



Florida Native Plant Society

Sea Rocket

Chapter Update

June 2026

Promoting the preservation, conservation, and restoration of native plants and their communities in Florida.

Announcements

May 27, 2026 Membership Meeting Special Guest, Melissa Fernandez de-Cespedes

It was a pleasure meeting and getting to know Melissa Fernandez de-Cespedes, Ph.D., FNPS Executive Director, who participated with several Chapter members in multiple activities including a Butterfly Garden Tour, checking out the overlook at the end of the Enchanted Crossing, a Biodiversity Loop Hike at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, lunch at El Leoncito Restaurant, and car tour of the Blackpoint Wildlife Drive at the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, all before attending our May Membership meeting the same day! We also presented her with a few Sea Rocket souvenirs including 2 fans, some of our wooden coins, seed packets, and a T-shirt! Pictures of the day will be posted soon on our Facebook Page.

Dr. Fernandez spoke of the importance of keeping the Florida Native Plant Society focused on science and citizen education. She noted that FNPS has worked this year to maintain funding for the Florida Forever Program along with research on rare native plants during the State legislative session. Dr. Fernandez encouraged everyone to sign up for FNPS Action Alerts through <https://www.fnps.org/> and wants to remind everyone about the official FNPS Bookshop.org storefront on the FNPS web site. We checked, and some of the many books available at the storefront include:

- Florida Landscaping Guides and References (26)
- Butterflies and Other Pollinators (11)
- Ecosystems and Plant Communities (10)
- Human Uses of Plants (6)
- Plant Identification and Taxonomy (25)
- Wildlife and Connecting with Nature (18)
- Carnivorous Plants (1)

Every purchase made through this shop helps fund FNPS's statewide efforts in education, public policy, citizen science, and land stewardship. You'll also be supporting independent bookstores across the country. Learn more at <https://bookshop.org/shop/FNPS>.

2026 Sea Rocket Chapter Scholarship

The Sea Rocket Chapter was pleased to be able to establish an educational scholarship this year in the amount of \$500.00 for students working toward a degree or career in environmental protection or conservation and meeting a few additional requirements.

The Board of Directors will be designating the 2026 Scholarship recipient during their June 2nd meeting and will announce the winner to all members via email on June 15th. Information will also be shared through our Facebook, Website and Instagram.

Sea Rocket Chapter Bylaws

Guidelines in our Bylaws require that they be reviewed annually and revisions are scheduled for final approval during the Annual Membership meetings in February. Our current Bylaws received final approval from our Membership on February 25, 2026.

The Board of Directors will begin their review of our 2026 Bylaws at their June 2nd meeting. We're starting a little earlier this year, so that much of the review can be completed before work on next year's budget begins.

Proposed Bylaws for 2027, which will have been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors, will be distributed with the February 2027 Newsletter/Chapter Update and be presented to the Membership for final approval at the next Annual Membership Meeting, which is scheduled for February 24, 2027.

Members are encouraged to participate in the review process to observe, ask questions, and provide suggestions which can also be submitted to the Board through srsecretary@fnps.org.

Budget

Our Chapter's budget is also scheduled for annual review and approval, but it follows a different schedule as our fiscal year runs January – December. A proposed budget for 2027, which will have received Board approval, will be distributed with the November Newsletter/Chapter Update and be presented to the Membership for final approval at the November 18, 2026 Membership meeting, as we will not be having a formal Membership meeting in December. Members are encouraged to participate in the review process to observe, ask questions, and provide suggestions which can also be submitted to the Board through srsecretary@fnps.org.

On June 2nd, the Board of Directors will review a proposed schedule for the 2027 budget planning process.

Garden Workdays

As in years past, we will not be advertising Garden Workdays in the Butterfly Gardens at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, during the hot summer months. It is possible that volunteers may get together a few times for specific projects. If you would like to be notified of these dates, speak with Paul Schmalzer, or contact him by email schmalzp@digital.net.

Posters

You can pick up a **FREE** copy of the **Florida's Butterflies, Caterpillars, and Their Host Plants II** poster by visiting a Sea Rocket Chapter Membership meeting, plant sale, or other outreach. Supplies are limited, so we hope you'll visit us soon!

FNPS Annual Report

The FNPS 2025 Annual Report has been released and can be viewed through this link:

https://issuu.com/fnps/docs/fnps_2025_annual_report.

Outreach Reports

- **May 9th Garden Workday 9:00 to 11:00am**

Our previously scheduled May 2nd Garden Workday was rescheduled to May 9th. Thank you Bruce, Jesse, Alyssa, Cedar, and Ollie!

- **May 16th Plant Sale**

Two Hundred Thirty-Nine Florida native plants found new homes during our March 16th sale, making our recent plant sale season our best yet! Our next sale is currently planned for October. Plant sales are an important component of our community outreach and they generate the majority of our Chapter's income. A Big Thank you and Way To Go to Megan and everyone who volunteered with the sales.

- **May 27th Membership Meeting** Report by Alyssa Sferrazza

Speaker: Skip Healy, Change of Greenery, Melbourne,

Topic: ***Underutilized Frost-Resistant Trees for the Space Coast***

Sea Rocket was pleased to welcome Skip Healy back for the fourth consecutive year as a guest speaker. His presentation focused on "Green Star Trees," which he defined as trees that are either native to Brevard County or have been regionally vouchered in the area. He organized the discussion into three categories: Deciduous Green Star Trees, Evergreen Green Star Trees, and South Florida species that have been documented in Brevard County.

Among the deciduous Green Star Trees highlighted were Turkey Oak (*Quercus laevis*), American Elm (*Ulmus americana*), Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*), American Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), and Hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*).

