



Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens e-Newsletter SEPTEMBER 2020 EDITION

8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday - Thursday
8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday - Sunday

A Note of Thanks

Ron Whittington, President (Chair, Governance Committee)



I just want to share what a great opportunity and experience it has been to serve as the president of the board at such a pivotal time during the short history of the Jacksonville Arboretum & Botanical Gardens. Thank you for your support of the organization during my tenure.

Although we didn't get as much accomplished over the last two years as I had originally planned, we did achieve some important objectives.

- The board established a new full-time executive director position and part-time horticulturist position in 2019;
- A new security program was established, and we'll have a new security system installed on site shortly, thanks to the leadership of board member Steve Wingate;
- We developed a board succession plan, led by board member Kevin Blalock; and
- I'm excited to report that last month the board voted to engage 3. Fromme Design, based in Ocala, to expand our existing conceptual gardens plan to create a final master plan for our community's arboretum. We're currently raising funds to engage the firm with the goal of completing the process by next spring (so if you can help, let us know). The firm, among several recommended to us by the American Public Gardens Association, is familiar with Florida's native plants and has developed many beautiful designs at arboretums throughout the country.

On the management side, so far this year, our new executive director, Dana Doody, has implemented:

- A new volunteer and staff structure;
- A new membership system;
- A grants plan for 2020-21;
- The expansion of our donor outreach and recognition efforts; and
- A program offering "pop-up" weddings (working in conjunction with PRI Productions for larger ones), which is another small but notable revenue stream.

I again want to thank all our donors, including lead donor Marcia Mederos and the matching donation made by the Dolores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund through the Community Foundation of Northeast Florida, who all helped make a permanent ADA-compliant paved pathway on the south lake loop a reality. It is now named The South Loop Ravine Overlook.

I'm also very proud of how our staff and the entire board worked effectively throughout the COVID-19 closure earlier this year, closing and securing the venue to keep our staff and volunteers safe, and reopening as soon as possible to give people the opportunity to get out and enjoy nature when so many outside venues remained closed. While the pandemic certainly had a revenue impact, and we've had to rethink our various fundraising events and volunteer activities, we appreciate how our donors and sponsors have responded to these changes. Although the coronavirus proved to be a setback for us all, I'm excited to share that the board is now making up for lost time in a lot of areas. Our executive director is in the planning stage for a new bat event in collaboration with the Jacksonville Zoo & Gardens this fall, coordinating with the First Coast Plein Air artists for the return of a hybrid live/virtual "A Brush With Nature" event in October, and developing new events for 2021.

The transition from a board-driven to staff-driven agency is never easy and has its own set of challenges, but

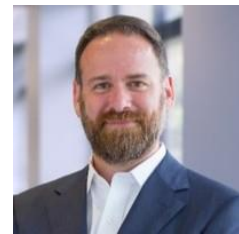
our board members and executive director have been working through those issues. With the management experience offered by incoming board president Kevin Blalock, I'm certain that transition will continue smoothly and effectively.

As I take a new role on the governance committee to expand our board and work with our city officials, I believe this momentum will continue as we further develop our garden areas, add new amenities for visitors, and put the programs in place to make the arboretum a growing, sustainable venue for the community and other visitors for years to come.

A Note of Anticipation

Kevin Blalock, President-Elect (President)

As you probably have already read in Ron Whittington's note, the Board has accomplished a lot under his leadership over the past two years, continuing to support the vision and mission of the Arboretum's founders as well as the growth initiated by prior leaders and boards. Ron and the team have continued to make the Arboretum a destination of choice while gradually improving the site, expanding the programs we offer, and continuing a focus on recreation, education and inspiration. This growth is highlighted by the increase in visitors and membership over the last two years...there are many days where the parking lot is over-flowing and we are all proud of that.



I am proud to have been involved in this growth in the last two years as a board member and President-elect, so I am fortunate to be succeeding Ron as President and happy that he will still be around to mentor me, guide us, and continue to make things happen as he has for the last several years.

Since I do not know many of you, I wanted to do a quick introduction and talk about my plans for the first few months in the new role.

