



# Georgia Native Plant Society

**Georgia Native Plant Society, Inc.**

**Chapter Manual, Second Edition**

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# Georgia Native Plant Society Chapter Manual

## Document Definitions

AOI - Articles of Incorporation

BOD - Board of Directors at the state level

CBOD - Chapter Board of Directors

FEIN - Federal Employer Identification Number

GNPS - Abbreviated name for Georgia Native Plant Society

SOS - Secretary of State

Society - GNPS at the state level

## About this Manual

In 2019, we wrote these words about our strategic plan to create a state governance board and grow GNPS to a new level:

*Rest assured, GNPS is doing good work, but we are not well-positioned to...leverage the immense interest in native plants...Most of all, we need more chapters statewide to spread GNPS across Georgia and to renew a grassroots approach to native plant activism. With more active, vibrant chapters we can recruit new members, level volunteer workloads, and keep everyone engaged and fresh. We must help GNPS function better as well as make it easier to start and run a chapter. Growing GNPS is the only way we will teach more people to love Georgia's native plants, conserve natural habitats, and do our part to preserve the environment of our state and world.*

This Chapter Manual is the heart of our efforts to grow new chapters. The guidance laid out in this manual represents many hundreds of hours of review and research by members of the 2020/2021 Membership/Chapter Relations committee, GNPS BOD, and others. We examined historical GNPS chapter procedures, interviewed chapter officers, researched practices employed by other state native plant societies and non-profits, and consulted with third-party legal and tax experts. We combed through years of GNPS BOD meeting minutes, particularly those that included discussions of strategic planning and vision for the growth of chapters, and incorporated ideas that remained relevant.

**In short, this manual represents what we believe are “best practices” to start, grow, and sustain a GNPS chapter, creating multiple generations of GNPS members who will value, conserve, and appropriately use native plants.** Thus, this manual consists of two main sections: how to form a new chapter of the Georgia Native Plant Society and suggestions for sustaining an existing chapter of GNPS.

This is the second edition of the digital GNPS Chapter Manual, which will be updated periodically, as needed.

## Section One - Forming a New Chapter of GNPS

### GNPS Structure

In November 2019, the Georgia Native Plant Society (GNPS) adopted new bylaws, which implemented a statewide governing board to set organizational policy, define its strategic vision, and directly support chapter activities. This new organizational structure paved the way for more chapters to form throughout Georgia. We, on the board of GNPS, are thrilled you are considering starting a new chapter.

### GNPS Mission

The GNPS mission is to promote the stewardship and conservation of Georgia's native plants and their habitats through education and with the involvement of individuals and organizations. Chapters provide a way for GNPS to accomplish its mission across the state.

### GNPS Bylaws Regarding Chapters

The bylaws of GNPS address the chapter organization in Article XVII, which is below as an exact excerpt. In this section, the word Board refers to the GNPS Board of Directors.

#### ARTICLE XVII CHAPTERS

Section 1. **Chapter Organization.** A group of ten (10) or more persons may organize a chapter of GNPS to further GNPS's mission at a local or regional level. The group shall follow the procedures set out in the GNPS Chapter Manual (the "Manual"). All members of a chapter shall be members of GNPS and are entitled to all Society membership privileges.

Chapters shall be designated as "The \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter of the Georgia Native Plant Society." If an organization already in existence desires to become a chapter of the Georgia Native Plant Society, it may retain its name and be known officially as "\_\_\_\_\_", a Chapter of the Georgia Native Plant Society." Changes of the designation of existing chapters shall be approved by the Board. Each chapter shall elect its own officers annually pursuant to the procedures set out in the Manual.

The Manual provides the chapter with model by-laws. Any changes to these by-laws must be consistent with GNPS's Bylaws and approved by the Board.

Each Chapter is encouraged to provide a representative to serve as a liaison to the

Board. The GNPS Board is empowered to develop a policy regarding election of these Chapter representatives as Board members. Chapter representatives will not have a vote on GNPS Board matters unless duly elected to the Board pursuant to the policy developed by the Board and the procedures set out in these Bylaws. All chapter representatives are invited and encouraged to attend meetings of the Board irrespective of Board membership.

Section 2. **Chapter Responsibilities.** All activities shall be conducted in a manner that is consistent with GNPS's mission, by-laws, policies, and procedures. Chapters shall foster the growth of GNPS by soliciting GNPS memberships. Any dues and membership applications shall be sent to the Board or its designee. Reports of chapter activities, elections, and other relevant information shall be provided to the Secretary or his/her designee at a frequency to be determined by the Board but not less than annually.

Chapters are responsible for complying with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations. Each chapter, which is a separate 501(c)3 at the time of adoption of these Bylaws, must maintain that separate 501(c) 3 designation and incorporation and file their own taxes. New chapters (those formed after the adoption of these Bylaws) may adopt one of the forms permitted in the Manual.

Section 3. **Finances.** Chapters may conduct their own fund-raising activities, including chapter dues, provided these are consistent with the purposes of GNPS. A proportion of the Chapter's member dues to GNPS shall be rebated to the chapter. The percentage of the rebate will be decided by the Board. A Chapter may request that the Board consider allocating additional funds to use at the Chapter's discretion for programs and projects approved by the Board.

Section 4. **Limitation of Chapter Authority.** No chapter, chapter officer, or chapter member shall have power to act or bind GNPS in any manner without express authority from the Board. No chapter shall have any proprietary interest in the name "Georgia Native Plant Society" and any use of the name or logo must follow GNPS's policies and procedures. Chapters shall hold harmless GNPS from any liability in connection with activities or functions of the chapters.

Section 5. **Dissolution:** A local chapter that has become inactive or taken any action inconsistent with the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws of GNPS may be dissolved upon majority vote of the Board. Following dissolution, no chapter or state property shall be retained in the possession of any member. A chapter may request dissolution upon written notice to the secretary of GNPS, subject to approval by the Board. All assets and records of the chapter shall become the property of GNPS.

## Chapter Governance

Chapters are governed by the GNPS bylaws, policies and procedures; chapter bylaws, policies and procedures; federal, state, and local law; and this manual. If discrepancies occur, GNPS bylaws and this manual will prevail.

## Quick Start Guide for Chapter Formation

GNPS provides a chapter quick start guide available at this link. [Chapter Quick Start Guide](#). The chapter manual you are reading includes detailed guidance on starting, growing, and sustaining a chapter.

## GNPS State BOD Partnership

The state board of directors (BOD) and staff will partner with you to form a new chapter. Frequent communication throughout the process is essential for a smooth chapter creation process. You may contact the executive director at [executivedirector@gnps.org](mailto:executivedirector@gnps.org) with any questions. We are here to help; supporting chapters is one of our primary responsibilities, so don't hesitate to contact us with any questions.

## Preliminary Considerations

Before you begin the official process of forming a chapter, you should think through these questions.

1. Do you have enough members in your area to support a chapter? GNPS bylaws require a minimum of ten members to start a chapter, but the chapter will ultimately need more members to keep it going.
2. Do you have enough people willing to step up to be leaders? Chapters have boards and committees and will need leaders to serve in these positions.
3. Where will you meet? Is there a local facility you can regularly use?

## Chapter Startup Expenses

GNPS will pay or reimburse the following expenses, limited to \$750.

