



# The Maypop



News and Notes, October 2020

## Gopher Tortoises Rock!

Aug. 19, Samantha Cobble, Northeast Regional biologist for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, presented a virtual program on gopher tortoises. The program reached a large audience from the Passionflower and other chapters of FNPS, along with others from across the state.

Attendees learned about these long-lived reptiles, their habitats, food sources, behaviors and how people can become “tortoise wise.” In Florida, gopher tortoises are considered a keystone species, sharing their burrows with more than 350 other species. Video snippets provided glimpses inside the burrows, which average 15 feet in length and 6.5 feet deep.

Because the gopher tortoise is listed as threatened, both tortoises and their burrows are protected under state law. If you missed the presentation, or want to view it again, you can access it here: [passionflower.fnpschapters.org/news](https://passionflower.fnpschapters.org/news).

To learn more, visit these sites and links:

- [myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/gopher-tortoise](https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/gopher-tortoise)
- [www.fws.gov/northflorida/gophertortoise/gopher\\_tortoise\\_fact\\_sheet\\_web.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/northflorida/gophertortoise/gopher_tortoise_fact_sheet_web.pdf)
- [www.nbbd.com/gophertortoise/2020/index.html](https://www.nbbd.com/gophertortoise/2020/index.html)



Report tortoise sightings at [public.myfwc.com/HSC/GopherTortoise](https://public.myfwc.com/HSC/GopherTortoise).

Guest speaker  
Samantha Cobble.

## Upcoming Events – Save the Dates

Through the end of 2020, we will continue to put our member and supporters’ safety first by shifting programs online and by only scheduling activities that avoid closed, crowded spaces and close contact.

Here’s what’s planned for the remainder of 2020:

- 🌿 Friday & Saturday, Oct. 2 & 3  
**Gardening Days**  
9:00-11:00 a.m. at Lake Louisa State Park
- 🌿 Saturday, Oct. 18  
**“Trunk or Treat” Plant Exchange Invitation only**  
10:00 a.m.-noon
- 🌿 Saturday, Nov. 14  
**Online Program: Grasses, Sedges and Rushes with Nancy Bissett**  
10:00 a.m.-noon
- 🌿 Friday & Saturday, Nov. 20 & 21  
**Gardening Days**  
9:00-11:00 a.m. at Lake Louisa State Park
- 🌿 Saturday, Dec. 5  
**Gardening Day**  
9:00-11:00 a.m. at Lake Louisa State Park
- 🌿 Saturday, Dec. 12  
**Online Social**  
10:00-11:30 a.m.

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



## Fun Fact

For their first concert at the Barcelona Opera House since the coronavirus lockdown, the Uceli Quartet performed to an audience that didn't have to worry about social distancing – 2,292 plants!

The plants came from local nurseries and were donated to health care professionals after the performance.

## Trunk or Treat

Many native plant gardeners have plants that reproduce and are blessed with new plants each year. While some are transplanted to new areas, gardeners often have more than they need or want for their own yards. Members are donating these “extra” plants for adoption.

We will be offering these free plants at an outdoor event on Oct. 18. Held in a parking lot, the gathering will require masks and social distancing, and attendance will be limited. Details and invitations will be emailed soon.

October is a great time to plant:

- Cooler temperatures mean less stress for the plants.
- Plants can focus on building root systems instead of flowers and foliage.
- We're still getting rain, helpful with the establishment watering chores.
- It's more comfortable gardening for humans.
- October is Native Plant month!



## Florida Native Plant Society Website Update

As of mid-September, the FNPS website has a new look and new functionality (including improved search capabilities).

You'll still find the great native landscape plant database, in addition to news, organization materials, resources and membership information (including online and downloadable forms to join or renew).

There are also links to two new stores where you can buy FNPS items, such as tee-shirts, masks, plant posters and artwork. Check out all the changes at <https://www.fnps.org>.

## Support FNPS Through Amazon Smile

Did you know you can support the good work of FNPS every time you shop on Amazon? Sign into your Amazon account at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), select **Florida Native Plant Society, Inc. Melbourne FL** as your charity, and Amazon will contribute every time you make a purchase. Thank you for supporting FNPS!

## Lake Louisa State Park – Progress in the Garden



Members have been working at the Lake Louisa State Park garden to install rescued plants in the Sandhill habitat area of the Ranger Station Garden. Some of the plants include prickly pear, pineywoods dropseed, narrowleaf silkgrass and liatris. More plants will be added to the area during our October and November gardening days. Please join us for some outdoor exercise and gardening camaraderie!

