Florida Native Plant Society
Sea Rocket Chapter Update
November 2026

The Mission of the Sea Rocket Chapter is to conserve, preserve and restore Florida's native plants and their habitats.

Announcements

2027 BUDGET VOTE – November 18, 2026 Membership Meeting

The Board of Directors voted to confirm their approval of the proposed budget for 2027 during their October 6th meeting and a copy of the proposed budget is included in the email for this Chapter Update. Members have been encouraged to participate in the preparation of the budget since June and the two suggestions received from members through October 1st, the date previously advertised as the ending date to submit suggestions, have been included.

This year, our November meeting will be held on the third Wednesday of November, which is November 18th. This date is a week earlier than usual due to the Thanksgiving holiday. We hope you'll join us for this important meeting when Becky Bolt will be our featured speaker.

HOLIDAY PARTY – December 5, 2026

We'll be gathering at Dixie Crossroads again this year for our Holiday Party, which will be held from 6:00-8:00pm on Saturday, December 5th. It's always fun to spend time getting to know other members, and the food is great! Attendees will be responsible for their individual checks.

If you would like to attend, please let John Stiner, johnstiner85@yahoo.com, our Hospitality Chairperson, know how many folks in your group will be attending by December 1st. Hope to see you then!

ANNUAL MEETING – February 24, 2027: ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Elections for Chapter Officers (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary) will be held during our annual meeting in February. A Nominating Committee Report, which will include a Slate of Nominees approved by the Board, will be distributed for consideration by members with the February Chapter Update.

If you would like to be considered for a position on the Board, or would like to nominate someone (with their permission) please speak with any Board member, or send a communication to srsecretary@fnps.org as soon as possible and no later than January 1, 2027 so the information can be included in the Board's final consideration of nominees during their meeting on January 5th.

Your help is needed to make this Chapter a continuing success!

ANNUAL MEETING – February 27, 2027: SEA ROCKET CHAPTER BYLAWS

As noted in the June Chapter Update, the Board of Directors began their review of the 2026 Bylaws on June 2nd, and no additional suggestions or revisions have been received since that time. The 2027 Proposed Bylaws will be distributed to members with the February 2027 Chapter Update and will be presented for final approval by the Membership during the Annual Membership Meeting on February 24th. Anyone who would like to have their suggestions considered should attend a Board meeting or submit suggestions to srsecretary@fnps.org by January 1st.

Plant Sales *Volunteer Opportunity!!!*

Remaining Fall Plant Sale Dates: November 14 and December 12, 2026

Thank you, Megan McCormick, our Plant Sale Coordinator, who has done a great job and increased our bank account substantially! Volunteering at our plant sales is a fun way to learn about Florida native plants and working the early shift gets you first dibs at the plants we have for sale. Please contact Megan, srtreasurer@fnps.org, if you would like to volunteer, and don't forget…Chapter members are eligible for discounts! We always have a great selection of plants, and you can purchase seed packets too, for just $2.00 each, or pick up a top-quality Sea Rocket Chapter T-Shirt along with some of our free brochures and information sheets on Florida natives, host plants, and ways to attract birds and butterflies.

T-Shirts,T-Shirts, T-Shirts!!

Beverly Lewis coordinates our T-Shirt ordering and sales, and we just received our latest order. We have new colors and sizes! Adult sizes are $12.00 and children's sizes are $10.00. Shirts are available at meetings, plant sales and all outreach events!

Chapter Secretary Needed *Volunteer Opportunity!!!*

The job of Chapter Secretary, one of the four Board Officers, is open, and needs to be filled as quickly as possible. Paul Schmalzer, President, is currently acting as Secretary. Please speak with Paul or contact srsecretary@fnps.org if you would like to know more.

Outreach Reports

September 26th Field Trip Helen and Allan Cruickshank Sanctuary, Rockledge

by Paul Schmalzer, Ph.D.