- \$25 Name Reservation fee (optional) - Secretary of State website
- \$100 Incorporation fee - Secretary of State website
- \$30 Initial Annual Registration fee
- \$40 Newspaper Publication fee
- \$275 1023 EZ filing fee
- Nametags
- Promotional Materials
- Signage

Contact the GNPS treasurer at [treasurer@gnps.org](mailto:treasurer@gnps.org) to request funds or reimbursement. Reimbursements require copies of receipts or proof of expenses paid. The GNPS Expense Reimbursement form is linked here. [Expense Reimbursement Form](#)

## Startup Committee

A startup committee is a small group of people who manage things and make decisions until chapter officers and the chapter board of directors (CBOD) are elected. We recommend three to five members on the startup committee.

## Chapter Interest Meeting

To determine your area's interest in participating in a GNPS chapter, we recommend holding a chapter interest meeting. Combining this with an educational program may draw more attendees. Staff and/or members of the GNPS BOD will attend the meeting if requested and help with email invitations, promoting the event, and virtual hosting, if needed. Contact the membership committee at [membership@gnps.org](mailto:membership@gnps.org) to request an email list of GNPS members in your area. Have your event publicized on the GNPS website and Facebook page by reaching out to the membership committee. Once you have determined you have sufficient interest and support to form a chapter, you may proceed with the administrative steps described below.

## Chapter Name

The chapter name may be a geographic or Georgia native plant name. Either botanical or common plant names are permitted. The chapter name must be in either of these formats:

The *Dogwood* Chapter of The Georgia Native Plant Society

or

The *Southeast Metro Atlanta* Chapter of The Georgia Native Plant Society

The startup committee should decide on the chapter name and submit the proposed name on the [chapter name application form](#). The GNPS BOD must approve chapter names.

Chapter names are a prerequisite for opening a bank account, reserving a name with the Georgia Secretary of State, FEIN application, incorporation, and getting a Sales tax ID number.

## Chapter Address

A chapter address is a prerequisite for opening a bank account, reserving a name with the Georgia Secretary of State, FEIN application, incorporation, and getting a Sales tax ID number. This address must be a street address. Typically the address of the Registered Agent (see below) is listed as the chapter address. You may want to acquire a PO Box for mail receipt. Fees vary for a PO Box.

## **Electing Temporary Officers**

Hold an official meeting of the startup committee to elect temporary officers. Keep minutes of the meeting as these will be required later in the chapter formation process. Nominate and elect a Chair or President (Chief Executive Officer), Treasurer (Chief Financial Officer), and Secretary. Incorporation documents and opening a bank account requires elected officers. Temporary officers must be GNPS members.

## **Business Name Reservation (Optional)**

Optionally, you may reserve a business name on the Georgia Secretary of State's (SOS) website to guarantee name availability. This name must be the exact name approved by the GNPS BOD on the Chapter Name Application Form. You must create an account on the [SOS website](#) to reserve a name and upload a name approval document. There is a \$25 fee, reimbursable by GNPS, for reserving a name.

## **Select a Registered Agent**

A registered agent is the “mailbox” for the corporation. The registered agent is designated to receive any service of process, documents, or other official communication on its behalf. The registered agent's address must be a street address. The incorporation process requires a registered agent.

## **File Articles of Incorporation (AOI)**

You will file for incorporation through the [Georgia Secretary of State's website](#) using the 'Inc.' designation and your approved chapter name. For example, 'The Dogwood Chapter of The Georgia Native Plant Society, Inc.' You will need your business name, street address, and email address for at least one incorporator. Use the [Model Articles Of Incorporation for GNPS Chapters](#) and fill in the blanks. It may be helpful to have a GNPS staff person review the Articles of Incorporation to catch any issues. You may access step by step instructions for filing your AOIs at [GNPS AOI Filing Instructions for Chapters](#). You may also find the filing procedures for incorporation in Georgia at [Filing Procedures](#). There is a \$100 fee for incorporation, reimbursable by GNPS.

## **Newspaper Publication - Notice of Intent to Incorporate - Time Sensitive**

Within one business day of filing for incorporation, you must complete a notice of intent to incorporate in your county's designated “legal organ” (newspaper). Search the Georgia Secretary of State's website for your county legal organ at this link [Secretary of State - Clerks](#). There is a model newspaper notice link here [Filing Procedures](#) under the section 'Publication of Notice of Intent to Incorporate.' There is a \$40 fee, reimbursable by GNPS, for the publication.

## **File Annual Registration - Time Sensitive**

You must file an annual registration within 90 days of incorporation and each year thereafter through the Georgia Secretary of State's website. This step is required annually for on-going compliance. You must list three principal officers, CEO (President), CFO (Treasurer), and Secretary on the registration. You must also list your registered agent's name and address. The initial registration will list the temporary officers your startup committee elected. You will list the chapter's elected officers in subsequent years. You can find the annual registration link here [Annual Registration - Georgia](#). There is a \$30 annual registration fee. This initial payment is reimbursable by GNPS.

## **Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN)**

An EIN is the organization's identification number and is required to open a bank account. It is similar to the social security number of a person. The temporary president or another officer must apply for the EIN. The application asks for the SSN of the person applying for the EIN. There is no cost for this application. The link to apply for the EIN is here [Apply for Employer Identification Number \(EIN\) Online](#).

## **Chapter Mission Statement**

The chapter's mission statement will align with the mission statement of GNPS. Submit your mission statement in the [GNPS Chapter Mission Statement Approval Application](#) for approval by the GNPS BOD.

## **Chapter Bylaws**

What are bylaws? Bylaws are the legally binding rules by which the chapter is governed. The bylaws contain provisions for the size of the CBOD, the frequency and number of CBOD meetings and member meetings, how directors are elected, how officers are appointed and more. The IRS requires a copy of bylaws when chapters apply for tax-exempt status.

Your CBOD can protect itself from legal challenges and internal confusion by adhering to the bylaws. Each member of the CBOD has an obligation to read and understand the bylaws. You should provide each CBOD member with a copy of the chapter's bylaws, the GNPS bylaws, the chapter's Articles of Incorporation, and access to this Chapter Manual. CBOD members should refer to the bylaws frequently to assure compliance with its provisions.

Your bylaws should be available to members and making them available to the public increases the accountability and transparency of the chapter.

Each chapter adopts the GNPS model chapter bylaws. The model bylaws provide latitude in some areas, and chapters may decide those items independently. For instance, some chapters may choose to hold CBOD elections annually, others may choose bi-annually and some may choose three year terms. The GNPS BOD must approve all chapter bylaws. Future changes to

bylaws must also be approved by the GNPS BOD, then voted on by chapter members, and finally, reported when filing the chapter's IRS form 990.

Model bylaws are available at this link. [GNPS Model Chapter Bylaws](#). Instructions for completing the model bylaws are available at this link. [Instructions for Completing Model Chapter Bylaws](#). Once complete, send your proposed bylaws to [executivedirector@gnps.org](mailto:executivedirector@gnps.org). The executive director will present your bylaws to the GNPS BOD for review and approval. You will be notified once the bylaws are approved or if any updates need to be made.

## **Acquire a Georgia Sales Tax ID Number (STIN)**

Your chapter will need a Georgia Sales Tax and Use ID Number available through the Georgia Department of Revenue website. You will need your FEIN, chapter name, chapter address, business activity, ownership information, etc., for this process. This number is **required** if the chapter will sell plants or other tangible property, and all chapters eventually sell something. Non-compliance results in penalties and fines, so don't skip this step. You can file electronically and you will be required to file your sales tax return at the frequency directed by the Georgia Department of Revenue. You can find the STIN application form here [Tax Registration](#). There is no fee for this process. You will also need to find out what county sales taxes you will need to pay. County sales taxes are filed the same way as the state sales tax.

