



The Maypop



News and Notes, August 2020

Service Award Celebrates Susan Knapp



Susan Knapp, one of the founding members of the Florida Native Plant Society Passionflower Chapter, was presented with an award of appreciation at a plant rescue in Clermont on June 14.

Susan was instrumental in advocating for the name "Passionflower," as it reflects the passion members have for promoting and preserving native plants — in addition to being the name of one of Florida's most beautiful and beneficial native plants. Since the chapter's founding, Susan has worked tirelessly to support local activities and served as Passionflower's Chapter Representative, connecting with other chapters at statewide FNPS meetings.

Susan is stepping back from the chapter to focus her passion on rescuing native plants and conservation initiatives across Central Florida. She has certainly made a difference, and Passionflower is grateful for her many contributions and dedication.

Above: Susan, center, with, from left, chapter officers Melanie Simon, Donna Bingaman and Laura Bennett-Kimble.

Upcoming Events – Save the Dates

In response to the spring survey, we changed our usual practice of taking a summer break and scheduled monthly programs to keep in touch with members and supporters and provide more learning opportunities.

While we mourn our inability to meet in-person, we are putting member and supporter safety first by shifting programs online and only scheduling activities that avoid closed spaces, crowded spaces and close contact.

- 🌿 Saturday, Aug. 22
Gardening Day
9:00-11:00 a.m. at Lake Louisa State Park
- 🌿 Wednesday, Aug. 26
Online Program: Gopher Tortoises
6:00-7:30 p.m.
- 🌿 Friday, Sept. 4
Gardening Day
9:00-11:00 a.m. at Lake Louisa State Park
- 🌿 Saturday, Sept. 12
Online Program or Field Trip, TBA
10:00 a.m.-noon
- 🌿 Wednesday, Sept. 23
Online: Passionflower Chapter Meeting
5:30-7:00 p.m.
- 🌿 Saturday, Sept. 25
Gardening Day
9:00-11:00 a.m. at Lake Louisa State Park

Watch your email or visit the Passionflower Chapter [website](#) and Facebook [events page](#) for more details.

It Takes a Village

Passionflower is one of over 30 FNPS chapters across Florida. Some are thriving, some are struggling to survive and some are dying. What makes the difference? It usually comes down to one thing – volunteer participation.

The Passionflower Chapter has a dedicated handful of volunteers who do double duty to keep the corporation running and work to plan, schedule and coordinate activities to fulfill our mission to **educate** chapter-area citizens, landowners and policy-makers about the benefits of native plants, **promote** gardening with native plants and sustainable landscaping practices, and **mobilize** support for initiatives to sustain natural native plants and native plant communities.

What would more volunteers help us do? Reach and educate more potential native plant adopters. Increase diversity. Get more involved in conservation and research efforts. Fund and staff a project in our community. The possibilities are endless.

Finding time to volunteer is hard, because it usually means giving up something else, but the benefits are substantial for Passionflower and for you. Think giving back, satisfaction, sharing hard-won knowledge, learning new skills or developing existing ones. What can you do with a few hours? Here are a few suggestions:

- Research speakers for programs or areas for field trips.
- Write a newsletter article about your favorite plant, something you've learned or a recent experience.
- Attend a chapter meeting and share your thoughts, ideas and opinions with friends and family members.
- If you know how to create/edit videos, you could help put together short spots to increase our online presence on Facebook.
- Reach out to a Scout troop to see if we can provide educational experiences, be supportive of scouting and gain support for future projects.

If you'd like to support and help the chapter survive and thrive, please email Passionflower.FNPS@gmail.com and/or attend our chapter meeting on Sept. 23.

Also, please renew your membership if you are already a member, or join FNPS and the Passionflower Chapter if you're a non-member supporter. Passionflower relies on membership dues to pay our annual fees and expenses like printing and postage, Zoom license, nametags, advertising and speakers. Make this YOUR organization by being a member and participating!

Recent Programs: Weedology 101

Janine Griffiths, a landscape designer and owner of GreenThumb, Inc. in Fort Lauderdale, entertained and informed Passionflower members and supporters on July 22 with her "Weedology 101" presentation, presented via Zoom. She covered a lot of ground, including the history of weeds, weeding techniques and tools, and weeding psychology. Her practical Weeding Wisdom:

- Removing weeds by hand is always more effective than with chemicals.
- Pull weeds when they are seedlings, before they flower and disperse seeds, or deadhead them before they go to seed.
- Pull weeds out by their roots – gently, but firmly so you get the whole root.
- Know what kind of weed you are removing so you can use the right technique.
- Think of weeding as therapy – a mindful opportunity to get to know your garden and plants.
- There is no such thing as a weed-free garden, just a weed-controlled garden.

For weed identification, Janine recommended several resources, including a free guide which you can download from the [Passionflower website Resources page](#), along with the program handout. There is also a video of the program at [Weedology 101 Recording 7-22-20](#).

