

# Maryland Native Plant Society Chapter Guidelines

## MNPS Mission Statement

The Maryland Native Plant Society uses education, research, and community service to increase awareness and appreciation of native plants and their habitats leading to their conservation and restoration.

Membership is open to all who are interested in Maryland's native plants and their habitats. Preserving Maryland's natural heritage, increasing knowledge about native plants, and helping to further the Society's mission are our goals.

The Maryland Native Plant Society sponsors monthly meetings, workshops, field trips, and an annual fall conference.

## Forming a Chapter

Chapters are formed when a group of people wish to expand the efforts of MNPS in a specific geographic region. Working within policies set by the board, chapters have a considerable degree of autonomy. Chapter boards address local issues and tailor programs to their own area's interests and needs.

The Society can provide members with **time, resources and leadership skills** to devote to the Chapter. The following are guidelines, suggestions and helpful hints for successful chapter development.

Most chapters use either counties or ecosystem boundaries. Current Chapters include Greater Baltimore, Catoctin, Eastern Shore, North East, Southern Maryland, Washington DC, and Western Mountains, and can have overlapping jurisdictions. All chapters must abide by the basic mission of the Maryland Native Plant Society, and for all Society policies, the word *Chapter* can be substituted for the word *Committee*.

### **Some benefits of abiding by the guidelines include:**

- use of the MNPS logo
- coverage under MNPS liability insurance
- use of the MNPS sales tax exemption
- promotion of activities in *Native News* as well as on the MNPS website
- receipt of \$250 for budget allocation each year. Unspent funds are not compounded each year. If a chapter earns greater than \$250 through workshops, sales, donations, etc., the annual budget may be increased to match that amount.

## Helpful Hints

- Cooperate with at least one local institution (park, nature center, non-profit, local government, garden center, business) to share office and meeting space; co-sponsor events; share volunteers; etc.
- Advertise activities in local papers and newsletters.
- Form a Steering Committee of 4-8 people to coordinate the Chapter.
- Local conservation issues have provided the best source of active volunteers, and maintaining the commitment to the Society.

## Key to the Guidelines

- This symbol indicates Requirements for Chapters
- This symbol indicates suggestions, helpful hints, and other pertinent information.

## Over the Course of the Year (January-December)

- Chapter must achieve **six of the ten required** (➤) guidelines to be considered active.
- Chapter achieving **fewer than six** of the guidelines must provide explanation and rationale to the Board to maintain active Chapter status. If the reasons seem justifiable, the Chapter will be considered active. If after a second year, six guidelines are not achieved, Board will determine if the Chapter will be considered inactive. Any activities occurring in an inactive Chapter jurisdiction will be assumed under the appropriate Committee.
- At least one of the **Coordination with State-Wide Efforts** and one of the **Finances** requirements must be met each year.

## Coordination with State-Wide Efforts

- Chapter should submit a summary for each *Native News*, even if no activity occurs.
- Chapter should submit a schedule of events for each *Native News*.
- Chapter should send a representative to at least four of the six Board Meetings.
- Chapter should advertise activities to the entire Society membership (via *Native News*, web site, MNPS list serve.)
- Chapter should nominate at least one member, annually, for election to the Board of Directors.
- Chapter should coordinate with any Committees in anticipation of submitting expenses.
- Chapter should to coordinate with state-wide efforts and other Chapters, such as publication deadlines of *Native News* and *Marilandica*, annual fall conference, other evening meetings, etc., to reduce scheduling conflicts.

## Finances

- Chapter must submit expense receipts to the Treasurer in a timely manner.
- Chapter should submit budget requests if they expect to exceed the Chapter Allocation.
- Except for rare exceptions, all financial transactions will be maintained by the Society Treasurer.
- Chapter will be reimbursed for expenses as long as they abide by the financial policies of the Society
- Expenses can be delegated to specific Committees in addition to the Chapter Allocation.
- All membership dues are paid to the Society. All Chapter members receive full Society membership.

## Jurisdiction

- Chapters must establish their boundaries, which may be modified as membership changes. Requests for boundary changes should be made to the Board.
- Current boundaries must be determined by county, zip code, or a combination.
- Members are assigned to Chapters based on these boundaries.
- Adjacent Chapters may have overlapping boundaries, and therefore overlapping memberships.
- In the future, we may have the ability to allow members to belong to one or more Chapters, based on member's choice, rather than by member's address.

## Membership

- Chapter should actively seek new members.
- Chapter should recruit new volunteers to support chapter activities.
- Chapter should set membership goals to sustain interest in the chapter.
- Chapter should strive to retain current members.

## Activities

- Chapter should plan or co-sponsor activities per year which can include:
  - land conservation efforts;
  - evening meetings to educate the general public about native plants, native habitats, or related subjects;
  - general field trips in their region;
  - community service projects, which could include invasive plant removal projects, clean ups, community native plant gardens, native plant information exhibits (examples: bulletin board in a community center, display at a community festival).
- Chapter should advertise activities to the general membership and/or to non-members, but may plan “Chapter only” or “members only” events.
- Chapter should consider hosting the Fall Conference.

## Financial Policy

(**Reminder:** for all Society policies, the word *Chapter* can be substituted for the word *Committee*)

Most expenses are generally assigned to a broad budget category (Chapter, Publications, Membership). A specific Committee is in charge of determining how the money should be spent, with general guidelines. Spending within a Committee budget is flexible to accommodate the special projects the volunteers undertake; therefore, most expenses are considered “budgeted”.

### Budgeted expenditures

- Under \$100.00 must receive general committee approval. Example: spend about \$75 for office supplies.
- Between \$100.00 and \$200.00 must receive specific committee approval. Example: Committee decides to spend \$125 for a weed wrench;
- Over \$200.00 must receive specific committee approval and Finance Committee approval. Example: Committee wants to spend \$300 for printing flyers for distribution at an environmental fair.

### Non-budgeted expenditures

- Under \$50.00 must receive general committee approval. Example: spend about \$40 on ad in a local newspaper.
- Between \$50.00 and \$150.00 must receive specific committee approval. Example: Committee decides to spend \$100 to purchase plants for a native plant display.
- Over \$150.00 must receive specific committee approval and Finance Committee approval. Example: Committee wants to spend \$200 on a computer printer.

If Finance Committee approval is required, the Finance Committee will determine if full Board approval is required for either type of expenditure based on, among other things, current financial status, known budgetary surpluses or deficits, and relevance to Society policy and initiatives.

## Deadlines

### *Native News* deadlines and approximate publication dates:

**January 25:** late-March, April, May events (publication date: February 28)

**March 25:** late-May, June, July events (publication date: April 30)

**May 25:** late-July, August, September events (publication date: June 30)

**July 25:** late-September, October, November events (publication date: August 31)

**September 25:** late-November, December, January events (publication date: October 31)

**November 25:** February, March (publication date: January 15)