## **Becoming a Tax Exempt Organization**

The chapter must apply to the Internal Revenue Service to become a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization using form 1023 EZ. The 1023 EZ process is somewhat time-consuming. Use NTEE code C40 or C42 on the application. After application, it may take several weeks to months to receive a decision from the IRS. There is a \$275 filing fee, reimbursable by GNPS.

Chapters will also need to file a federal tax return annually using form 990, 990 EZ or 990 N.

Chapters with less than \$50,000 in annual gross receipts may file form 990-N. It can be completed online in a few minutes time. With gross receipts greater than \$50,000, a chapter would likely want a CPA's assistance due to the complexity. Chapters may begin operation prior to the 1023 EZ approval. There are steps that will need to be taken to insure tax exempt status for donations. Please contact the GNPS treasurer at [treasurer@gnps.org](mailto:treasurer@gnps.org) for more information.

New chapters will want to file form 990-N (for small nonprofits with less than \$50,000 revenue), which is done online only by May 15 for December 31 year-ends. See publication 5248 for guidance: [IRS Publication 5248](#). There is no filing fee.

All chapters must adhere to the rules of operating a tax-exempt organization. The IRS provides guidance on exemption requirements at [Exemption Requirements](#). Chapter Officers must become familiar with these requirements and abide by them. If the chapter does not fully comply with the IRS requirements, it may lose its tax-exempt status and GNPS chapter designation.

## Provisional Status

After completing all of the steps above, the chapter should alert the executive director that tax-exempt status has been filed. The GNPS BOD will then grant Provisional status to the chapter. A Provisional Chapter is one that has completed the required steps to become a chapter, has submitted the IRS form 1023-EZ and is waiting on approval of that form. Provisional chapters are required to respond to the annual Chapter Survey, to the best of their ability, and will be evaluated in a similar way to Affiliate chapters, as appropriate.

## Chapter Affiliation Agreement

Chapter leadership and GNPS leadership will execute the [GNPS Chapter Affiliation Agreement](#) to formalize the relationship between GNPS and the chapter. The overall goal of the agreement is to ensure the chapter and GNPS remain in partnership toward the GNPS mission, and agree to support each other, abiding by the GNPS bylaws, policies and procedures. The agreement establishes the right of the chapter to use the GNPS name and receive support from GNPS in exchange for agreeing to follow the guidelines in this chapter manual, allowing for a certain level of oversight, and other formal requirements. It resembles a “franchise agreement” in the business world. GNPS may periodically update the affiliation agreement. Please contact the executive director at [executivedirector@gnps.org](mailto:executivedirector@gnps.org) if you have questions about the agreement.

## Chapter Application Form

When ready, chapters should complete the [Chapter Approval Application Form](#). This ensures that chapter leadership understands GNPS policy and procedures and accepts responsibilities of managing a GNPS chapter. After all chapter officers have read and understood this manual, the designated officer will complete and submit the form. The GNPS BOD will review the chapter’s application during the final approval process.

## Final Steps - Becoming an Affiliate Chapter

The last step to forming an official chapter is for the GNPS Board to approve your Affiliate status. An Affiliate Chapter is one that has received IRS non-profit status and completed all required steps to become a chapter, including duly electing a board of directors and signing the Chapter Affiliation Agreement. The chapter should notify the executive director at [executivedirector@gnps.org](mailto:executivedirector@gnps.org) when tax-exempt status so the approval process may proceed.

Once the steps in this section of the manual have been completed, the chapter affiliation agreement is executed, and the GNPS BOD has approved your chapter as an Affiliate, you are officially a GNPS chapter and entitled to all chapter benefits. **Congratulations!**

GNPS staff will work with you to grant access to GNPS technical tools and provide training. Staff and committee volunteers will assist you with on-going needs and any questions that arise.

## Section Two - Sustaining Your Chapter

### Chapter Status

Once you have been granted Affiliate status, the chapter is entitled to all chapter benefits, including annual membership dues rebates. GNPS provides tools and resources to assist you with sustaining your chapter.

### GNPS Contact Information

From time to time you may need to contact GNPS committees, subcommittees, the board of directors, or others. Below is contact information for your use.

**Advocacy Committee** - [advocacy@gnps.org](mailto:advocacy@gnps.org)

**Audit Committee** - [audit@gnps.org](mailto:audit@gnps.org)

**Communications** - [communications@gnps.org](mailto:communications@gnps.org)

**Conservation Committee** - [conservation@gnps.org](mailto:conservation@gnps.org)

**Education Committee** - [education@gnps.org](mailto:education@gnps.org)

**Executive Committee** (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer) - [execcomm@gnps.org](mailto:execcomm@gnps.org)

**Executive Director** - [executivedirector@gnps.org](mailto:executivedirector@gnps.org)

**Finance Committee** - [finance@gnps.org](mailto:finance@gnps.org)

**Governance Committee** - [governance@gnps.org](mailto:governance@gnps.org)

**Grants and Scholarships Committee** - [grants.committee@gnps.org](mailto:grants.committee@gnps.org)

**Habitat Certification** - [habitatcertification@gnps.org](mailto:habitatcertification@gnps.org)

**Membership** - [membership@gnps.org](mailto:membership@gnps.org)

**Propagation Subcommittee** - [propagation.subcommittee@gnps.org](mailto:propagation.subcommittee@gnps.org)

**Rescue Subcommittee** - [rescue.subcommittee@gnps.org](mailto:rescue.subcommittee@gnps.org)

**Restoration Subcommittee** - [restoration.subcommittee@gnps.org](mailto:restoration.subcommittee@gnps.org)

**State Board of Directors** - [board@gnps.org](mailto:board@gnps.org)

**Symposium Subcommittee** - [symposium@gnps.org](mailto:symposium@gnps.org)

## **The Chapter Board**

Your chapter board of directors (CBOD) is the governing body of your chapter. The members of the CBOD are directors and are collectively called the board of directors. The CBOD is elected by the members of the chapter on a frequency determined in the chapter bylaws. The terms of CBOD members are also set out in your chapter bylaws.

## **Electing the Board**

The number of CBOD members is specified in your bylaws but must be a minimum of three. Five to seven CBOD members is a more ideal number to maintain the chapter. All CBOD members must be GNPS members and maintain their membership throughout their service. The election of the CBOD must follow the process outlined in GNPS and chapter bylaws. We recommend an odd number of CBOD members to prevent tie votes.

## **Board Member Agreement**

You should provide potential board members with the [Board Member Agreement](#) for them to preview before they commit to joining the CBOD. Board members should complete the Board Member Agreement once they have been elected to the CBOD. The chapter should retain a copy of these agreements in their GNPS electronic storage (Google Drive).

## **Board Member Responsibilities**

The CBOD is charged with overseeing the chapter and has a legal and fiduciary responsibility. The fiduciary responsibility requires it to act with care and in the best interest of the chapter and to remain loyal to its mission. It is responsible for following federal, state, and local law, as well as assuring the chapter adheres to its legal obligations and governance documents. A CBOD that strays from your governance rules could steer your chapter in the wrong direction, impact your chapter's standing in the community, and jeopardize its status as a GNPS chapter.

Additionally, the CBOD is responsible for financial oversight, and assuring that members are acting within the stated purpose and mission of the chapter.

These responsibilities are often called the three D's; Duty of Care, Duty of Loyalty, and Duty of Obedience.

## **Duty of Care**

CBOD members should fulfill their roles to the best of their abilities. This means proactively participating and communicating.

