already a native plant lover and always up for an adventure, so I jotted down their directions and recruited my friend Bonnie to join me for a Sunday trip to find this spot. This was before I had a smartphone and I hadn’t done much exploring of areas outside of Tallahassee, so I took a circuitous route that had us driving all morning. Our confidence was waning when we finally found the small dirt road we were looking for.

It was a typical hot and humid late July afternoon in the Florida Panhandle, not a hint of breeze in the thick air. The summer sun seemed to intensify the color saturation of everything it touched. The sandy clay road cut a bright orange path through fresh growth of shimmering green pines, grasses and shrubs that were flushing out after an early spring burn. As we drove in, I noticed something moving on the roadside. It was a male peacock! In the middle of the Apalachicola National Forest! I was speechless. Peacocks are not native to the Americas and I had never seen one before in Florida. I hopped out of the car and
approached the bird as he fanned his shimmering feathers in an epic display. We watched as he disappeared into the trees. That surreal experience set the tone for the rest of our adventure. We drove slowly down the orange road as if in a dream.

The recently burned pine savannas were easy to walk through, and the fire-adapted native flora was lush with exuberant new growth. Even from a distance, we could see them—thickets of bright, chartreuse pitchers rising up on the edges of the blackened forest where it met the dwarf cypress swamp. I had never seen such a sight. These lemon-lime pitchers were enormous! Rising waist-high with a deep, scarlet blotch at their throat, just below their hoods. This was *Sarracenia flava var. rugelii*, commonly known as Yellow Pitcherplant or Cutthroat Pitcherplant. Most of what I knew about these plants were from books and a few sorry-looking nursery-grown plants in pots, so I was completely unprepared for how magnificent they are in their natural setting.

I was born and raised in the Florida Panhandle, yet until I became interested in native plants, I did not know that this region is one of the richest areas of biodiversity in North America. The Panhandle is a hotspot for carnivorous plants in particular—home to the greatest number of species and the largest populations in North America.

![Sarracenia x moorei](Photo by Lilly Anderson-Messec)

Six native species in the genus *Sarracenia*, commonly known as “pitcherplants”, are found in the Florida Panhandle; more than anywhere else in the world. *Sarracenia* have modified leaves that form a tube or “pitcher” with hoods at the top. The pitchers secrete nectar to attract prey—usually insects. Once the unlucky insect enters the pitcher, the slippery interior walls guide them down to the base of the trap which is filled with an enzyme rich liquid. This liquid dissolves the insect, allowing the plant to absorb the nutrients. This is a brilliant evolutionary adaptation to the nutrient poor soils they persist in.

Pitcherplants are typically found in sunny, open savannas that are wet year-round, as well as wet flatwoods, seepage slopes, wet prairies, streamside seeps, and edges of dome swamps and depression marshes. These areas have wet, acidic soils that are nutrient poor and often anaerobic, so most plants are not able to thrive in these soils.

*Sarracenia* is a dynamic genus, and our six native species naturally hybridize in the wild, creating many named and recognized hybrids. Those hybrids can cross and backcross, creating very unusual and varied individuals. This adds to the attraction of this charismatic genus, making these species and hybrids highly sought after by carnivorous plant enthusiasts and collectors across the globe. Unfortunately, research estimates that less than 3% of the original *Sarracenia* habitat along the Gulf Coastal Plain remains, lost mostly to development, agriculture, and habitat degradation due to fire suppression. The remaining populations are threatened by poaching as well. Many of our unusual subspecies or hybrids are very valuable to collectors, and unethical and illegal poaching is common.
often see signs of poaching in the well-known spots for these plants, which is both heartbreaking and infuriating. These wet sites are also easily and irreparably damaged by too much foot traffic.

