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Coastal Plain Chapter

Georgia Native Plant Society

2023 January Email to CPC Members

Save the Date: South Georgia Native Plant and Wildflower Symposium (SGNPWS)

Mark your calendar for **Wed., March 15, 2023**, when the second **South Georgia Native Plant and Wildflower Symposium** takes place at the [Georgia Museum of Agriculture](#) in Tifton, GA. We are excited to again be co-presenting this symposium with the Camellia District of the Garden Clubs of Georgia, Inc.

After last year's initial symposium, attendees requested future speakers on landscaping with native plants, so we happy to announce that Jody Walthall will present "Design with Nature: Ecological Landscaping." Jody is co-founder (with his wife, Donna Legare) of [Native Nurseries](#) in Tallahassee, FL. Jody worked as a landscape designer at Native Nurseries for forty years, passing on his knowledge to the younger generation who now run the business.

We will announce other speakers and launch our registration site in a couple of weeks.



Photo, l - r: Amy Heidt, Paul Sumner, Heather Brasell, and Mary Alice Applegate at the Alapaha, Ga. Depot.

GNPS Native Plant Educational Garden Installed

With a lot of encouragement by CPC member Heather Brasell, a GNPS-approved educational garden was completed as part of an impressive city renovation project. The Alapaha Rail Depot was built in 1881 in the center of Alapaha, Ga. It was recently renovated to be used for community events. The area on both sides of the depot platform needed landscaping, providing CPC member Heather Brasell a good opportunity to coordinate with the town council and establish a [GNPS Native Plant Educational Garden](#).

The site was prepared by digging to loosen compacted soil to a depth of at least one foot and some topsoil was added to level the site. A variety of native plants were provided by the Coastal Plan Chapter of GNPS, donated by chapter members, and purchased from Superior Trees in Lee, FL.

CPC members Amy Heidt and Mary Alice Applegate helped with the landscape design. Correctional personnel helped plant the garden areas, then Paul Sumner installed an irrigation system. Alapaha town employees spread pine bark mulch donated by the local Dupont sawmill. This project entailed a

lot of teamwork involving CPC and local citizens. Garden installation was completed in time for the official open house on December 10, 2022. It will be maintained by a team of local volunteers.



Propagation Season Begins—

CPC members use various methods for propagation, with some setups more technically elaborate than others. The majority of the native plants sold at CPC plant sales are from the seeds sown by Amy Heidt and Paul Sumner, in their small greenhouse, which Paul has engineered to include heat, if needed. The greenhouse floor holds a floating bed for continuous moisture of germinating plants. (See photo above.)

Though we think of January as the beginning of our propagation efforts, the process actually starts in the summer and fall, when we gather seeds that have matured on the plant. Seeds are stored, sometimes for months in labeled paper envelopes or bags. Many seeds require at least a month of cold

and/or moist stratification before they can germinate, so that is another part of the cycle to consider.

CPC member Marilynne Marshall has an outdoor “mini-greenhouse” adjacent to her house, where she propagates several favorite native plant varieties. Other CPC members such as Heather Brasell and Mary Alice Applegate use a simple outdoor winter-sow method, placing seeds outdoors in labeled pots and allowing nature to carry out the cold / moisture stratification process. CPC member Mary Beth Cary, [Monarchs Across Georgia](#) Chair, specializes in propagating monarch butterfly host plants, using various milkweed varieties. Her method is described in the article below.

Our chapter invites other members to join in the propagation process, using your favorite seeds or by rooting cuttings. Contact Amy Heidt ameidty@bellsouth.net if you have any questions.



Photo: Mary Beth Cary’s milkweed propagation setup, under a grow light, using a pig warmer mat (not visible) in her unheated greenhouse.

Propagating milkweed (*Asclepias* species) from seed—Mary Beth Cary, Chair, [Monarchs Across Georgia](#)

Some folks easily grow *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed) and *A. Incarnata* (swamp milkweed) like any other seeds; but cold/moist stratification is the way to ensure a good crop. With this method, seeds think they have been through winter. January or February is the best time to start. Always use seeds from a reliable source, either purchased or collected.