## **Duty of Loyalty**

All activities should be done in the best interest of the chapter, not in the best interest of individual CBOD members.

## **Duty of Obedience**

The CBOD members should follow organizational rules as defined in the chapter's governance documents.

To better understand the roles and responsibilities of being a CBOD member, review this [CBOD Member Orientation Checklist](#).

Having a plan for board members when they leave the board is key as well. You can refer to the [Chapter Board Officer Off-Boarding Checklist](#) to ensure a smooth transition.

## **Holding Chapter Elections**

You must notify chapter members via email or newsletter at least two weeks before the meeting when chapter elections are to take place. You should provide members with a slate of CBOD candidates and information about the election's time and place. Votes may be cast electronically or in person, as provided for in the chapter's bylaws. For assistance with electronic voting, contact the executive director at [executivedirector@gnps.org](mailto:executivedirector@gnps.org). Our CRM database, NeonCRM, has the capacity to manage electronic voting and the membership committee will assist you with the setup and execution of the vote. In the event of uncontested positions, the election may be decided by acclamation. Chapter elections are official chapter business, and **meeting minutes** must be kept and preserved in the chapter's Meeting Minutes folder on the GNPS Google Drive. Notify the executive director of each new CBOD member's name, position, term, address, phone number, and email address.

## **Officers**

Once the CBOD is elected, its first order of business is to select officers from within its ranks. The number of officers is set forth in your bylaws, but must be a minimum of three in order to have the required number of officers. Officer positions are President or Chair, Vice President or Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer or Secretary/Treasurer. The Secretary and Treasurer positions may be combined. The duties of each officer are set forth in the chapter bylaws and are also listed below. Members of the CBOD who are not officers are simply called directors or board members. The term "member at large" is not appropriate, because it implies that some of

the other members are representing a group or region. All board members should complete and sign the [Board Member Agreement](#).

### **Annual Selection of Officers**

Officers are selected annually by the CBOD. An officer must be a member of the CBOD and the officer's term may not exceed their term as a director. For instance, If Claudia was elected to the CBOD for a three-year term, 2020, 2021, and 2022, she may only be an officer during those years. When her directorship ends, her officer term ends as well.

### **Chair or President**

The Chair or President shall preside over all meetings of the Chapter at which business of the CBOD is conducted. The Chair or President shall have the general powers and duties usually vested in the office of President of a board. He/she shall be an ex-officio member of all committees. The Chair or President shall work with CBOD Officers and Committee Chairs to develop meeting agendas, ensure the skillful conduct of meetings of the CBOD, and perform such other duties as the CBOD may prescribe from time to time.

### **Vice Chair or Vice President**

The Vice Chair/President shall assist the Chair or President. In the absence or inability of the President, the Vice Chair/President shall act in his/her/their stead. Other duties may be assigned from time to time by the Chair or President or the CBOD.

### **Secretary**

The Secretary shall: 1) keep the minutes of the meetings of the members and of the CBOD and be the custodian of the corporate records; 2) ensure that there is a record of the members maintained, including the mailing address of each member; and 3) in general, perform all duties incident to the office of Secretary and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned by the Chair or President or the CBOD.

### **Treasurer**

The Treasurer shall have charge and custody of and shall be responsible for the funds and securities of the Chapter; receive and give receipts for monies due and payable to the Chapter from any source whatsoever, and deposit all such monies in the name of the Chapter in such banks, trust companies or other depositories as shall be selected by the CBOD; disburse, or cause to be disbursed the funds of the Chapter, as may be directed by the CBOD; regularly render to the CBOD an account of any or all transactions as Treasurer and of the financial condition of the Chapter; prepare or cause to be prepared and certify or cause to be certified, the financial statements to be included in any required reports; be responsible for compliance with the laws of the state of Georgia and the United States regarding the finances of the Chapter; and, in general, perform such other duties as from time to time may be assigned by the

President or the CBOD. In addition, the Treasurer shall: 1) prepare or assist in the preparation of the budget; 2) make financial information available to the CBOD members; 3) cause to be prepared an accurate statement of the assets and liabilities of the Chapter as of the close of each fiscal year, all in reasonable detail, which statement shall be made and filed at the registered office or principal place of business of the Chapter in the State of Georgia within a timely manner, and thereafter kept available for a period of at least ten years; and 4) in general, perform all of the duties incidental to the office of Treasurer and such other duties as may be assigned by the Chair or President or the CBOD.

## **Bylaws**

Read more about bylaws in [Section One: Chapter Bylaws](#)

### **Chapter Bylaws Vote**

When chapters are initially formed, the GNPS BOD reviews and approves the chapter bylaws. Following that approval, chapter members vote on the bylaws. If changes to chapter bylaws are needed in the future, the chapter must submit a copy of the new bylaws to the GNPS BOD for review and approval. Following GNPS BOD approval, chapter members must also vote to approve them and they must be submitted on the chapter's IRS form 990.

### **Chapter Committees**

Committees are an asset to the CBOD and will allow the CBOD to run more smoothly and effectively. Committees can take on more focused work and allow the CBOD to operate at a broader level.

Don't be overwhelmed when you think about forming committees. It sounds like a lot of work but it's easier than you might think. Committee membership doesn't have to be a huge time commitment. Some committees will complete their work in just a few hours per year. For instance, the finance committee might meet only once a year when the budget and annual financial report are being prepared. The governance committee may only need to meet when chapter elections are imminent, and when potential conflicts of interest are brought to the CBOD for review.

Each CBOD will designate at least three standing committees just after chapter approval from GNPS; the [Executive Committee](#), the [Finance Committee](#), and the [Governance Committee](#). These committees are included in the chapter bylaws.

While these three standing committees are required, other standing and ad-hoc committees may be designated by the CBOD based on the needs of the chapter. Members may serve on multiple committees.

Some additional committees might be a conservation committee, an education committee, a membership committee, a public relations committee, a communications committee, and others.

It's up to chapter leadership to decide what committees are needed to help the CBOD and chapter meet its goals.

Typically, the chapter president appoints the chair of each committee, and the committee chair selects the members of the committee, with CBOD approval. For standing committees, it is important to outline committee roles and responsibilities, the number of members, terms, filling vacancies, etc. in chapter policy documents.

## **Executive Committee**

The executive committee is composed of the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer and up to three other directors as stated in the chapter bylaws. The executive committee is responsible for directing the business and affairs of the chapter except those matters and duties that are required (by law, the articles of incorporation, or the chapter bylaws) to be performed by the full CBOD. Meeting minutes should be kept for all executive committee meetings and made available to the full CBOD.

The CBOD may terminate the Executive Committee at any time. The CBOD may appoint or remove a member of the Executive Committee at any time or fill a vacancy resulting from death, resignation, or other cause, pursuant to the bylaws.

Termination of the Executive Committee has no effect on the positions of its members as directors or officers, but merely removes the ability of the Committee to take actions without CBOD approval, nullifying its only purpose, at least until reinstated by the CBOD.

## **Finance Committee**

The finance committee is chaired by the Treasurer and has at least two members, inclusive of the treasurer. The Treasurer may appoint CBOD members or non-CBOD members to serve on the committee. The finance committee is responsible for assisting with creating a chapter budget, financial reporting, [reimbursements](#), and other duties as specified in the [Financial Policies and Procedures](#). The finance committee may also manage [grant applications](#) and [fundraising programs](#).

## **Governance Committee**

The governance committee is appointed by the chapter president and approved by the CBOD. A governance committee is very important to an organization and is often misunderstood. It is the “committee of the board” and handles the recruitment and vetting of CBOD members. It also addresses conflicts of interest if they come up, reviews policies of the chapter, and engages the CBOD in self-evaluation.