My family and I moved to Jacksonville in 2010, and we did not expect to be here this long. My wife, Carina Santalucia, two boys Avery and Jake, and our two dogs, fell in love with the town and the lifestyle here. In 2018 I was looking for a way to give back to and get more involved in the local community while building on my interests. At the time, I had no idea the Arboretum and Gardens existed. But when I learned about it, my family and I were excited because we spend most of our free time and vacations traveling to national, state and local parks for hiking, birding, and site seeing. We have visited many arboretums around the country. This seemed like a great fit and offered the bonus benefit of getting outside when I needed to "work" (and sometimes I can drag my sons along with me without complaint). My wife is also an avid gardener, so volunteering here makes sense. Finally, when I met with Ron, Melinda Simmons, and Martha Mazza about potentially joining the board, I learned quickly that the organization was poised for growth and had outstanding potential. That kind of environment plays to my professional skills, and I hope I can continue to foster the kind of environment the Arboretum needs at this stage and continue to execute on the plans that Ron and the team have set in motion.

Any new leader wants to put their fingerprint on the organization. However, since I have been a part of the organization for the last 2 years, I see a lot of opportunity in what is already in progress, and I do not want to repeat what Ron has highlighted in his note. My primary task and that of the Board will be to listen to our members, patrons and donors to make sure we are meeting your needs. With that in mind, you can expect us to continue to improve the site as our masterplan evolves and we begin to add infrastructure and expand our attractions; maintain the city's best trails, which draw visitors from all parts of the city and region; continue to provide great programs and maybe even implement some new events and programs; and improve our financial position to support the plans for growth. This will require continued support from our donors and supporters who have been so reliable through the years, a strong, dedicated board who works well as a team, and your energy and passion for this incredible venue and organization.

Discovering Nature Nearby

Lynsae Davidson, Program Manager

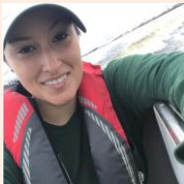


In October 2019, I took over as Program Manager for Discovering Nature Nearby (DNN) and the Children's Tour. These two wonderful programs were initially led and managed by our longtime volunteer, Alice Shinkos. DNN and the Children's Tour were created to educate our guests on sustainability, ecology, biology, horticulture, and much more. When Dana Doody became the Arboretum's new Director, we discussed combining the two programs and expanding it into something truly great for our community. I'm so happy and proud to say that Discovering Nature Nearby at the Jacksonville Arboretum and Gardens is the epitome of what a non-profit educational program should be. Our goal in 2021 is to combine mental and physical health with nature and education for families, veterans, those with disabilities, and

everyone in-between. As I step down, I would like you to know that we have a group of very talented individuals coming on-board to make DNN better than ever.

Thank you to everyone at JAG for allowing me to be a part of such a wonderful organization!

Please welcome Alexandria Wilson and Ryan Lofton as our new DNN team.



My name is Alexandria, or Alex for short, and I have always been fascinated by nature and the sciences. After graduating high school in 2009, I joined the United States Marine

Corps as a meteorologist, forecasting the weather for aviation and ground combat missions. After a successful enlistment, I decided to go to college to complete my education. I am currently in my senior year at Jacksonville University studying Marine Sciences and Secondary education. I am thrilled to volunteer my time to the Jacksonville Arboretum and the community to help with the Discovering Nature Nearby program.



Hello! My name is Ryan. I am a student, cook, and tutor. I love to hike in random sections of the woods, write funny short stories, and play fighting and adventure games. I'm also deeply interested in space and philosophy. I go to school for Aerospace Engineering,

because I want a future that is new and full of awe. I want humankind to explore new frontiers in space and science and also the frontiers of their hearts. I want people to care about the planet, its people, and its wildlife. I am a vegan and I love participating in animal and environmental activism. From time to time, I work with Food Not Bombs to save food that is to be wasted and cook plant-based meals for those who are hungry. I also advocate for community care, ethical consumption, adopting and spaying pets, and having an awareness of one's local ecology. I hope that I can learn from DNN and see it thrive. I am honored and happy to assist the Jacksonville Arboretum in any way I can.

Events to look forward to!

Workday in the Garden – September 12th

Join us from 8 a.m. to Noon for our garden workday. It is an extremely rewarding day of getting your hands in the dirt and helping our horticulturist, Shayan Khatibi. We will also be selling our JAG t-shirts, and Earthworks will be joining us for a plant sale! We are so excited to have them!

[Learn More](#)

A Brush with Nature – October 17th & 18th



10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

[Learn More](#)

The Arboretum is Going Batty – October 27th

Tickets on sale soon! Keep checking online for more info

Volunteer Spotlight: Audrey Ormerod

Audrey Ormerod is what we call a “Super Volunteer.” She shows up every workday with a smile on her face and helps to manage our volunteer efforts. She is big reason that our gardens always look so good! She is also a very generous donor to us, and we are so grateful!

Thank you, Audrey!

Interested in volunteering with us?

[Sign up today](#)



Bats. The only truly flying mammal.

Many of us see them at dusk just as the sun sets over the horizon, and usually all we see is their silhouette against last light of dusk.