HEALTHY YARDS

Checklist for a Healthy Yard

MOW HIGH AND WATER LESS

Mowing grass to about 4" helps shade out weeds and encourages roots to grow longer: this helps the lawn tolerate heat better and require less watering.

check

GO ELECTRIC

Switch to electric or battery powered yard equipment. It's cleaner, less polluting, quieter and it is better for your health as well as the planet's.

check

DON'T USE ARTIFICIAL PESTICIDES OR HERBICIDES

Save the natural ecology of the soil and the quality of our drinking water by using only natural amendments. For the safest protection against ticks, use tick bait boxes and check yourself.

check

DON'T USE ARTIFICIAL FERTILIZERS

Runoff from chemical fertilizers causes great harm to our streams and ponds. Native plants, shrubs and trees don't need fertilizers.

check

MULCH GRASS AND LEAVES

Leaf blowers damage our yards and our health. Leave grass clippings on the lawn and attach a leaf mulching blade to your existing mower in the fall to mulch leaves into the lawn.

check

CHOOSE SUSTAINABLE PLANTS

Pollinators and birds rely on native plants to raise their young. Plant native perennials also for better drainage, erosion control and their beauty.

check

COVER AND AMEND THE SOIL NATURALLY

Try to plant densely to decrease the need for water and weeding. Compost and fallen leaves improve the soil structure and add nutrients for your plants.

check

REMOVE INVASIVES

Familiarize yourself with the invasive plants in your area and remove them from your property.

check

REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE LAWN

Turf grass provides very few benefits to the ecosystem. For a more sustainable yard, reduce the size of the lawn and add beds for native plants.

check

KEEP IT DARK

If you place light fixtures in your landscape make sure they direct downwards, so they don't distract wildlife. Don't use blue light and turn the lights off when you leave the outdoors.

check

For more details and information please visit www.healthyyards.org

Healthy Yards

What makes a healthy yard? Native plants are a great foundation, but there are other things we can do to create and maintain a healthy outdoor space, according to Healthy Yards.

The organization asserts that many of us have adopted landscaping habits that are harmful to our environment and our health.

The group, organized by a team of professional gardeners, master gardeners and garden "passionates," states, "Changing your yard practices might be the easiest way to fight climate change and support your local ecosystem!"

Check out the website, healthyyards.org, which offers information for homeowners, professionals, HOAs and food gardeners, as well as this handy checklist, at left.



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The Rewarding Work of Rescuing Plants



Above, volunteers at a recent native plant rescue project admire a *Dalea feayi* plant. Below, a close-up view of a bloom.



© John Bradford

While hot, humid summer is not an ideal time for plant rescues as far as us humans are concerned, it is an ideal time to collect Florida's fall-blooming native plants that are growing on land slated for development.

Many of these native plants are deciduous or go dormant over the winter, and small seedlings can be very difficult to identify. That makes June and July an ideal timeframe for rescue plants. They have established foliage and are growing with the summer rains, but have not yet bloomed, so they are not putting all their energy into producing flowers. This timing helps boost survival rates.

Unfortunately, we can't save all the beautiful plants we see. Some species, such as lupine, rarely survive if their roots are disturbed. Others, such as *Dalea feayi*, have very extensive root systems or large, strong tap roots, which make it challenging to dig out successfully. Rescuers at a Clermont-area site admired the delicate lavender flowers of the *Dalea*, but left it undisturbed. Rescuers will be back in the fall to collect seeds, which partners will propagate.

Rescue partners not only propagate plants, they also transport and care for them through the whole process. The plants have to be "hardened," or provided time in the shade and frequent watering to recover from the stress of being dug up, for a month or two before getting planted in a new location. After hardening, the plants get new homes in a conservation area to help restore habitats and increase the biodiversity.

As development in Central Florida continues to reduce pristine native habitat areas, these rescues are vital to preserve genetic diversity and help native plants (particularly those that are threatened, endangered, rare and/or endemic) persist into the future. FNPS rescues at sites where landowners give us permission to do so, and we are glad for that and the volunteer rescuers. An added benefit for rescuers is the great opportunity to see native ecosystems up close and learn about plants that are not cultivated or sold at nurseries.

Interested in joining us? Watch your email for opportunities to help at a plant rescue.

Pretty in Pink, Red and White

What's not to like about a plant that blooms year-round, self-sows and attracts butterflies, bees, small seed eating birds and hummingbirds? That is why many people new to cultivating native plants start with Tropical Sage. This member of the mint family (note the square stem) is a perennial in Zones 8 to 10. Tropical sage grows 2 feet tall if pruned, though can stretch to 4 to 5 feet tall if not. Blooms range in color from vibrant red to pink, coral and white. Deadheading spent flower stalks can ensure almost continuous bloom.

Tropical sage loves the sandy Florida soil and once established is drought tolerant. It is not salt tolerant. Though you may find it popping up around the yard, this sage won't become thuggish or invasive.

Gardeners who have both white and red varieties near each other have discovered varying shades of pink

Tropical Sage (*Salvia coccinea*) Fast Facts

Name: *Salvia Coccinea*

Zones: 8-10

Type: Perennial

Common Names: Scarlet Sage, Tropical Sage, Red Salvia, Blood Sage

Light: Full sun to light shade (happiest with morning sun and afternoon shade)

Soil/Water: Well-drained moderately moist to dry soil

Family: Lamiaceae (Mint)

Height: 2' to 5'

and coral in their new seedlings.

In addition to volunteer seedlings, the plants can be propagated by division, or cuttings can be rooted.

This easy-to-grow plant is available at native plant nurseries, garden centers and can also be started from purchased or collected seeds.

For more information:

<https://fnps.org/plants/plant/salvia-coccinea>.

Article and photo by Donna Bingaman.



Florida Native Plant Society Mission:

Promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

For information on FNPS activities in Central Florida and beyond, check out the [FNPS blog](#).

Chapter Leadership

- President: Melanie Simon
- Vice President: Laura Bennett-Kimble
- Secretary: Donna Bingaman
- Treasurer: David Biega
- Chapter Representative: Melanie Simon
- Communications Director: Laura Bennett-Kimble
- Membership Chair: Kathy Peres

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