The governance committee is responsible for creating the slate of directors and officers for election, notifying the membership of the candidates at least two weeks prior to the annual meeting. The governance committee is also responsible for overseeing adherence to the

chapter bylaws and mediating any conflicts of interest. A chapter's governance committee may reach out to the Society's governance committee at any time for assistance at [governance@gnps.org](mailto:governance@gnps.org).

### **Other Committees (Optional)**

Optionally, a chapter may want to establish additional standing and ad-hoc committees related to programs, projects, and activities. For example, an education committee would facilitate programs or activities devoted to educational outreach. Committees may be formed based on the priorities and goals of the chapter. The CBOD will decide the committees that are needed, and the chapter president, with input from the CBOD, will appoint a chair of the committee. The committee chair may select the members of the committee, with CBOD approval.

### **Representative to GNPS Chapter Council (Recommended)**

Each chapter should provide a representative for the GNPS Chapter Council, a state level committee that facilitates communication and collaboration among the chapters and with the GNPS Board in collective pursuit of the GNPS mission. You may contact the executive director at [executivedirector@gnps.org](mailto:executivedirector@gnps.org) with your chapter representative's information.

### **Representatives to GNPS State-Level Committees (Optional)**

Each chapter is encouraged to suggest members of their chapter for GNPS state-level standing or ad hoc committees. Chapter support of state committees is valued and appreciated. State committees may reach out to chapter officers when they have slots on their committees to fill or are in need of particular technical expertise.

### **Attending GNPS State BOD Meetings (Optional)**

Any member interested in attending a GNPS Board Meeting must make a request to the Board Chair at [chair@gnps.org](mailto:chair@gnps.org) at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled meeting date. If interested in addressing the Board, the topic to be presented or request is to be identified by the guest to allow for agenda development. GNPS publishes a [calendar of board meeting dates](#) on its website.

## **Finances**

### **Corporate Bank Resolution**

One of the first actions a new chapter board will undertake is to decide where to open the chapter's bank account. GNPS provides a [Bank Resolution Template](#) for chapter boards to authorize the opening of the bank account and identify signatories.

## Chapter Bank Account

Chapter bank accounts are business accounts. Before you open the account, be sure the bank offers accounts for Domestic Nonprofit Corporations. Some banks may only offer accounts for S Corporations or C Corporations. The name on the bank account will be the exact name on your incorporation documents. You will need to provide some or all of the following to the financial institution; FEIN, Articles of Incorporation, chapter name, chapter address, list of elected officers, and minutes of the business meeting where officers were elected. You will need two signatories on the account, and both must be GNPS members. Having two signatories doesn't mean that two persons will sign the checks; instead, it means that two persons are authorized to sign. In case of absence, illness, or death of one signatory, the second will step in. You should also have a process to update signatories when members leave or elections change who is responsible. A no-fee/interest-bearing account is preferred. Most institutions require a minimum deposit to open an account. You may be able to find a bank that provides free accounts for non-profits. You will need to acquire checks and deposit slips for use by your Treasurer.

## Accounting

Contact the GNPS treasurer at [treasurer@gnps.org](mailto:treasurer@gnps.org) for assistance with accounting and financial reporting . An Excel spreadsheet template is available to assist chapters with accounting, financial reporting, and budgeting. A 'treasurer's calendar' is a good tool for keeping track of recurring transactions and commitments, as well as access to key websites.

Chapters should provide their membership with financial reports at least annually. Chapters may be requested to provide their most current income statement tied to beginning and ending period total bank balances in response to the annual chapter survey. The GNPS treasurer is available to consult with you on reporting requirements and assist the chapter with accounting procedures and methods. You may contact the GNPS treasurer at [treasurer@gnps.org](mailto:treasurer@gnps.org).

## Financial Policies and Procedures

The CBOD will pass a resolution to adopt written financial policies and procedures using [GNPS Chapter Model Financial Policies and Procedures](#) as a guiding document. The CBOD has fiduciary responsibilities to ensure chapter assets are protected and used in support of the mission; and ensure regulations, bylaws, and GNPS BOD requirements are complied with. Written policies and procedures will assist the CBOD by

1. Establishing, defining, and communicating policies/procedures for:
  - a. financial responsibilities and authority
  - b. accounting and record-keeping
  - c. financial reporting and tax compliance
  - d. internal controls, including regarding conflict of interest
  - e. asset management

2. Providing consistency in accounting and financial reporting practices year over year regardless of changes in chapter leadership from year to year.

## **Categories of Income**

Donations, grants, sales of merchandise, workshop registration fees, and the annual chapter dues rebate will make up the bulk of your chapter's income.

## **Categories of Expenses**

Chapter expenses are primarily operating expenses, such as registration fees, program and project expenses, speaker fees, chapter-maintained website maintenance (if not hosted by GNPS), post office box rentals, facility rentals, postage, printing costs, etc.

## **Calculating and Paying Sales Tax**

On the Georgia Department of Revenue website, access the current 'General Rate Chart' to find the county and jurisdiction related to your sales. The total tax rate shown will include state and jurisdiction tax rates. If your sales are inclusive of taxes (normal), divide total gross sales by (1 + the total tax rate) to determine the sales price excluding sales tax (net sales). You will enter this net sales price in the online form after selecting the applicable county/jurisdiction. You will also enter the calculated taxes collected amount. County sales taxes are filed on the same form as state sales taxes. Here is the GA Dept. of Revenue link to instructions: [Sales Tax Instructions](#). You are required to file a state sales tax return on the frequency (monthly, quarterly, or annually) the Department of Revenue instructs you to use. You are required to file a return even if you have no sales or tax to report.

## **Expense Reimbursement Forms**

Chapter members who incur expenses that are reimbursable by the chapter should provide a form to request reimbursement. Prior authorization may be required by the chapter treasurer for expenses to be reimbursable, in accordance with chapter's financial policies and procedures. If you need assistance in establishing this procedure, please contact the GNPS treasurer at [treasurer@gnps.org](mailto:treasurer@gnps.org).

Chapter members may also be reimbursed by GNPS for additional pre-approved expenses at the discretion of the GNPS treasurer. Use the [GNPS Expense Reimbursement Form](#) and submit to [treasurer@gnps.org](mailto:treasurer@gnps.org).

## **Chapter Rebates**

GNPS will rebate a portion of the chapter's membership dues to chapters during April each year. The rebates are a percentage of the dues of members who have affiliated with your

chapter. The GNPS BOD decides the percentage of the rebate. Chapter rebates are contingent upon a chapter completing the annual chapter survey and being in good standing.

### **Chapter Fundraising (Optional)**

Chapters may conduct their own fundraising activities, such as collecting additional member dues, donation jars at meetings, social media campaigns, hosting workshops, plant sales, or other fundraising campaigns, provided these are consistent with the purposes of GNPS. Please refer to GNPS bylaws, Article XVII Section 3.

### **Chapter Grants (Optional)**

Chapters in good standing may apply for the Chapter Grant Program administered by the GNPS BOD. More information on this program is available annually during the chapter review period. .

## **Insurance And Liability**

### **Chapter Insurance**

GNPS provides general liability insurance coverage. The GNPS liability insurance coverage covers the chapters and its members. Access a current Summary of Insurance stating the coverages and limits [[Summary of Insurance](#)], and a Claim Report form that should be completed immediately after any incident that could potentially result in a claim [[General Liability Insurance](#)]. Contact the GNPS Treasurer with any questions (treasurer@gnps.org) about insurance.

