

Georgia Native Plant Society  
2022-2025 Strategic Plan

# Grow a Better Landscape

Georgia Native Plant Society





# Where we started...where we're going...

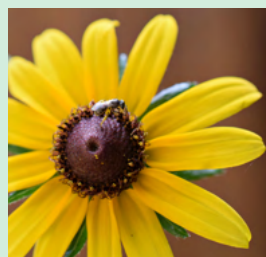
A small group of determined native plant devotees formed GNPS in 1994 to advocate the use and preservation of Georgia's native plants. Although the Society formed in Atlanta, our founders' goals were higher. They envisioned a statewide organization. Our first chapter formed in 2008, but growth was slow. Meanwhile, urgency to preserve and use more native plants mounted. Our growth was not keeping pace with our members' desire for knowledge and action.

In 2019, GNPS took a bold step, creating a State Board of Directors that would focus on strategic governing and direct significant resources toward cultivating a balance of equally strong chapters across the state. Our thinking was that more chapters would focus more GNPS resources at the local level, encourage new leaders, and increase membership, while allowing the State Board to focus on key state-level partnerships and strategies that would lead to more meaningful change and progress of our mission.

Your response to this organizational shift has been overwhelmingly positive. GNPS began 2022 with eight geographically widespread chapters and an all-time high of 1,400-plus members. With more members more than ever poised to further our mission across Georgia, we turned toward developing a three-year strategic plan.

**As we thought about how to channel the power of our growth,  
we pondered what does GNPS do that makes us unique?**

***We connect people with native plants...***







***We teach people how to use  
native plants in landscapes...***



***We inspire people  
to be good stewards of the land...***





***We empower members to share their knowledge with others...***



***GNPS grows people who love native plants...***

**That's it! Growing people who love native plants.  
In a nutshell, this truly is what GNPS does best.**



With that settled,  
we wondered how we can  
leverage what we do best?

How can we best  
serve our members,  
grow statewide,  
and help Georgians  
*grow a better landscape?*



# We Can...Make More of Us

During the next three years, while our membership grows through more and stronger chapters, GNPS pledges to nurture each member on their personal journey to becoming a native plant steward of their own property. Further, we pledge to inspire members to teach and mentor others who want to *grow a better landscape.*





# We Can...Encourage Conservation and Planting Better

In urban and suburban areas, where development and clear-cutting land is increasing, available native vegetation to support the ecosystem is shrinking. Dramatic decreases in insect and bird populations have been linked to reduced native vegetation.

Helping people understand that what they plant makes a difference is key to their using more native plants in all areas: private residences, business parking lots, schools, churches, non-turf greenspaces, parks, and even municipal landscapes. In rural and undeveloped areas, the urgency is no less important. Rural areas have designed landscapes, too. Plus, we must seize the opportunity to protect and conserve undisturbed native habitat where we can.