It’s been over a decade since that hot July afternoon that sparked my love for carnivorous plants and a passion for the biodiverse Panhandle, but even in the relatively short period of time since that first otherworldly experience, I have seen so much loss and damage due to poaching and foot traffic. To avoid this, I make sure to never geotag sites, and I only give the county name or the general area if someone asks. I have seen too many sites ravaged by poaching, and now I just don’t feel it’s ethical to share locations for these plants. I am even careful when sharing photos in messages or online since digital photos can contain location data. The panhandle of Florida is still relatively intact compared to central and south FL. We need to preserve as much of it as we can. Not just for future generations to enjoy, but for all of the species that rely upon these ecosystems to continue to function.

Is It Time to Finally Restore the Ocklawaha River? | Eugene Kelly, Policy and Legislation Chair

The “pros” are many; the “cons” few and they are surmountable

The Ocklawaha River is the largest tributary to the St. Johns River. Once upon a time, it was a riverway bustling with boat traffic because it provided a route for commerce and tourists to travel from the Atlantic Ocean to the interior of frontier Florida. Tourists flocked to Silver Springs via the Ocklawaha and Silver Rivers. The Ocklawaha and Silver Springs were renowned for their scenic splendor and astounding wildlife. But Florida history is replete with examples of humanity’s predilection for improving upon nature. After draining the Everglades, and while replumbing the Kissimmee River, our early visionaries turned their attentions to the notion of creating a shipping channel that would link the Gulf of Mexico with the Atlantic Ocean and allow shipping to bypass the long journey around the Florida peninsula and through the Florida Straits. Their vision eventually morphed into the Cross Florida Barge Canal project.

Map of the Ocklawaha River centered on the Rodman Reservoir. Designed by Eugene Kelly. Data from the Florida Natural Areas Inventory
You can find much more detailed accounts of the lengthy history of this project. Suffice it to say here that the immense environmental calamity that would have resulted from completion of the Cross Florida Barge Canal project was largely averted. But some remnants remain. On the positive side, we have the 70,000-acre, 110-mile long Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, which is described as “one of the nation’s largest incomplete public works projects” on the Florida State Parks website. It is a linear park aligned along what would have been the footprint of the Barge Canal, and it is certainly an environmental and recreational jewel. Quite appropriately, it is named for one of the central leaders of the fight to end the Barge Canal project.

On the negative side, one segment of the Barge Canal was completed. Construction of the Rodman Dam and Buckman Lock system was completed in 1968 and impounded the lower Ocklawaha River, resulting in creation of the Rodman Reservoir (see Overview Map). Calls to remove or breach the dam and “Free the Ocklawaha River” quickly followed. But proponents of retaining the Rodman Reservoir, which became a magnet for bass fishermen, prevailed. The Rodman Dam was subsequently renamed in honor of one of the leading proponents of retaining the reservoir system, which was recognized as a boon to fishermen and the local economy.

In addition to creating an artificial waterbody renowned for bass fishing, the Rodman Reservoir destroyed an estimated 7,500 acres of the lower Ocklawaha’s forested floodplain, submerged many miles of natural river channel, and submerged 20 freshwater springs. Severing the natural, open connection between the Ocklawaha and St. Johns ended the movement of manatees to the warm water refugium of Silver Springs and blocked the seasonal migrations of such anadromous fish species as the Shortnose sturgeon, Atlantic sturgeon, striped bass and American shad to spawning habitat up the Ocklawaha. Movement between the Ocklawaha and St. Johns by boaters and paddlers was also impeded, requiring either passage through the Buckman Lock and Canal, or portaging by paddlers at the location of the Kirkpatrick Dam. Over the course of the 50+ years since the completion of construction, the negative environmental consequences have become increasingly obvious and severe, while the fishing and other recreational values of the reservoir system have declined. During bass fishing tournaments conducted in the reservoir, it is not unusual for the participants to exit the reservoir via the Buckman Lock in favor of fishing the St. Johns.