But can you hear them? Those of us with decent hearing can sometimes detect the high-pitched squeak of a bat using its echolocation, but did you know that each species has its own unique high-pitched noise? And that there are several species in Florida? With special acoustic software, scientists can record a bat's call and identify the species by the specific sound pattern.

To help with an acoustic study to monitor the species of bats in Florida, the [Jacksonville Arboretum and Gardens](#) got together with the [Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens](#) (JZG) and the [Florida Bat Working Group](#) to see what's happening in northeast Florida. JZG staff went to the Arboretum this past July to set up an acoustic monitor.

Of the 13 species of bats found in Florida, eight are thought to be found at the Jacksonville Arboretum, based on our four-night sampling period! They include:

- [Red bats](#) (*Lasiurus borealis*),
- [Seminole bats](#) (*Lasiurus seminolus*),
- [Northern Yellow bats](#) (*Lasiurus intermedius*)
- [Big Brown bats](#) (*Eptesicus fuscus*)
- [Southeastern bats](#) (*Myotis austroriparius*)
- [Evening Bats](#) (*Nycticeius humeralis*)
- [Tricolored Bats](#) (*Perimyotis subflavus*)
- [Brazilian Free-tailed bats](#) (*Tadarida brasiliensis*)

The data we collect is then shared with the [North American Bat Monitoring Program](#) to support long-term bat population monitoring. This data provides important information on things like bat population activity, foraging sites, roosting sites, and more. We can answer some interesting questions. Does this species migrate? If so, where and how far? Are they found in this region? Is their habitat use changing? And much, much more.

It is important to know how plants and animals are doing in the ecosystems around us because a diverse

ecosystem benefits humans and animals alike. The more we learn about the world around us, the more we appreciate what is in it.

We thank the team at the Jacksonville Arboretum and Gardens for their willingness to help with the study and look forward to seeing what we can learn about bats here in northeast Florida!

Lucas Meers
Conservation Program Officer
Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

SAVE THE DATE: “The Arboretum is going Batty” Our bat educational event will reveal more about the results of our study and will be a chance to walk the Jones Creek Trail at night. Hopefully, we'll see some of these furry, flying mammals! So, mark **October 27th** on your calendars, and look for more details to come soon about how to get tickets to this exciting event!

Around the Garden: Giant Swan Milkweed

Native to South Africa, this plant is a definite conversation starter. *Gymnocarpus physocarpa*, commonly known as giant swan milkweed, is a fast growing annual host plant for the monarch butterflies. Reaching up to 6 feet tall in full sun, the white pendulous flowers provide nectar to a variety of pollinators and give way to numerous balloons that look like large hairy, green Christmas tree ornaments. The balloons eventually dehisce to release readily self-propagating airborne seeds. Although the winter in our area keeps them tamed, this milkweed continues to last in the garden until the first frost. Easy to grow and enjoy, this a great addition to any pollinator garden.

This article written by our own – Shayan Khatibi
Photo Credit Audrey Ormerod



**A society grows great when
old men plant trees whose
shade they know they shall
never sit in –**

GREEK PROVERB

This quote is perfect when referencing planned giving. Gifts to Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens through planned giving support our gardens and trails for future generations to enjoy.

If you have selected us for a planned gift, please let us know so we may show our gratitude.

For information, please call Executive Director, Dana J. Doody at 904.318.4342 or email her at info@jacksonvillearboretum.org

Explore with Your Four-legged Friend!

What better way to take in the beauty of the Jacksonville Arboretum than with your four-legged friend? The arboretum is a wonderful place to enjoy the beauty of nature while you get out and about with your dog. Read on for a few tips for visiting the arboretum with your dog.

Let your dog sniff and take in all the scents as nature intended. The arboretum is home to lots of critters, and your dog can certainly smell them! Be respectful of the wildlife. If you see a cool critter, admire it from a distance.

Bring your dog's favorite treats. This will allow you to reward good behavior, and it helps with generalizing training to new areas.

Keep your dog on the path and on a leash. This will prevent trampling of vegetation or inadvertently transferring seeds from one area to another. And it will help ensure the safety of your dog and others.

Leave only your footprints behind. Be a good dog owner, and clean up after your dog. You may want to bring some water to ensure your dog is hydrated, especially if you intend to do a lot of exploring. The arboretum has a variety of trails and terrains to choose from!

Last but not least, take the time to slow down and enjoy the beauty of the arboretum. It is a magical place and worth taking a pause to appreciate it for the treasure that it is.

Written by - Kate Godfrey, ABCDT



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