# We Can...Leverage Partnerships

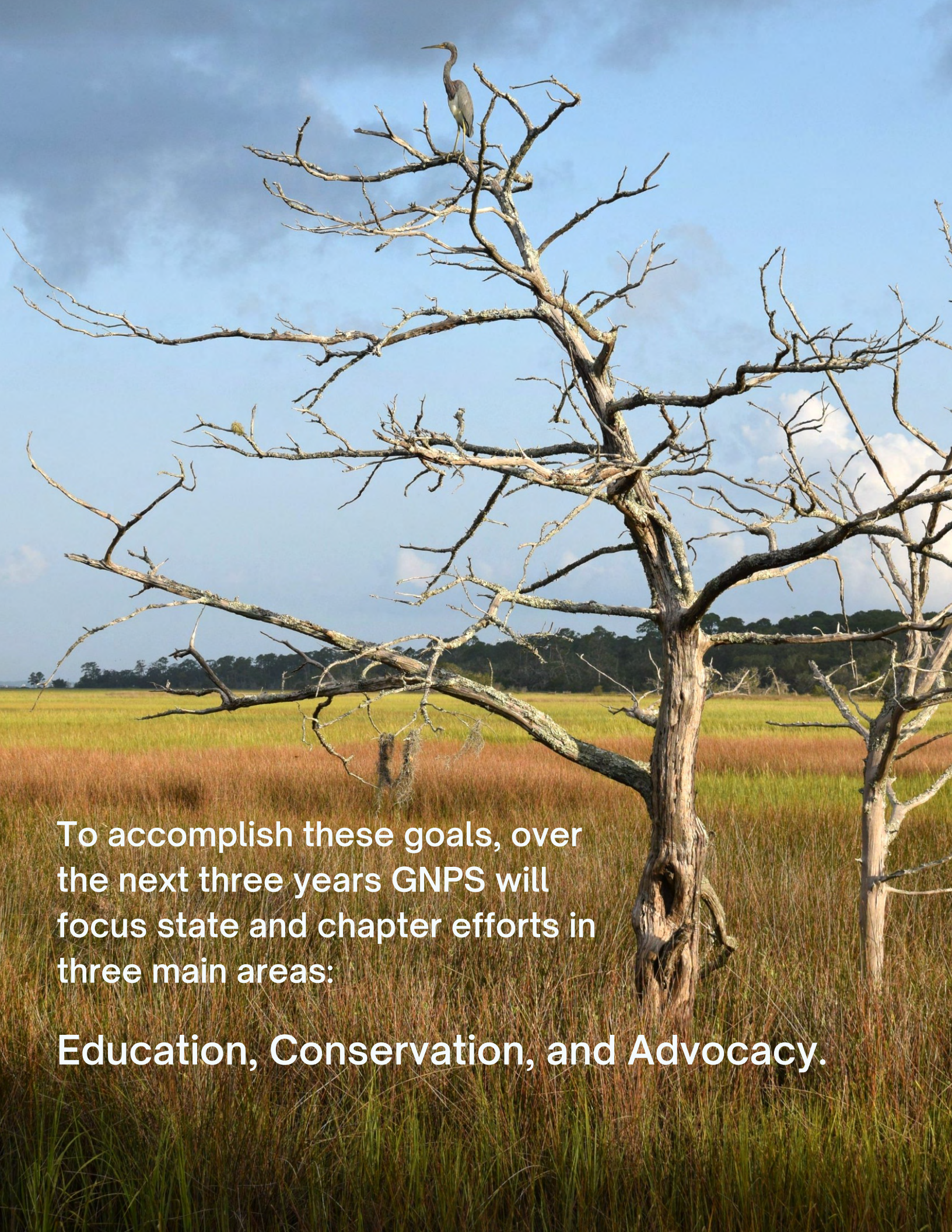
Fortunately, public interest in native plants and the understanding of the difference they make for native insects and birds is higher than ever, and we are not alone in our quest.

We enjoy strong partnerships with other organizations who are working toward the same goal across Georgia, and we are cultivating new partnerships to grow this network. Our aim is not to duplicate our partners' programs but to leverage and complement them.



With the GNPS state organization joining hands with our chapters and partners, we and other like-minded people will accomplish these goals faster. We will be stronger working together, making a difference for native plants and people in Georgia by *growing a better landscape*.





To accomplish these goals, over the next three years GNPS will focus state and chapter efforts in three main areas:

**Education, Conservation, and Advocacy.**



# Education Focus

## **Create an educational pathway to actively encourage and increase the number of members knowledgeable about native plants**

- Develop a native plant curriculum, using existing coursework offered statewide through various educational institutions or organizations, and developing local material, as needed.
- Offer incentives to members who complete tiered levels of the pathway and become knowledgeable native plant stewards and mentors to others.

## **Create opportunities to educate traditional landscaping professionals, municipalities, and developers**

- Attend and exhibit at conferences and trade shows.
- Network with native plant nurseries to reach target audiences.
- Recruit landscaping professionals to the GNPS board.

## **Empower our chapters for success through leader training and other state-level support to grow chapters and increase members served**

- Centralize resources for chapters to access quickly at any time.
- Provide ready access to marketing materials for chapter use.
- Formalize processes for state and chapter leaders to meet and exchange feedback on successes and challenges facing chapters.
- Provide guidance and assistance to on-board signature state programs at the chapter level.

"...it is tempting to garden only for beauty, without regard to the many ecological roles our landscapes must perform. All too often, such narrow gardening goals result in a landscape so low in ecological function that it drains the vitality from the surrounding ecosystem."

-- Douglas W. Tallamy, *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard*





# Conservation Focus

## **Improve Georgia's native plant habitat through a "Habitat Corridor" program tied to our native plant habitat certification and site restoration programs**

- Create map of state with color-coded dots representing certified GNPS habitats and restoration sites across state, along with other native plant habitat programs.
- Work to "connect the dots" of native plant habitats across the state.

## **Expand the GNPS Plant Rescue program across Georgia**

- Increase number of chapters participating in rescue program.
- Increase geographic availability of plant rescues and engage more members.
- Make rescued plants more available to conservation partners and restoration sites.

## **Expand the GNPS Habitat Restoration program across Georgia**

- Increase number of chapters participating in restoration program.
- Increase geographic representation of restoration sites across state.
- Engage more members and non-members to volunteer at restoration sites.



"Plant rescue doesn't happen nearly as often as it needs to. There is a lot of plant material that is being wasted."