The Florida Native Plant Society is a longtime member of the Free the Ocklawaha River Coalition, which is now comprised of 60+ organizations and business interests, and in recent years has been renamed the Free the Ocklawaha River Coalition—For Everyone! (https://www.freetheocklawaha.com/). The Coalition’s goal of restoring a free-flowing Ocklawaha River hasn’t changed, but the scope of its vision has expanded in recognition of the economic and social impacts restoration would have on the surrounding community. That’s where “Everyone” enters the picture. Conceptual plans for the restoration now promote the inclusion of significant recreational amenities to help counter the negative impacts to the fishermen and businesses that have benefited from existence of the reservoir.

**The Pros and Cons of Restoration**

The members of FORCE believe the time to finally move forward with restoration is undeniably at hand. A basic accounting of the pros and cons to breaching the dam and draining the reservoir, some alluded to above, includes:

- 7,500 acres of floodplain forest and up to 20 springs and spring run streams drowned by the reservoir, in addition to 8,000 acres of stressed floodplain forest located upstream and downstream of the reservoir, would be restored.
- An estimated 150 million gallons of freshwater discharge per day would be restored to the St. Johns River as a result of increased spring flows along the Ocklawaha and the reduction in evaporation from the existing reservoir.
- Saltwater intrusion up the St. Johns River in response to the double whammy of sea level rise and declining river flows would be impeded.
- The ability of manatees to access the warm water refugium of Silver Springs would be restored.
- The historic movement of many fish species, including striped bass, American sturgeon, white and channel catfish, American shad and mullet, from the Atlantic Ocean to Silver Springs, would be restored.
- Water quality would be enhanced in response to reductions in water temperature, increases in flow, and the restoration of thousands of acres of associated wetlands.
- The growth of invasive aquatic vegetation and need for repetitive herbicide treatments would be reduced.
- Landscape connectivity via the Ocala to Osceola Wildlife Corridor would be enhanced—more on that in a discussion that follows.
- A continuous “blueway” extending from the Ocklawaha’s headwaters in Central Florida’s Harris Chain of Lakes, all the way to the Atlantic Ocean, would be regained by boaters and paddlers.
• The expenditure of an estimated $14 million to repair the dam, which has already exceeded its design lifespan, and nearly $400,000 per year in maintenance and operation costs, would be avoided.

• Increased revenues from tourism would be generated for Putnam, Marion, and Alachua Counties, relative to revenues currently provided by the reservoir. It has been observed that recreational usage of the lower Ocklawaha increases by an average of 80 percent during the periodic drawdowns of the reservoir as paddlers and other outdoor enthusiast flock to explore the original river channel and the re-emergence of the drowned springs.

There are additional environmental benefits not enumerated above, and a number of economic analyses support the projections of enhanced revenues for the surrounding communities. You may note there is not a corresponding list of cons, or reasons to rebuild the dam and maintain the reservoir, presented here. That is because the economic impacts to the businesses and residents that benefit from the status quo, and changes to the current recreational usage enjoyed by fishermen, are the only arguments against restoration, and those impacts could be more than offset by including a comprehensive recreational development component as part of the restoration. The needs and sensibilities of people who live, work and play in the area need to be considered to ensure that everyone would ultimately benefit from restoration.

Enhancing the "O2O" Corridor

The Ocala to Osceola Wildlife Corridor, often referred to as the “O2O”, is a patchwork of natural lands and working landscapes that stretches from the northern end of the Ocala National Forest to the southern end of the Osceola National Forest. Much of the corridor has already been protected through public ownership of such tracts as the Etoniah Creek State Forest, Camp Blanding Military Reservation and Mike Roess Gold Head Branch State Park, or via conservation easements placed over a number of privately-owned parcels and mitigation banks. However, there are large gaps that remain entirely unprotected. Maintaining this existing connection between the national forests should be one of the highest priorities of Florida's land conservation efforts, including the Florida Wildlife Corridor project that was approved by the legislature and signed into law by Governor DeSantis this year. With Florida again growing by an estimated 1,000 new residents EVERY DAY, the $300 million dedicated to protecting the Florida Wildlife Corridor, of which the O2O is a segment has come at a time when the opportunities for protecting critical connections are closing rapidly.

