



# The Maypop



News and Notes, January 2021

## President's Letter

As we move into the new year, I want to give a heartfelt thanks to members who are supporting the Passionflower Chapter and FNPS mission to preserve, conserve, and restore Florida's native plants and habitats.

COVID-19 prompted Passionflower to adapt by moving to an online platform for programs. Outreach events were canceled, but we continued to do small, outdoor activities where we could maintain social distancing. Occasional plant rescues and conservation work allowed us to support the FNPS mission, while monthly work in the native plant garden at Lake Louisa State Park has helped keep the garden looking good – and we added a sandhill habitat area.

Feeling the need to get out from behind our computers and see our fellow native plant enthusiasts (even if in a parking lot and masked), we had a Trunk or Treat Plant Adoption event for Native Plant Month. Over 100 plants grown by our members were given away free to members and supporters.

2020 offered unprecedented opportunities to learn. Passionflower did not take our usual summer break and continued to host Zoom programs in June, July, and August. In fact, our August program on gopher tortoises drew the largest audience Passionflower has ever had, with 68 participants. Everyone who took advantage of online Passionflower programs, FNPS Lunch & Learn, and the ability to tune into the programs offered by other chapters was able to expand their plant, environmental, and conservation knowledge.

Our goals for 2021? Increase our membership, increase volunteerism and participation, expand outreach in our growing community, and continue to be safe and resilient until we resume in-person activities.

*Melanie*

## Upcoming Events – Save the Dates

We are slightly altering our meeting schedule for 2021. Programs will be on either the second Wednesday or second Saturday of the month, and our Lake Louisa State Park gardening days will be on the last Saturday of the month. Chapter business/planning meetings will continue to be on the fourth Wednesday.

Until COVID-19 is behind us, we will continue to put member and supporter safety first by doing educational programs online and by scheduling activities that avoid indoor, crowded spaces.

Wednesday, Jan. 13

**"Native Plants for Florida Gardens"** program with Stacey Matrazzo, 6 p.m. – online

Wednesday, Jan. 27

**Chapter Meeting**, 5:30 p.m. – online

Saturday, Jan. 30

**Gardening Day**, 9 a.m. – Lake Louisa State Park

Saturday, Feb. 13

**Native Plant Landscape Design** with Kirsten Sharp-Ortega, 10 a.m. – online

Wednesday, Feb. 24

**Chapter Meeting**, 5:30 p.m. – online

Saturday, Feb. 27

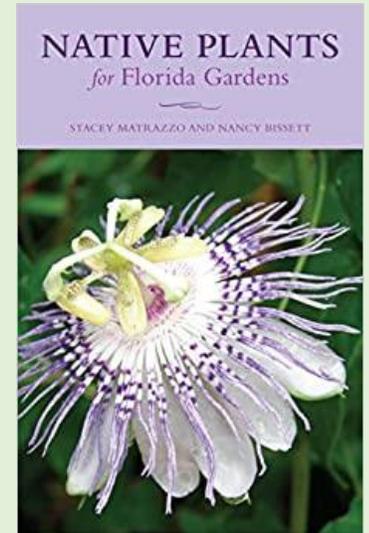
**Gardening Day**, 9 a.m. – Lake Louisa State Park

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

## Native Plants for Florida Gardens

The Florida Wildflower Foundation's new book, *Native Plants for Florida Gardens*, takes the guesswork out of using many of the native plants that make great additions to urban and naturalistic residential landscapes. The book (which has a Passionflower on the cover!) has beautiful photographs and site condition, range, lifespan, bloom season, growth habit, propagation, planting, care, tips for growing almost 100 native plants.

Plan to join us on Jan. 13 at 6 p.m. when one of the authors, Stacey Matrazzo, presents a selection of species from the book, discusses how to use them to transform your landscape into a living ecosystem with "real Florida" style, and answers questions. Stacey is a certified Florida Master Naturalist and a program manager for the FWF. She is also an environmental educator and adjunct professor at Rollins College who holds a bachelor's degree in environmental studies and a master's degree in liberal studies.



## Legislation, Design, and Maintenance

When we use native plants and landscape for wildlife, there may be push-back because the way we garden doesn't always conform to current cultural norms. Challenges we have to deal with may be a negative remark from a neighbor, a ticket from city or county code enforcement, or a notice from an HOA.

Until native plants and more naturalistic landscaping are better understood and accepted, we've still got to play by the rules. How can we do this and still have a sustainable yard that protects Florida's natural beauty and ecosystem functions? It turns out there are three key parts to the answer:

- Legislation that supports sustainable landscaping;
- Design to appeal to humans as well as wildlife; and
- Maintenance.