## Please Continue Your Support: Sticking Together While Staying Apart

As the coronavirus pandemic wears on, the Passionflower Chapter continues its work to promote the preservation, conservation and restoration of Florida's precious native plants. Please help us by supporting the chapter with your new or renewed membership and volunteering as you are able. You don't need to be a botanist to help – honest! Check out our [website](#) to learn more. Thanks so much for your support in these challenging times.

## Reading “The Nature of Plants: An Introduction to How Plants Work”

*A book report by Melanie Simon*

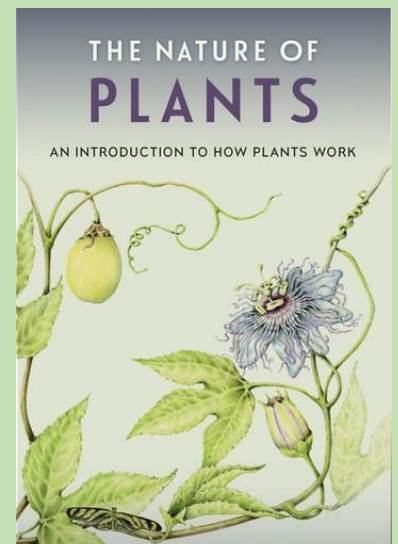
Dr. Craig Huegel does not think we have to become scientists to become good gardeners, but he believes that scientific knowledge will help gardeners understand what plants need to achieve their full potential, make better decisions about what plants to add to our plant communities and evaluate the reasons if something doesn't go right after they are planted.

Above all, I learned from this book how amazingly diverse and complex plants are. Unlike animals, plants can't run away from unfavorable conditions, so they have evolved extremely complex ways of adapting and defending themselves. They communicate, protect themselves (they can differentiate damage by herbivores from damage by clippers and respond differently!), interact with other plants both above and below the ground, tell time and adjust their metabolisms to survive damage and adversity.

This belies the notion that plants are purely ornamental objects – like decorative pillows – that should be located and shaped to please humans and casually discarded if they fail to survive or maintain a desired “look.” Plants seem simple only because what they do is generally sight unseen.

This book confirms my impression that gardening is often more of an art than following a “recipe.”

But for those of us who feel joy at our plants' successes and sorrow at their failures, and who depend on our plants – what would life be like without our gardens to putter around in, especially due to COVID-19 social distancing? – the knowledge in this book can help us make our landscapes works of enduring, and living, art.



## Recent Programs: Learning About FNPS and Our Mission to Conserve, Preserve, Restore

Did you know the Florida Native Plant Society is the second-largest state native plant organization in the country, after California? California leads the National Plant Conservation Campaign ([www.NANPS.org](http://www.NANPS.org)).

These fun facts and more were shared at the Sept. 12 online program meeting by Valerie Anderson, FNPS director of communications and programming.

She reminded members of the five areas of focus that promote the organization's mission: conservation, land management, research, education and landscaping.

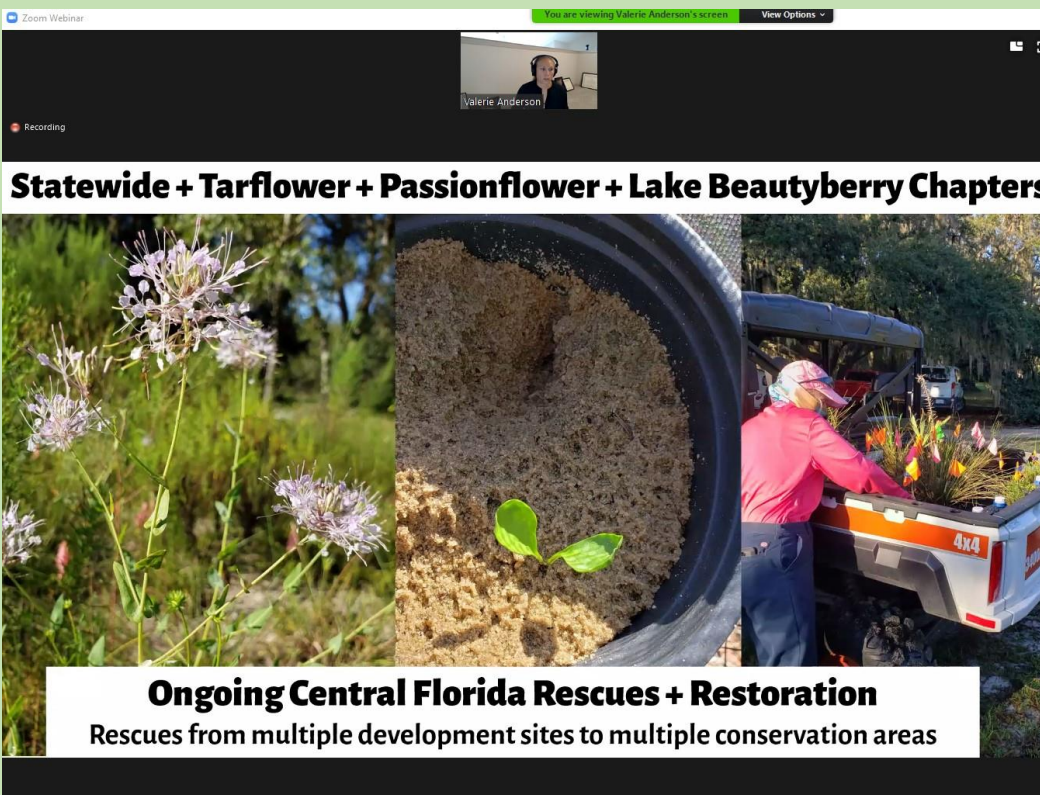
The structure of the organization is primarily volunteer-driven, with more than 4,400 members across the state and a very small group of paid professional staff.