We had a great time at the Helen and Allan Cruickshank Sanctuary, in Rockledge, last Saturday. Five people attended the trip, and in addition to seeing lots of native flora, the group saw several Florida Scrub Jays, which are endemic to our state and are Federally listed as Threatened. Adam Markowitz took a wonderful picture of beardgrass *(Andropogon)* which is shared on our Facebook page. If you have pictures from our field trips that you would like to have considered for our Facebook page, please send them to Laura Covel lauracovel@gmail.com, our Social Media Chairperson.

The Cruickshank sanctuary includes about 140 acres of scrub and flatwoods habitat in Rockledge, Florida and supports a healthy population of Florida Scrub Jays. It was acquired by the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program and the State of Florida. We saw the three species of scrub oaks that occur in Brevard County: Chapman oak *(Quercus chapmanii)*,

myrtle oak *(Q. myrtifolia)*, and sand live oak *(Q. geminata)*. Myrtle oak and sand live oak had mature acorns that the Scrub Jays cache for their winter food supply. In the drier scrub areas, we saw scrub species including coastalplain staggerbush *(Lyonia fruticosa)*, saw palmetto *(Serenoa repens)*, frostweed *(Crocanthemum sp.)*, jeweled blue-eyed grass *(Sisyrinchium xerophyllum)*, pricklepear cactus *(Opuntia humifusa)*, sand spikemoss *(Selaginella arenicola)*, beardgrasses *(Andropogon spp.)*, and other species.

In the flatwoods, fetterbush *(Lyonia lucida)* and gallberry holly *(Ilex glabra)* became more common. We saw two shrubby species of oaks in the flatwoods: dwarf live oak *(Quercus minima)* and running oak *(Q. pumila)*; these are both clonal, shrubby species, similar to scrub oaks in that regard but occur in the more poorly drained flatwoods. Laurel oak *(Quercus laurifolia)* was also present. Vanillaleaf *(Carphephorus odoratissimus)* was flowering.

The EEL Program recently conducted a prescribed burn on the unit at the western side of the sanctuary. Sprouting of saw palmetto, fetterbush, gallberry holly, myrtle oak, dwarf live oak, running oak, and other species were occurring already. Regrowth of bracken fern *(Pteridium aquilinum)* was abundant in places. This area shows the rapid recovery of scrub and flatwoods vegetation after fire.

All our field trips are free, fun, and open to the public. Come join us!

October 3rd Butterfly Gardens Workday

Thank you, Madeline Klinko, Woody Dierberg, and Paul Schmalzer who participated in our October 3rd garden workday!

October 17th *Plant Sale*

We started the day with 333 Florida native plants and sold a whopping 191 plants, lots of seeds and two T-Shirts!

Thank you, Megan and Adeline McCormick, Beverly Lewis, Adam Markowitz, Russ Hansen, Madeline Klinko, Paul Schmalzer, and Alyssa Sferrazza for volunteering at our first plant sale of the fall season.

October 24th OUTREACH Enchanted Forest Harvest Festival

The day started with a brief sprinkle of rain, but soon the sun was shining, and the weather was wonderful for this annual event where we shared information on the Florida Native Plant Society, our Chapter, and Florida native plants. Beverly Lewis, Adam Markowitz, Russ Hansen, and Laura Covel volunteered at the Education Station, and Megan McCornmick, Jesse Baker, and Paul Schmalzer volunteered in the plant sale area. We also sold a bunch of plants!

October 28th Membership Meeting *by Paul Schmalzer, Ph.D.*

Speakers: Brad Fontaine and Adam Klingenberg Topic: *From Rainfall to Waterfall: Blending Ecology, Native Plants & Water Feature Design in Florida's Landscape*

Brad Fontaine and Adam Klingenberg, co-owners of Florida Custom Aquatic LLC in Melbourne, Florida, were our speakers for the October Sea Rocket Chapter meeting. Brad and Adam have backgrounds in fisheries biology, aquaculture, marine and aquatic science, and habitat restoration. Florida Custom Aquatics works on projects in pond and lake management, natural water features, "pondless" waterfalls, natural shoreline construction, and recreational swimming ponds.