### **GNPS Auto Insurance Coverage**

GNPS provides liability coverage insurance on non-owned vehicles GNPS rents or borrows in the organization's name for use by its volunteers; and also covers use of a volunteer's personal vehicle that he/she owns, borrows, leases or rents, and while acting at the direction of GNPS and working within his/her duties for GNPS. The amount of coverage is \$1,000,000 "excess" coverage per incident over any other insurance. A more complete explanation of the coverage and risk management requirements of the policy may be found within the [GNPS Auto Liability Coverage and Risk Management](#) document.

### **GNPS Liability Waiver**

Chapter members and visitors must complete a GNPS liability waiver before any chapter activity such as a field trip, hike, nature walk, workshop, workday, or GNPS plant rescue. You may download a copy of the waiver from [GNPS Liability Waiver](#). This waiver must be printed as a two-sided document.

## Signing Contracts

### Limitation of Chapter Authority

The GNPS BOD must review and approve any contract a chapter is considering signing. Submit an unsigned copy of the contract to [board@gnps.org](mailto:board@gnps.org). Do not sign any contract without the prior approval of the GNPS BOD. Below is an exact excerpt from the GNPS Bylaws related to signing contracts.

No chapter, chapter officer, or chapter member shall have the power to act or bind GNPS in any manner without express authority from the GNPS BOD. No chapter shall have any proprietary interest in the name “Georgia Native Plant Society,” and any use of the name or logo must follow GNPS’s policies and procedures. Chapters shall hold harmless GNPS from any liability in connection with activities or functions of the chapters. No chapter officer or member shall have the authority to enter into any contract or agreement without the prior written approval of the GNPS BOD.

### Annual Chapter Survey

GNPS distributes a chapter survey annually during the first quarter. The chapter survey’s objective is to create and collect a consistent set of information about each chapter for use by the GNPS committees and the GNPS BOD. The survey serves as an annual report to the GNPS BOD and ensures that chapters are operating according to minimum standards. It also provides GNPS with vital details such as officer names and bylaws. The chapter survey also offers an opportunity for chapters to share their successes and suggest improvements.

## Technical Tools for Chapter Use

### Chapter Google Drive

GNPS utilizes Google Drive, a cloud-based system that provides storage, access, and organization of organizational documents. The GNPS executive director manages the chapter folders on Google Drive.

### Google Groups

Google Groups are similar to a LISTSERV. Emails sent to the google group address, for instance [chaptername@gnps.org](mailto:chaptername@gnps.org), will be received by all members of the group and any member of the group may respond to the email. Using a Google Group is a good way to share information with members interested in the chapter during the chapter’s early formation stage. The Google Group will be phased out once your chapter is using NeonCRM to send emails to chapter members. The advantage of NeonCRM over Google Groups is that NeonCRM always has the most current list of your chapter members. The Google Group requires manual updates.

## Storing Documents

GNPS provides each chapter with space on Google Drive to store important chapter information. There is no cost to chapters for this service. Electronic storage is the best way to ensure that documents are secure, safe, and available when needed. Chapters should limit the number of photographs, graphics, and audio files as they can be quite large.

## Accessing Folders

A standard set of folders on Google Drive will be created and access granted to the forming chapters' startup committee. Chapter presidents may provide a list of CBOD members or officers to the executive director for access.

The table below shows the standard folder structure and recommendations for storing documents.

Folder	Recommended Content
Activities	Documents related to chapter activities, field trips, workshops, educational presentations, speakers, etc.
Bylaws	Current and prior GNPS BOD approved bylaws
Chapter Formation Documents	Articles of Incorporation, IRS determination letter, original bylaws, name registration, etc.
Chapter Officers	Name, position, email, phone for current chapter officers. A separate document with historical officer information
Chapter Survey	Documents requested for annual chapter survey
Conservation Sites	Documents related to conservation sites you support
Financial and Tax	Annual audits, year-end financial documents, budgets, financial statements, IRS 990 or 990N
Fundraising and Grants	Documents related to fund-raising plans or activities. Documents related to grants applied for or given.
Habitat Certification	Documents related to habitat certifications
Licensing and Registration	Georgia SOS Annual Registration, Live Plant License
Media and Communications	Branding, State and local chapter graphics, Photography, Templates
Meeting Minutes	Meeting minutes for CBOD meetings, executive committee meetings, committee meetings, etc.
Membership	Most recent member lists downloaded from Neon, Documents related to growing and retaining membership, etc.
Newsletter	Copies of newsletters for the past year unless stored in Neon

Plant Rescues	Documents related to plant rescues
Plant Sales	Documents related to plant sales
Policy and Procedure	Policies and procedure documents for the chapter and its committees
Restoration Sites	Documents related to GNPS restoration sites you support

More information may be found in the [GNPS Systems User Policy](#). You may send questions about the Google Drive Space to the executive director at [executivedirector@gnps.org](mailto:executivedirector@gnps.org).

## NeonCRM

GNPS utilizes NeonCRM, a software solution for nonprofit organizations to manage membership, communications, and events. Each chapter will designate at least one officer or member to access NeonCRM to run reports of members, investigate membership questions, and send chapter emails and newsletters. You may access instructions and training through the Neon knowledgebase at [Neon Support](#). An overview of NeonCRM for GNPS users is available at this link: [NeonCRM Overview](#). More information may be found in the [GNPS Systems User Policy](#). You may contact GNPS staff at [membership@gnps.org](mailto:membership@gnps.org) for questions about using Neon.

## Virtual Meeting Account

Each Affiliate chapter is granted one license for a virtual meeting platform. Chapters may use this to conduct virtual meetings, programs and events. The executive director will set up the chapter with the account. More information may be found in the [GNPS Systems User Policy](#).

## Chapter Website (Optional)

A chapter may work with the membership committee to publish a chapter page on the GNPS.org website (free) or host it separately (not free), or both (with basic information, event listings, and posts on the GNPS.org page, and detailed information at a separate web site). A chapter-specific web page can help your members find information like social media pages and contact information. An example of a website hosted outside of GNPS.org is: <https://cpcgnps.org/>. An example of a chapter that has both a chapter page and a separate website is at <https://gnps.org/west-georgia-chapter/> (with a link on that page to <https://www.wgawildflowers.org>, as well as social media).

## Chapter Contributions to GNPS.org (Optional)

One or more members of the chapter may contribute content to the GNPS.org website. This content may be calendar events for chapter meetings and activities, blog posts, news about chapter events, etc. Contact the executive director at [executivedirector@gnps.org](mailto:executivedirector@gnps.org) to request access. Once you have been granted access, you may access several training videos on the [GNPS Contributor Welcome Page](#) or in the [Documents for Open Access](#) drive.

## Meetings and Activities

### Chapter Activities

GNPS requires chapters to have at least four membership meetings or membership activities per year, but we hope you will have more. The chapter shall conduct all activities in a manner that is consistent with GNPS's mission, bylaws, policies, and procedures. These activities may be general membership meetings, plant sales, field trips, workshops, nature walks, or other educational experiences. Chapter activities can be open to the public and are a way to get the community involved and learn about Georgia's native plants.

### Chapter Requirements

Some chapter functions are mandatory while others are optional. Use the chart below to determine which items are required. New chapters or chapters with fewer resources (volunteers and time) may not want to participate in any of the recommended or optional items or may want to focus on what is important to the chapter membership. It is important to take on only those activities that can be managed successfully by the resources available to the chapter. Don't burn out your volunteers by taking on too much too soon. A larger chapter with more volunteers and time may want to take on many or all of these activities.