The Rodman Reservoir, situated at the northern end of Ocala National Forest and at the southern end of the O2O, is more than 2 miles across for much of its length and may be the single greatest barrier to migration or movement by wildlife—and plants!—along the entire 100-mile length of the O2O. The anticipated impacts of climate change lend additional urgency to the goal of accommodating north-south movement by our native flora and fauna. Replacing the Rodman’s wide expanse of open water with a narrow, meandering river channel and forested floodplain, could more effectively accommodate movement by species that are unable to cross such an expanse of open water or that would otherwise favor the protection and cover provided by a forest.
When discussing the importance of maintaining connectivity within and between natural landscapes, widespread usage of the term "wildlife corridors" may seem to imply the importance of connectivity is unique to animal species, or reflect a sense that plants do not "move". I think we all know better! It's obvious the mechanisms by which plants "move" are different because individual plants are rooted in place. So we must think in terms of how plant propagules move and how gene exchange might take place across the landscape. Often it includes hitching a ride with wildlife, so enhancing wildlife movement can directly enhance plant movement. Consider also the complex process by which entire plant communities might need, or be able, to "move" and adapt genetically in response to the stresses induced by climate change. Movement and gene exchange will be no less important for plants and plant communities than for wildlife.

Thinking in terms of plant "movement" at the southern end of the O2O, and without any substantial body of research to guide said thinking, I concluded that the plant species and communities most relevant to such a discussion are those most proximate. The northern end of Ocala National Forest is dominated by scrub and longleaf pine sandhill habitats, with some large areas of mesic pine flatwoods and several noteworthy spring/springrun systems mixed in. Looking north of the reservoir, there are some large occurrences of scrub, sandhill and mesic flatwoods protected in Etoniah Creek State Forest; however, thousands of additional acres remain unprotected, but targeted for protection as part of the Etoniah/Cross Florida Greenway Florida Forever Project. Closing these gaps in the O2O may now be possible with the funding provided by the Florida Wildlife Corridor project.

Imperiled plant species and plant communities may deserve some special recognition in this kind of discussion, and it is worth noting that scrub, sandhill and mesic flatwoods are distinguished as imperiled communities by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory and are included among the nine designated as "focal communities" because they are under-represented in Florida’s network of conservation lands. Some of the noteworthy imperiled species that might benefit from enhanced connectivity as a result of Ocklawaha restoration include:

- Scrub Buckwheat (Eriogonum longifolium var. gnaphalifolium) E
- Hartwrightia (Hartwrightia floridana) T
- Star Anise (Illicium parviflorum) E
- Pondspice (Litsea aestivalis) T
- Florida Spiny Pod (Matelea floridana) E
- Pygmy Pipes (Monotropis reynoldsiae) E
- Clasping Warea (Warea amplexifolia) E

The Federally-Listed Clasping Warea (Endangered) and Scrub Buckwheat (Threatened), and State-Listed Florida Spiny Pod and Pygmy Pipes (both Endangered), occur in the xeric scrub

Clasping Warea (Warea amplexifolia) within the O2O Corridor. Photo by Valerie Anderson.

Pondspice (Litsea aestivalis), Price’s Scrub. Photo by Robert Simons.

Florida Spiny Pod (Matelea floridana). Chinsegut WEA. FWC Photo by Alice Mary Herden.
and/or sandhill habitats of the region. Marion County is the northern limit of Clasping Warea’s range so improved connectivity might facilitate a range extension northward. Pondspice (State-Endangered) is present in flatwoods both north and south of the reservoir. Star Anise (State-Endangered) and Hartwrightia (State-Threatened) favor the banks of spring run streams—a number of which would be reemerge from beneath the reservoir in the event of restoration.