Valerie reminded us that plants are considered personal property on land and don't have the protections in place that animals do. That is why the work of FNPS is so important. Partner organizations include Florida Wildflower Foundation, Florida Forest Service, the Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Association of Native Nurseries.

It is amazing how much work is accomplished with this powerhouse fueled mainly by volunteers. To find out how you can promote the mission, check out the FNPS website, volunteer to serve on a Passionflower chapter committee and attend our many virtual and in-person activities.

Click on the links to learn more!

- 🌿 [www.fnps.org](http://www.fnps.org)
- 🌿 [www.fnps.org/resources/pubs](http://www.fnps.org/resources/pubs)
- 🌿 <https://passionflower.fnpschapters.org>



Zoom Webinar You are viewing Valerie Anderson's screen View Options

Recording

Valerie Anderson

### Statewide + Tarflower + Passionflower + Lake Beautyberry Chapters

**Ongoing Central Florida Rescues + Restoration**  
Rescues from multiple development sites to multiple conservation areas

Interested in learning more about FNPS and its work? The presentation is available for viewing through a link posted on the Passionflower website. Visit <https://passionflower.fnpschapters.org/news>.

Article contributed by Donna Bingaman, with Laura Bennett-Kimble.

A screenshot from Valerie's informative Zoom presentation.

## Florida's Beautiful Native Cacti

Native to the U.S., Mexico and South America, the prickly-pear cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*) is low-maintenance plant built to take the sun and survive with little water. Sometimes called Devil's Tongue, it grows in sunny, well-drained soils across Florida.

An evergreen cactus, it tends to grow in clumps and has large pads with tufts of spines and yellow flowers that appear in spring and summer. The plant's pollen is an important food source for bees and other pollinators. The flower gives way to a round, reddish-purple berry, up to 2" long.

The prickly-pear cactus provides food and shelter for many animals. Songbirds and small mammals shelter in spine-protected dens. Raccoons and gopher tortoises eat the pads and fruits. Prickly-pear fruit and seeds are consumed by quail, wild turkey, doves, thrashers and woodpeckers, along with many mammals, such as fox, squirrel and rabbit. Humans, too, enjoy the fruit.

## Prickly-Pear Cactus Fast Facts

Scientific Name: *Opuntia humifusa*  
Zones: 4B-11B  
Type: Long-lived perennial  
Blooms: Spring/Summer  
Native Habitats: Scrub, scrubby flatwoods, sandhill and other dry areas

Family: Cactaceae  
Height: up to 16"  
Soil: Sandy & well drained

Cathy Brown, of BB Brown's Gardens, Florida Scrub Jay Trail, said years ago, some prickly-pear plants were mistakenly cut down and thrown on a pallet to be composted at a later date. Forgotten about until much later when Cathy rediscovered them, the pieces had thrived on no soil or special care, pretty much flourishing on just the air they "breathed."

However you enjoy the prickly-pear, in your garden or as a food source, beware of those sharp spines and prickly hairs. Avoid getting poked and stabbed by wearing leather gloves when handling these plants.



Photo: *Opuntia humifusa* © Shirley Denton

Article contributed by Mindy Meadows.

Thanks to UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions for information shared in this article.

**For more information:**

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/opuntia>



## 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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