#### GNPS Chapter Requirements Reference

Activity Description	Required	Recommended	Optional
Annual Business Meeting	Yes		
Annual Chapter Survey Completion	Yes		
Annual (or Bi-annual) Election of Officers	Yes		
Annual Financial Report to Members		Yes	
Bylaws approved by GNPS BOD	Yes		
Chapter approved by GNPS BOD	Yes		
Chapter Member with gnps.org Website Access		Yes	
Chapter Member with NeonCRM Access	Yes		
Chapter Newsletter		Yes	
Chapter Officers are GNPS Members	Yes		
Chapter Social Media Presence		Yes	
Chapter Website		Yes	
Contribute to NativeSCAPE Newsletter		Yes	
Field Trips			Yes

Activity Description	Required	Recommended	Optional
File Tax Returns	Yes		
Four Activities Each Year	Yes		
Habitat Certification Program		Yes	
Live Plant License	Yes		
Minimum of Ten Members	Yes		
Minimum of Three Officers	Yes		
Plant Sales			Yes
Rescue Program			Yes
SOS Annual Registration	Yes		
Support GNPS Restoration Site		Yes	
Workshops			Yes

## Chapter Annual Calendar

This annual calendar may be helpful to chapters for planning purposes. While not all-inclusive, it lists some of the most important annual events.

January	Georgia Secretary of State Annual Registration due between January 1 and April 1  Renew Georgia Department of Agriculture Live Plant License	<a href="#">GA SOS Annual Registration</a>
February	Chapter Survey due by February 15  Chapter Grant Program open February 1- November 1	Sent to chapter leaders each year in January.
March		
April		
May	Tax Filing - IRS - Form 990-N due by May 15th	<a href="#">IRS Filing Requirements</a>
June		

July		
August		
September		
October	Nominations for CBOD Slate	
November	Approval of CBOD Slate	
December	Annual Business Meeting Vote on CBOD Slate  Renew Georgia Department of Agriculture Live Plant License before December 31	<a href="#">Live Plant License</a>

We recommend that chapters contribute articles regularly to GNPS.org and the NativeScape newsletter on an on-going basis. Please contact [executivedirector@gnps.org](mailto:executivedirector@gnps.org).

Sales and Use Taxes are due on a frequency (Monthly, Quarterly, or Annually) determined by the Department of Revenue.

**Meeting and Programs**

Chapters have meetings both to conduct business and to provide educational activities for members and the public. Sometimes a meeting may be exclusively for conducting chapter business or educational activities, and sometimes they are combined. You should schedule the meeting at a time that most members can attend. Many chapters meet in the evening or on weekends to accommodate working members. We recommend meetings be no longer than two hours.

**Annual Business Meeting**

Chapters will have an annual business meeting. At least one business meeting is required each year to maintain status as a nonprofit. In years when chapter elections are required, this is the meeting where voting will take place. The business meeting should include an annual financial report prepared by the treasurer, and may include other items of chapter business or committee reports. Notify chapter members of the meeting in accordance with the chapter bylaws. Since this is an official meeting, minutes must be taken and stored on the GNPS Google Drive. If elections are conducted, notify the executive director at [executivedirector@gnps.org](mailto:executivedirector@gnps.org) of each new CBOD member's name, position, term, phone number, and email address. You should store the financial report presented to members at this meeting on the chapter's GNPS google drive folder "Financial and Tax."

## **Meeting Locations**

Chapter meeting locations should be centrally located to most chapter members, ideally have adequate parking and lighting, and be able to accommodate both chapter members and visitors. Extension Service offices are good options, as are community centers. Virtual meetings may be conducted as well using the chapter's virtual meeting account..

## **Scheduling**

Chapters are required to have at least four meetings or activities per year. More frequent meetings and activities help to maintain a sense of continuity. Many chapters schedule meetings on the same day of the month, e.g., the second Thursday of the month.

## **Meeting Notification**

You should consider using NeonCRM email, social media channels, your chapter's website, the GNPS website, GNPS social media channels, and local media to advertise your chapter meetings and activities to draw in more attendees. If there are like-minded groups in the area, such as garden groups or nature groups, let them know about your events. You should keep a record of all chapter activities, including the date, time, and the number of persons attending, speaker, topic, etc. This information will be requested in the annual chapter survey and used when the chapter applies for grants.

## **Meeting Agenda**

The CBOD members and committee representatives should plan the meeting agenda to include important chapter news and issues. The agenda should outline the meeting events in the order they will occur. Your members will appreciate a meeting that runs smoothly and follows the agenda. We recommend you present the meeting's business portion (if there is one) early in the meeting.

## **Before the Meeting**

Be sure to greet new people as they arrive. Have attendees sign in and provide their name, phone, and email address. You may want to have separate sheets for GNPS members and non-members. This information can be used to follow up with people who have attended for the first time, thank them for attending, provide information on joining GNPS, and ask them for their feedback on the meeting. Sign-up sheets are also a useful record to determine what types of presentations draw the most attendees. Encourage non-members to join GNPS.

## **Conducting the Meeting**

The chapter president typically conducts the meeting and serves as moderator throughout. In his/her absence, another CBOD member may preside. Start the meeting on time and remember to introduce any guest speakers.

## Refreshments & Time to Mingle

Chapters may want to provide refreshments and have time for meeting attendees to socialize.

## After the Meeting

When the meeting concludes you may want to provide assistance to members to get to their vehicles, if needed. Be sure to clean up the meeting area and remove all GNPS and chapter materials.

## Raffles

Chapters are discouraged from holding raffles due to the legal requirements and permits required, which may vary by jurisdiction. There are potential tax implications to the raffle winner and the chapter depending on the raffle ticket's cost and the raffle prize value. **Silent auctions** are an alternative to raffles and may raise more funds.

## Sustaining and Growing Membership

### Chapter Newsletter (Optional)

Stay in touch with members with a recurring chapter newsletter. Use Neon to manage email audiences and [campaigns](#) to send out communications using email templates. Here's an example of an [informative newsletter](#) from our Coastal Plain chapter. A chapter newsletter is recommended but not required.

### NativeScape Newsletter

Any chapter can submit content to be included with the NativeScape newsletter, sent to all members in good standing six times per year. Submissions are requested 2 to 3 weeks in advance of publication. To be added to the email list, send an email to [nativescapechaptercontacts@gnps.org](mailto:nativescapechaptercontacts@gnps.org) and you will receive a reminder.

Examples of content to include:

- Events (in-person or virtual).
- Major recognition (e.g., by DNR, SBG, GPCA, Nature Conservancy, a university, etc.) or contributions by a chapter (individual member or group)
- Scholarships or grants awarded or funding for new restoration sites or new projects
- Milestones (e.g., chapters fully launched, new achievement in number of certified habitats, first plant sale or plant rescue, etc.)

### Social Media (Optional)

Maintaining active social media accounts can engage members and draw new membership. Links to your social media pages can be posted on the GNPS website. Be sure to include a link to the GNPS [membership page](#) for new members. A social media presence is recommended for

chapters, but not required. GNPS provides [this guidance](#) on social media based on the success we've had in the past as well as illustrating ways to use the power of the state branding to help chapters grow. .