But is it Affordable?

Affordability can be a pretty subjective thing to measure. How much will restoration cost? What are the tradeoffs—meaning what must we forgo in order to fund it? The $14 million estimate for repair of the dam is based on a study completed in 2007, so it may cost more in 2021 dollars. But if we assume $14 million is still accurate, then adding the estimate of annual maintenance costs yields a total cost of $17.6 million over 10 years to just refurbish, maintain and operate the dam. The “partial” restoration envisioned by FORCE, which would simply breach the dam in order to gradually restore the natural water levels and engage in some replanting of native vegetation in the exposed floodplain, is estimated to cost $25.8 million over 10 years. So while restoration might cost a bit more over the first 10 years, there would never be any future need to repair or maintain the dam or to operate the lock. When accounting for the revenues generated by increased recreational usage, a cost-benefit analysis determined restoration would produce a cumulative net benefit of $47.2 million over the first 10 years, versus a cumulative loss of $5.3 million with repair and maintenance of the dam. Given the long list of environmental benefits, can we afford NOT to choose restoration?

Kissimmee River restoration is nearing completion, and it is a bit illuminating to compare and contrast the two projects. At completion, the Kissimmee project will have restored 20,000 acres of riverine wetland. A fact sheet completed by the US Army Corp of Engineers in January 2021 stated that Kissimmee restoration required the acquisition of 102,000 acres to complete the project and estimated total restoration costs will exceed $1 billion. Virtually the entire land base needed to accommodate Ocklawaha restoration is already in public ownership, helping make it “shovel ready”, and at a net return of $47+ million over 10 years, Ocklawaha restoration looks like a real bargain. It is definitely time to finally restore a free flowing Ocklawaha River!

Locally Sourced Native Plants at the UF Milton Native Garden | Lizzy Jenny, President, Longleaf Pine Chapter

UF Milton’s Native Plants Garden is bursting in blooms this summer, its second year of growth. The majority of plants in this collection were grown from local or regional Northwest Florida native plant material collected through seeds and cuttings (with permission and proper permitting as necessary). Material was then propagated and cultivated in the greenhouses before design and installation into the garden beds.

As native plants become more well-known and of interest to average gardeners, we certainly hope that they will also become more commercially available. Nonetheless, another challenge presents itself when native plant species are sold as “native” without context. Many commercially available natives have wide distribution ranges that are not all the same. So, on top of sourcing native plants, we want to encourage responsible, local growing with a process that also begins locally.

The hope when creating this garden was for it to serve as a resource and educational tool for the public as well as for the Horticulture and Forestry students at the UF Milton campus. We also want the garden to serve as a resource for seed stock and plant material with genetics specific to our region. The native garden

The garden contains over one hundred labeled species.
can provide beauty and education, but it can also provide services for our local fauna in the way of habitat and food source for wildlife including small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, insects, and butterflies. Please feel free to visit the native garden located in front of the UF greenhouses and open to the public during daylight hours.

Left: *Hibiscus grandiflorus* (swamp rose mallow) and *Vernonia gigantea* (giant ironweed) blooming behind the entrance sign. Right: The garden collection includes several species of *Hypericum* (St. John’s wort) species demonstrating a variety of its natural shapes, sizes, and textures Photos by Joelle O’Daniel Lopez

### Suncoast Chapter Native Garden Grant Program | *Kenny Gil, Agriculture Teacher, Middleton High School*

The Middleton High School Future Farmers of America (FFA) would like to say thank you to the Suncoast Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society for awarding a grant to our growing inner-city chapter during the 2020-2021 school year. This grant helped students learn about installing and maintaining Florida Natives and their importance, but it has done much more than that. The garden has become a place for students and faculty to visit and take a quick mental break, to reconnect with nature, to enjoy the flowers and pollinators. It has also given the students a sense of pride; knowing each time they pass by that their hands were responsible for the creation of something beautiful and beneficial. We were able to collect seeds from a few of the plants and have some small starts growing that we are going to plant in another area of the school. We are looking forward to what the 2021-2022 school year will offer and wish everyone at the SNPS well.