Skip also featured a variety of evergreen Green Star Trees with significant ecological and landscape value. Florida Privet (*Forestiera segregata*) was noted for its rapid growth, heavy reseeding, and importance as a wildlife food source. Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) was recognized as the host plant for the Hickory Horned Devil caterpillar.

Another highlighted species was Hercules-Club, or Toothache Tree (*Zanthoxylum clava-herculis*), which serves as a host plant for the Giant Swallowtail butterfly and is valued for its strong salt and cold tolerance. Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*) was recommended as an excellent tree for planting near structures. Sweet Acacia (*Vachellia farnesiana*), which can reach up to 20 feet in both height and crown spread, was noted for its wind tolerance and adaptability to Florida's coastal counties.

Black Ironwood (*Krugiodendron ferreum*) was described as producing the heaviest wood grown in the United States. Tough Bumelia (*Sideroxylon tenax*) was recognized for its exceptional wind and cold hardiness. Myrtle Oak (*Quercus myrtifolia*), one of the three major oaks of Florida scrub communities, naturally grows behind the dune line on barrier islands and exhibits high wind and salt tolerance. Chapman's Oak (*Quercus chapmanii*) was highlighted for its dense growth habit

and prolific acorn production, making it an important wildlife food source.

Blolly (*Guapira discolor*), an endangered species with high salt tolerance, was also discussed. Jamaica Caper (*Quadrella jamaicensis*) was noted as a smaller tree with a columnar to conical form that thrives in sandy soils near brackish water and is related to the Mediterranean caper. Loblolly-bay (*Gordonia lasianthus*) prefers rich, damp soils but has low wind and salt tolerance. The final evergreen Green Star Tree discussed was False Mastic (*Sideroxylon foetidissimum*), considered one of the finest tropical shade trees and known for its edible yellow fruit.

The final category focused on South Florida species that have been vouchered in Brevard County. Cinnecord, also known as Thornless Acacia (*Vachellia choriophylla*), and Cinnamon Bark (*Canella winterana*) were highlighted as successful examples. Skip also pointed out several regionally vouchered trees that showed freeze damage during the last major cold event, including Gumbo Limbo (*Bursera simaruba*), Seagrape (*Coccoloba uvifera*), Buttonwood (*Conocarpus erectus*), and Paradise Tree (*Simarouba glauca*).

In conclusion, Skip emphasized that trees remain underutilized in the landscape, that “not all trees read the books,” and that planting trees provides some of the highest habitat value possible. He encouraged attendees to prepare for both colder winters and increasingly hotter summers in the future.

Note:

If you would like more information, contact Skip at “A Change of Greenery”, in Melbourne.
<https://www.changeofgreenery.org/> (321) 536-0655.

• **Upcoming Events** *and* **Dates to Remember**

All events are held at the EEL Program's Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, unless noted otherwise.

- **June 2nd Board Meeting** 6:00 – 8:00pm

Members are always invited!

- **June 27th Membership Meeting** 6:00 – 8:00pm

Our June Speaker will be Patrick Mugan, from Dark Sky International. Topic: To Be Determined.

- **Plant Sale**

Our next public plant sale is not scheduled until October, but you can still purchase any plants that are remaining in our inventory from 5:30 to 6:00pm before Membership meetings.

In Other News

Titusville City Council to Consider Urban Forest Management Plan

We received an email on May 29th from Kay St. Onge from the Titusville Tree Team requesting that we relay information regarding the June 9th, 6:30pm Titusville Council meeting regarding the possible adoption of an Urban Forest Management Plan. The Plan's vision statement reads: "To enhance and preserve a healthy urban forest through conservation and strategic tree plantings that maximize environmental benefits, improve water quality, reduce heat, and enrich the quality of life for the greater Titusville community." If you would like additional information on the Urban Forest Management Plan, please contact Kay via her email: stongekay@yahoo.com.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- June 2nd – Board Meeting
- June 15th – Scholarship Winner Announcement
- June 24th – Membership Meeting
- July 7th – Board Meeting
- July 22nd – Membership Meeting

SEA ROCKET CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

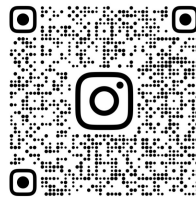
President: Paul Schmalzer, Ph.D.
Vice-President: OPEN
Treasurer: Megan McCormick
Secretary: Alyssa Sferrazza
Chapter Representative: Elizabeth Bishop
At-Large: Jesse Baker
Education/Outreach: Beverly Lewis
Field Trip Leader: Paul Schmalzer
Gardens/Plant Sale – Paul Schmalzer/Megan McCormick
Hospitality: John Stiner
Membership: Beverly Lewis
Newsletter/Chapter Update: OPEN (Laura Covell, acting)
Social Media: Laura Covell

For additional information.....

Facebook



Instagram



Website



Website: <https://searocket.fnpschapters.org>

Calendar: <https://searocket.fnpschapters.org/calendar>

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/searocketchapterfnps>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/searocket.fnps/>

Chapter Secretary: srsecretary@fnps.org

Florida Native Plant Society: <https://www.fnps.org/>

Sea Rocket Chapter 2026 Meeting Schedule

January	6 th	Board	July	7 th	Board
	28 th	Membership		22 nd	Membership
February	3 rd	Board	August	4 th	Board
	25 th	Membership		26 th	Membership
March	3 rd	Board	September	1 st	Board
	28 th	Spring Picnic		23 rd	Membership
April	7 th	Board	October	6 th	Board
	22 nd	Membership		28 th	Membership
May	5 th	Board	November	3 rd	Board
	27 th	Membership		18 th	Membership
June	2 nd	Board	December	1 st	Board
	24 th	Membership		Holiday	Gathering TBD

Remember...

*All Sea Rocket Chapter events are free,
and open to the public.*

All Are Welcome!

Tell your family, friends and neighbors!