Equipment for cold/moist stratification:

- Zip-lock sandwich bags
- Sand OR vermiculite, OR other sterile media
- Seed propagation flat with drain holes (you can get creative with recycled berry flats)
- Bottom tray to fit flat without drain holes
- Professional seed starting mix (such as Promix) OR other sterile seed propagation mix
- Spray bottle with water
- Labels
- Plastic wrap
- Rubber bands
- Humidity dome
- Warming mat, if needed

Steps:

1. Mix seeds with equal amount of damp (not moist) sand or vermiculite or sterile media in sandwich bags.
2. Seal, label and store in a refrigerator (33–38°F) for 4-6 weeks.
3. After 4-6 weeks, fill flat (with holes) with moist propagation mix, sprinkle seeds on top.
4. Sprinkle a light dusting of dry propagation mix on top.
5. Lightly mist with water from spray bottle.
6. Record species, number of seeds and date of sowing on label. Place label horizontally along one edge of flat.
7. Cover with plastic wrap and seal with a rubber band.
8. Place flat in tray without drainage holes.
9. Place the flat under grow lights, in a warm sunny window, or in a greenhouse. (Most seeds will germinate in 7-10 days if the flats are maintained at 75°F.)
10. Water from the bottom and keep moist but not wet.
11. When seedlings emerge, remove plastic wrap and cover with humidity dome.
12. When plants have 2-4 true leaves, they are ready to be stepped up to a larger size container.

Equipment for stepping up:

- Plug flats or deep cell packs with holes
- Professional potting mix (such as ProMix)
- Tray without drainage holes
- Humidity dome

- Warming mat, if needed

Steps:

1. Mix potting mix with water in bucket or basin. 2. Fill plug flats or cell packs with moist mixture, gently level top without packing. 3. Use a pencil, chopstick, or similar item to make a hole in each cell. 4. Separate the seedlings from their siblings, trying not to injure the stems. 5. Place one or two seedlings in each cell. 6. Gently firm soil around each seedling so that the soil surface is even with the pot. 7. Cover only the root and the base of the stems. 8. Place in tray, cover with humidity dome. 9. Use warming mat if the habitat is cold. 10. Put under grow light. Keep light just above the top of the seedlings. Continue to water from the bottom of the tray as needed.

Hardening Off

When danger of frost is past, acclimate the plants to outdoor conditions for a few days by placing them in a sheltered location during the day and then bringing them indoors at night. Plant in a deep pot to accommodate the long taproot or in a sunny spot in your garden. You can sow the seeds in your garden a couple of weeks after the danger of frost.

Additional Information:

- [Monarch Watch](#)
- [Xerces Society](#)

Online Equipment Sources:

- [Greenhouse Mega Store](#)
- [Johnny's Selected Seeds](#)
- [Park Seeds](#)
- [Prairie Moon](#)

Disclaimer from Mary Beth Cary: These directions work for me. If you successfully grow milkweed from seeds, please continue your method!

Monarch Across Georgia Award Nominations Due by Feb. 1

Do you know someone who goes above and beyond to create habitat for pollinators? Or how about someone or someplace that is ardent about monarch conservation? If so, honor the individual or facility by nominating them for the **MAG Service Award** or the **Pollinator Habitat Award!**

The MAG Service Award recognizes significant contributions to monarch education, conservation, and/or habitat restoration in the state of Georgia.

Two Service Awards are available: one for an individual engaged in formal or informal education, and another to recognize a facility. Both awards measure

the active impact the nominee has had on monarch education and general pollination.

The Pollinator Habitat Award recognizes a MAG certified pollinator habitat that goes above and beyond the minimal certification criteria and has been established for at least three years.

Links to the award applications and scoring rubrics are on the [awards page](#). The submission **deadline is February 1, 2024**. Only one nomination per person or facility, please!

State Botanical Garden of Georgia

The SBG in Athens offers [classes](#) toward a **Certificate in Native Plants**. Classes are also offered for the **Plants and Pollinators Specialization**. For further information, email **Sean Cameron** sbgeduc@uga.edu or call 706-542-6156.

- **Jan. 28, 2023:** Winter Tree Identification, Athens
- **Feb. 4, 2023:** Hidden World: The Survival Systems of Plants, Online
- **Feb. 6, 8, 15, 2023:** Natural Communities of Georgia, Online

CPC Board meetings: The next meeting of CPC Board of Directors is January 18, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. via zoom. Board meetings are open to all CPC members. Contact Mary Alice Applegate maryalice.applegate@gnps.org to request a Zoom link. Minutes of all meetings are available, if requested.

CPC Board of Directors

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The Coastal Plain Chapter of the Georgia Native Plant Society focuses on native plant species and ecosystem issues in the Coastal Plain region of Georgia.



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