### Pawpaw Chapter Update | *Sande Habali, Co-Chapter Representative*

While some chapters take a summer break, Pawpaw holds events all year long. Our annual plant swap is in August. Members bring three native plants to trade. It’s a good opportunity to gain first-hand native plant horticulture experience. There are always too many plants, so new and prospective members get to go home with plants, even if they couldn’t bring any. Before the swap, we always take a plant walk around the venue, armed with a plant list prepared by Warren Reynolds. In August we’ll visit Tomoka State Park to see the native plant pollinator garden, which volunteers planted and have maintained for a few years now under the supervision of Park Specialist Aggie Armstrong.

Chapter members continue to participate in outreach programs. In July we partnered with Christie Miller, the new Be Floridian Now / Volunteer Coordinator for Volusia County. Her first project with us was clearing and creating a pollinator garden at Lyonia Preserve in Deltona. Several members also participated in Land Management Reviews. They highly recommend this experience to everyone, even if they just have to be an observer for their first review.

Our chapter is always on the look-out for ways to help protect our namesake, Rugel’s pawpaw (*Asimina rugelii*). In August, member Sonya Guidry joined Cheryl Peterson, rare plant conservation manager for Bok Tower Gardens, and Richard Harris, Volusia County environmental specialist, to plant 20 rescued Rugel’s plants and tissue culture seedlings in a remote area suitable for their success.
The Naples Chapter held a successful native plant sale on July 31st. Despite the predictable heat and humidity, 231 plants were sold to 39 customers in less than four hours! The sale offered intriguing variety with 37 different species represented.

Popular purchases included Leavenworth’s tickseed, swamp milkweed (pink and white), and blue porterweed. The Naples Chapter was thrilled with the number of Collier County residents who chose to add native plants to their landscapes.

Evan Barr (Plant Sales Chair) coordinated the event with guidance from Marlene Rodak of the Coccocoloba Chapter. Numerous volunteers made the sale run smoothly: Karyn Allman, Danny Cox, Leslie Landert, Art Mattson, Andee Naccarato, Connie Nagele, and Becky Troop. The Naples Chapter would like to thank the Naples Zoo and the Coccocoloba Chapter for their generous support that made this plant sale a success!

Et cetera

We now have 56 Lunch and Learns available to members of the Florida Native Plant Society—they’re collected in an easy-to-browse YouTube playlist.

If you’d like to share our Lunch and Learns with friends or family, please share the public YouTube playlist, which consists of seventeen videos.

Did you miss our four FNPS After Hours presentations? These are monthly informal evening programs, our first was on a Wednesday evening and our second was on a Saturday evening. They’re public, so share them at will! Here’s the playlist.

Recent back issues of the Palmetto are now available to members on our Google Drive. You can still search for individual articles on the website.

At the very launch of our first-ever all-Spanish video Seis plantas nativas de Florida fáciles para el sol y la sombra we had some great discussions about our existing Spanish-language resources, which weren’t previously in one place, so I put them all here. Print away!

We now have twenty chapters with their own YouTube Channels!

Citrus - Conradina - Cuplet Fern - Dade – Hernando - Ixia – Mangrove - Marion Big Scrub – Martin County - Naples - Pine Lily – Passionflower - Pinellas – Sarracenia - Sea Rocket - Serenoa - Suncoast - Sweetbay - Tarflower - The Villages

Don’t have a YouTube Channel? I can help you get set up, just email me and we’ll get started. I can help you upload meeting recordings or field trip videos as well.

We also have a new channel for just chapter leader and volunteer education called FNPS Tools and Materials.

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Past issues are available on our website. Please consider submitting an article to the Sabal Minor - email the editor to discuss your story ideas – sabalminor@fnps.org.