Each of us gardens with different constraints, but we can all benefit from understanding how to navigate and mitigate any potential issues, because that makes us better able to bend the constraints, let loose our creativity, and experience more satisfaction. Watch for programs on these topics in 2021.



## A Prehistoric Plant

Coontie (*Zamia integrifolia*) has become a popular landscape plant in Florida. Although palm-like, Coontie is a cycad, a primitive group of non-flowering plants that were present when dinosaurs roamed the earth.

Slow-growing to its full height and width, Coontie is highly adaptable in its light and water requirements. Once established, Coontie will tolerate very long, very dry periods of drought and also tolerate cold (the plant may die back in freezing temperatures, but not die).

Dioecious, there are male and female plants. Both produce cones, and the female cone splits open to reveal orange seeds in the fall/winter. Propagate with seeds or division and plant 2 to 3 feet apart for good airflow. This is important, because Coontie is susceptible to scale and mold – cut back to the ground if infected.

Due to its popularity for landscaping, starch production, and cut foliage, Coontie is State-listed as commercially exploited. This popularity has, however, bolstered the populations of the Atala butterfly (generally not found this far north) which uses Coontie as a larval host.

Coontie provided a profitable industry as a source for arrowroot and an ingredient in animal crackers for white settlers in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Even earlier, Coontie was harvested by Seminole Indians for the underground root/stem, which was pounded, processed with water, and fermented to make into flour. Why was processing necessary? Because the plant contains the toxin cycasin. This toxin killed one of Hernando de Soto's men and is no less toxic today.

A Chapter member recently had a close call with Coontie and her friend's puppy. This is a reminder to everyone who has animals that many plants can cause mild to deadly reactions. Although there are a number of toxic plant lists available, there does not seem to be a single, comprehensive list for Florida. Some available lists (posted on the Passionflower website under Resources) include native, non-native, weeds, invasives, and cut flower species. So if you have pets, especially young, curious ones, do some research and keep these hotline numbers handy: ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, 888-426-4435, and American Association of Poison Control Centers, 800-222-1222.

### Coontie Fast Facts

**Scientific Name:** *Zamia integrifolia* (aka *Zamia pumila*)

**Also referred to as:** Arrowroot

**Type:** Long-lived perennial

**Ecoregion:** Upland hardwood forests,  
high pines, coastal hammocks

**Zones:** 8A-11A

**Light:** Full sun to shade

**Date of flower's bloom:** n/a

**Family:** Zamiaceae

**Height:** 1' to 4'

**Width:** 2' to 5'

**Soil:** Well-drained sandy or  
calcareous

**Water:** Moist to very dry

**Phenology:** evergreen



## Fun Fact

The Lamiaceae (mint) family includes herbs and shrubs that almost all have distinctively four-sided stems, opposite leaves, and a strong scent when crushed. In addition to culinary herbs, the Lamiaceae family includes many Florida natives, including Salvias, Beebalm (*Monarda Punctata*), and Rosemary (*Conradina spp.*). But there is a Florida native plant in this family that does not have all the typical identifying characteristics. Can you guess what this unusual member of the mint family is? Answer: Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*).

## FNPS License Plate



As announced in the November/December Sabal Minor, FNPS is thrilled that Gov. DeSantis has signed a bill creating a Florida Native license plate. FNPS will receive \$25 for each plate ordered/renewed, which will provide a meaningful source of continuing income in support of our mission.

To make the plates available for distribution to the public, 3,000 plates need to be preordered. If that threshold is not reached within two years, the plate will be de-authorized and FNPS will lose out on this crucial revenue.

Please support FNPS and our mission by preordering and paying for an FNPS license plate at [www.floridanativelicenseplate.com/fnps](http://www.floridanativelicenseplate.com/fnps) and by encouraging family and friends to do the same. If we fall short of the minimum in pre-sales, you will receive a refund.

## There are many ways to support the FNPS mission:

1. Join FNPS – become a member or gift a membership at [FNPS.org/support/membership](http://FNPS.org/support/membership)
2. Renew your membership – and help even more by including others in your household and upgrading to a multi-member membership.
3. Use smile.amazon.com when you shop on Amazon and select *Florida Native Plant Society, Inc. Melbourne FL* as your charity – Amazon will contribute every time you make a purchase.
4. Order an FNPS license plate.
5. Donate to support key native plant projects or the general fund at [FNPS.org/support/donate](http://FNPS.org/support/donate).
6. Donate your time – volunteer for rescue and conservation work, volunteer to help the Chapter in a small way (we can find a task you'll enjoy), or volunteer to join Chapter leadership.



## 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 website](#) and [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  
Program/Field Trip Chairs: Vacant  
Outreach Chair: Vacant  
Social Committee Chair: Vacant

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