

## NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY—THE VILLAGES CHAPTER

Friday, July 27, 2018

Big Cypress Recreation Center, 3110 Hendry Drive – Periwinkle Room

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Kathy Porter at 1:30pm.

Present: 83 were in attendance, 18 of whom signed in as guests.

### New Business:

Kathy welcomed members and guests. Kathy welcomed all first time attendees. There are annual dues to become a member of the Florida Native Plant Society and about 30% of the dues come back to our Villages Chapter. The state society has about 4,000 members and our chapter is almost 150 members. FNPS has an annual conference and in 2019 it will be in Crystal River – very close to The Villages. FNPS encourages local landscaping practices and policies that preserve Florida's native plant heritage.

Our July Presentation is: **The Florida Milkweed Project** by Marc Godts

### Speaker Bio:

Marc Godts has 30+ years of experience in the landscape construction industry and is retired from one of Central Florida's largest landscape construction firm. Marc is a horticulturalist and has been a member of the Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) for many years and a volunteer with The Nature Conservancy on rare plant surveys. He received FNPS awards in 2016 and 2018 for his design and installation of residential landscapes in The Villages.

Marc's philosophy is to use native plants as the foundation of all landscapes and to garden with appropriate non-invasive exotics. His nursery, Green Isle Gardens <http://www.greenislegardens.com> is one of the largest growers of native plants in Central Florida, conducting large scale restoration projects as well as residential design, installation and maintenance of native plant landscapes. He supports The Villages chapter of FNPS with monthly donation of native plants for our chance drawing.

The Florida Milkweed Project wants to prevent loss of habitat of the Monarch Butterfly by:

- Collecting seeds
- Studying seed collection / storage / propagation
- Developing best practices
- Educating on selection, use, cultivation and maintenance

By planting NATIVE Milkweeds (not tropical milkweeds) we can reduce the use of pesticides. In this project, they keep the genome separated throughout the state, i.e. seeds collected in Northern Florida, Central Florida, Southern Florida even though it's the same plant – they develop differently in different areas.

One kind of Milkweeds will die back in the winter months as a way to push migrating Monarch butterflies through the area. One kind – the seeds have a “fluff” attached to help them spread through the air; another grows in water will just drop the seeds in the water, to float downstream.

If a plant is treated with an insecticide, that insecticide will linger for three generations of seeds. Some safe soft insecticides include: Neem Oil, M-Pede, Suffoil-X, Water stream, Botanigard. Biological controls – ladybugs eat aphids.

Let the manager of your big box stores know that you want to buy NATIVE plants that are PESTICIDE-FREE – changes are customer-driven.

If you have Tropical Milkweed plants in your yard, it is important to cut them back to the ground in late Fall / December and keep them cut down until March, so the Monarchs move on. Green Isle Gardens grows pesticide free for the benefit of plants as well as safety of workers and critters.

Following his presentation, Mr. Godts addressed questions from the audience for about 20 minutes, until 2:25pm.

August Presentation Kathy Porter noted that the August presentation will be Native Florida Pollinators; Overview of our native pollinator groups, what their benefits are, and some fun/interesting facts about each (by Jonnie Deitz of Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, FL)

September Presentation Kathy Porter will speak on Composting and Agriculture.

Donated plants were awarded to members and guest in the chance drawing.

The meeting adjourned at 2:45pm.

The next general meeting will be August 24, at 1:30pm at the Big Cypress Recreation Center

Jo Hudak, Secretary