### **Facebook (Optional)**

Create a page to draw new members and post events. The page acts like a profile for the chapter. Multiple people can manage the page and any events can be co-hosted by GNPS to increase visibility. Enable [charitable giving](#) for the chapter and add a [Donate button](#) to the chapter page. Create a group for members to interact with each other. You can link the group to the page so that it's easy to find. Be sure to make group membership subject to admin approval to keep out spammers. See this [help page](#) for more information about pages and groups

### **Instagram (Optional)**

Post pictures. Be sure to link your Instagram and Facebook page to use fundraising tools like adding a donate button.

### **Others (Optional)**

Use Threads, Bluesky, X or other platforms to post events and blog posts. Use YouTube to post videos such as garden tours, events, and informational videos. Use TikTok to post shorter video content, like plant spotlights, to engage members and attract new members.

### **Event Tables (Optional)**

Display a banner at your table to draw interest and provide promotional materials like pamphlets or business cards. Use a local print shop or an office supply store to print banners and promotional materials. GNPS can provide sample graphics. Sell merchandise like stickers or [T-Shirts](#). For payments, Square will send you a free card runner. Keep records of sales for reporting purposes. Sign up new members by providing printed membership forms or let them use a tablet to sign up on the website. Prepare check-in/check-out procedures to keep track of promotional materials.

### **Selling GNPS T-shirts (Optional)**

GNPS is willing to provide the artwork so that chapters can print t-shirts, including the standard shirt or the Plant of the Year shirt. Chapters can also design their own chapter t-shirt. Use a local screen print shop or print-on-demand services like [Bonfire](#).

## Plants

### Chapter Live Plant License

Chapters that plan to sell plants must apply for a Live Plant License through the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Licenses expire on December 31 of the year issued. You must renew the license annually before January 31.

There is no cost for the license for non-profit organizations. You may access the application and renewal form here [Live Plant License Application/Renewal Form](#). You can read more information about live plant rules and regulations here [Live Plant Regulations](#). If a licensed third party vendor partners with the chapter for all plant sales, the live plant license is not required.

Please contact the GNPS treasurer ([treasurer@gnps.org](mailto:treasurer@gnps.org)) if you have any questions about obtaining or renewing a live plant license.

### Chapter Plant Sales

Chapters may propagate Georgia native plants and sell them. All proceeds from chapter plant sales go to the chapter's income. A Live Plant License is required for conducting plant sales unless a licensed third party vendor partners with the chapter for the sale. All plants must be labeled with botanical names. If possible, it may be helpful to record what plants are sold to guide you in planning future sales. For instance, if native azaleas sold out but there were only a few sales of bloodroot, you might plan to propagate more azaleas for your next sale. Don't forget that you must collect and pay state and county sales tax on plants that you sell. Plant sales are an optional chapter activity.

## Conservation Programs

The GNPS Conservation committee is responsible for conservation policies for GNPS. GNPS Conservation Position Statements were written to ensure we further the GNPS mission through policy, legislation, rescues, propagation and restoration. These guidelines provide framework for GNPS and chapter rescue, propagation and restoration activities. To learn more about our conservation strategy, contact the conservation committee at [conservation@gnps.org](mailto:conservation@gnps.org),

### Native Plant Rescue Program (Optional)

The native plant rescue program has been in existence since 1994. The GNPS Rescue Program is a statewide program. The Rescue Program is overseen by the GNPS Rescue subcommittee and rescue operations are implemented by chapters or area facilitators. Chapter rescue facilitators must take mandatory training that ensures safe, appropriate, and consistent operations that are legally grounded. To start your own chapter rescue program contact the

plant rescue subcommittee at [rescue.subcommittee@gnps.org](mailto:rescue.subcommittee@gnps.org). The native plant rescue program is optional for chapters.

### **Propagation Program (Optional)**

From 2009 to 2019, Atlanta area members ran a native plant propagation operation at Stone Mountain Park (known as Stone Mountain Propagation Project [SMPP]), primarily to grow plants for native plant sales. In 2019, with the state reorganization of GNPS, SMPP became a state-operated program with an emphasis on growing for conservation and restoration projects more so than for sales to home gardeners. However, plant sales to members and the public remain a popular avenue for increasing chapter revenue, educational outreach, and increasing landscape use of native plants. Contact the propagation subcommittee at [propagation.subcommittee@gnps.org](mailto:propagation.subcommittee@gnps.org) to get more information on how to start a propagation program in your chapter. The propagation program is optional for chapters.

### **Restoration Sites (Optional)**

GNPS supports two kinds of restoration initiatives: habitat restoration and native plant educational gardens. Restoration project guidelines are overseen by the state restoration subcommittee and projects are established and maintained by a project liaison within a chapter. We encourage chapters to support GNPS restoration sites. You may find a list of GNPS restoration sites and scheduled workdays at [GNPS Restoration](#) web page. Training for restoration site program implementation can be requested from the Restoration Subcommittee at [restoration.subcommittee@gnps.org](mailto:restoration.subcommittee@gnps.org). If there are sites in your area that may be candidates for restoration, you may encourage the site owner to complete the [GNPS Project Restoration Application](#). Restoration projects are recommended for chapters but not required.

## **Education Programs**

### **Educational Outreach (Optional)**

Some chapters partner with local educational systems to bring native plant programs to schools, libraries and other educational forums. Some schools have garden clubs, which may be a good fit for native plant education. Projects might include planting a native plant garden on the school grounds with the help of students and faculty, or conducting a class on native plants.

### **Habitat Certification Program (Optional)**

GNPS has a Native Plant Habitat Certification Program that allows members to apply to have their property certified as a Gold or Silver level property. You may find more information about the program at [GNPS Native Plant Habitat Certification Program](#). Chapters may manage the program in their areas, and chapter members may become certifiers. The Habitat Certification Program is recommended for chapters, but not required. For more information, contact [habitatcertification@gnps.org](mailto:habitatcertification@gnps.org).

## **Annual Symposium (Optional)**

Chapters may be asked to present during the GNPS annual symposium. The GNPS Education committee chair will reach out to chapters with specific requests and ideas.. This is an optional chapter function.

## **Advocacy**

Chapters may choose to engage in local or regional advocacy efforts. Chapter members may also participate in the state advocacy committee that has a broader statewide scope that focuses on advancing key issues that promote favorable native plant policies and providing resources to chapters. For more information, contact [advocacy@gnps.org](mailto:advocacy@gnps.org). Advocacy activities are optional for chapters.

## Appendix

### Linked Documents

[Chapter Quick Start Guide](#) (in [Quick Start Guide for Chapter Formation](#))

[Chapter Name Application Form](#) (in [Chapter Name](#))

[Model Articles Of Incorporation for GNPS](#) (in [File Articles of Incorporation \(AOI\)](#))

[GNPS AOI Instructions for Chapters](#) (in [File Articles of Incorporation \(AOI\)](#))

[GNPS Model Chapter Bylaws](#) (in [Chapter Bylaws](#))

[Instructions for Completing Model Chapter Bylaws](#) (in [Chapter Bylaws](#))

[Chapter Approval Application Form](#) in ([Chapter Application Form](#))

[CBOD Member Orientation Checklist](#)

[CBOD Member Off-Boarding Checklist](#)

[GNPS Chapter Model Financial Policies and Procedures](#) (in [Financial Policies and Procedures](#))

[Corporate Bank Resolution Template](#) (in [Corporate Bank Resolution](#))

[GNPS Expense Reimbursement Form](#) (in [Expense Reimbursement Forms](#))

[GNPS Auto Liability Coverage & Risk Management](#) (in [GNPS Auto Insurance Coverage](#))

[NeonCRM Overview](#) (in [NeonCRM](#))

[GNPS Chapter Affiliation Agreement](#) (in [Chapter Affiliation Agreement](#))