Natural water features avoid the use of chemicals, incorporate native aquatic plants, attract wildlife, and can help capture and use rainfall. These range from fountains to “pondless” waterfalls and ponds. ”Pondness” waterfalls utilize an underground tank to store water and a pump system for recirculation. Recirculating and aerating water helps to maintain the system, incorporates beneficial bacteria, reduces maintenance, and prevents mosquitoes from completing their life cycle there. Native wetland and aquatic plants are incorporated into these features. These waterfalls range in size and can be incorporated into modestly sized (1/8 ac) lots.

Retention ponds are a common feature in developed areas of Florida. These are typically constructed with steep slopes to maximize water storage and buildable land and have turf up to their edge. The steep banks frequently erode, and exotic plants frequently establish in these ponds. Removal of nuisance vegetation, such as excessive cattails, may be necessary.

Mechanical removal is more ecologically friendly than chemical (herbicide) treatment but is often more costly. Management can be improved by incorporating sloping littoral areas planted with native aquatic plants. Native plants can help reduce shoreline erosion, take up nutrients, and improve habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. It is important to keep expectations about stormwater ponds realistic as they are intended to hold water and nutrient runoff.

Additional information is available at www.FLCustomAquatic.com.

October 31st Field Trip *Dicerandra* Scrub Sanctuary, Titusville

We’ll have a report on this field trip in the next issue!

Upcoming Events *and* Dates to Remember

All events will be held at the EEL Program’s Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, in Titusville, unless otherwise noted.

November 3rd Board Meeting *6:00-8:00pm*

November 7th Garden Workday *9:00-11:00am*

Volunteering is a great way to spend some time in the sunshine while learning about Florida native plants and making new friends. RSVPs are appreciated but they are not required. We have garden tools and gloves to share, but please wear closed toe shoes and bring water. Please contact Dr. Paul Schmalzer at schmalzp@digital.net if you would like to know more or just show up! We’ve scheduled fall Garden Workdays for November 7th, and December 5th. Come join us!

November 14th *Plant Sale - Volunteer Opportunity* *9:30am-1:00pm*

We’ll be placing an additional plant order to be sure that we have lots and lots of Florida native plants available for our November sale. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Megan McCormick, srtreasure@fnps.org.

November 18th Membership Meeting – 2027 Budget Vote

Speaker: Becky Bolt, Topic: *Seeing the Big Picture by Appreciating the Small Things*

Becky Bolt, one of our favorite speakers, is a wildlife ecologist who recently retired from 35 years at the Kennedy Space Center. During her tenure at KSC, she worked with animals ranging from fish to mice, was involved in over 30 professional publications, and gave many, many educational presentations.

In Other News

Free Coloring Pages

Did you know that the coloring pages we share through our Education Station are available on the Florida Native Plant Society website? There are about a dozen free, downloadable pages featuring Florida native plants and some of the animals they support. You can download the pages through https://www.fnps.org/educational-materials#gsc.tab=0!

Sea Rocket Chapter Outreach at Local Libraries

Many thanks to Beverly Lewis, Outreach Chair, and Jesse Baker, At-Large Board member, who have established and maintain Sea Rocket Chapter outreach displays at the Titusville and Port St. John Libraries. Check them out!

SEA ROCKET CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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/

Remember,

All Sea Rocket Chapter events are FREE,
and open to the public.
All Are Welcome!
Tell your family, friends and neighbors!

FNPS Sea Rocket Chapter
Annual Holiday Dinner

Dixie Crossroads
Seafood Restaurant

1475 Garden Street
Titusville, FL 32796

Saturday, December 5, 2026

Dinner 6:00 PM

RSVPs requested by December 1st
Please contact John Stiner
***johnstiner85@yahoo.com*.**

Full Menu Available at:
https://dixiecrossroads.com/

Please Join Us
To Celebrate the Holidays!

Attendees responsible for their individual checks.