-- Tom Patrick, Department of Natural Resources, 1992 in Atlanta Journal-Constitution story on rescuing plants



# Advocacy Focus

## Research, package and implement favorable plant policies for municipalities

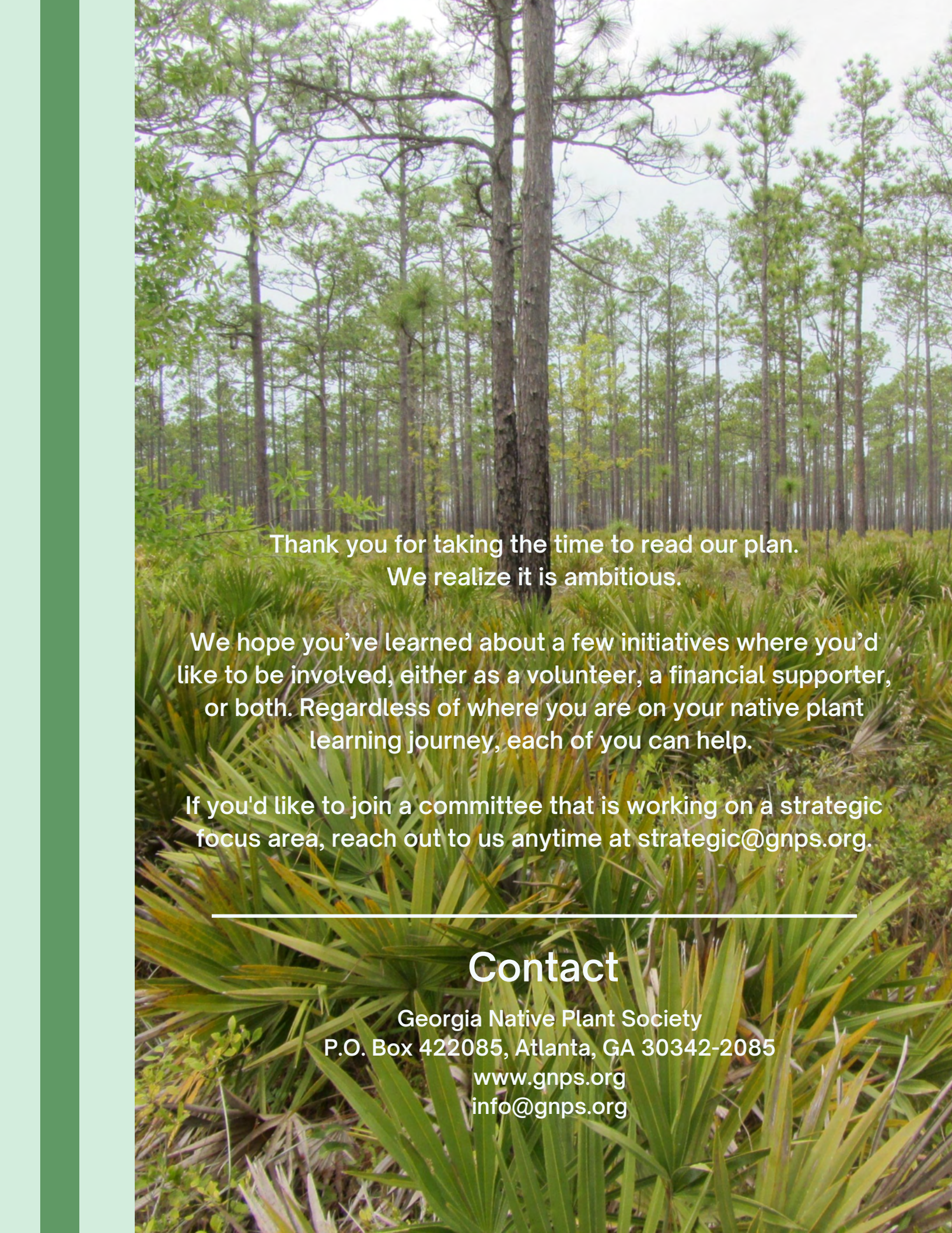
- Create a model ordinance to limit invasive species.
- Create a model ordinance to use native plants in city/county landscaping.
- Develop action materials (brochures and slide presentations) to disseminate information to local officials and industry groups.
- Increase number of municipalities with favorable native plant policies.



"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,  
nothing is going to get better. It's not."

-- *The Lorax* (Dr. Seuss)





Thank you for taking the time to read our plan.  
We realize it is ambitious.

We hope you've learned about a few initiatives where you'd like to be involved, either as a volunteer, a financial supporter, or both. Regardless of where you are on your native plant learning journey, each of you can help.

If you'd like to join a committee that is working on a strategic focus area, reach out to us anytime at [strategic@gnps.org](mailto:strategic@gnps.org).

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## Contact

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