

New MNPS President Maps Out Her Goals for the Society

As the recently elected President of the Maryland Native Plant Society (MNPS), I am looking forward to helping make the organization even more welcoming and effective. In consultation with the other Board members, I have decided to focus on four interrelated goals for protecting and promoting interest in native plants and ecosystems:

1. Continue to grow MNPS membership to reach additional people and expand our footprint across the state through initiatives such as new chapters.
2. Strengthen MNPS operations and promote equity by increasing diversity and inclusivity within our organization.
3. Advocate for protection of Maryland's flora, natural areas, and biodiversity, including through state and local legislation.
4. Offer more events for our members across the state, such as field trips, talks, and workshops.

In support of MNPS and these goals, the Board is pleased to introduce the following three new Board members.



Jill Fonda Allen serves on the Maryland Orchid Society Board of Directors and volunteers as a Weed Warrior for Montgomery Parks, often at Rachel Carson Conservation Park. As a lifelong nature and art lover, she enjoys spending time at family farms in upstate New York. At home, Jill is busy restoring her property in the upper Patuxent River watershed. During her professional career, she was a genetic counselor at Children's National and George Washington University Medical Centers in DC, after earning a bachelor's in biology and a master's in genetics from Penn State.

Jorge Bogantes Montero is a Natural Resources Program Manager at the Anacostia Watershed Society in Bladensburg, MD. He leads conservation and ecological restoration efforts on public parklands in the Anacostia River watershed in DC and MD. On June 24, 2025, Jorge gave a talk to the Society on his project using wild rice to restore the Anacostia River. Jorge is a native of Costa



Rica and earned a bachelor's degree in Natural Resource Management and Protection from Universidad Estatal a Distancia in San José, Costa Rica. Before moving to the U.S., he worked in Costa Rica on tropical biodiversity conservation issues.

Cristina Niciporciukas serves as Chair of the recently revived MNPS Eastern Shore Chapter, and was co-chair of our highly successful annual conference "Extraordinary Ecosystems of Maryland's Eastern Shore", held at Washington College on September 6-7. The conference showcased the unique natural habitats of the Eastern Shore and the conservation efforts underway to protect these special areas. Cristina is a strong advocate for native plant conservation and restoration, and she documents the state's native flora via iNaturalist for the Maryland Biodiversity Project. Cristina previously worked as a pharmaceutical and healthcare professional.



Consistent with the goal of advocacy, two articles in this issue of Marilandica show how individuals can make an impact on Maryland legislation. Mark Southerland's article (Don't Let Our Magical Vernal Pools Disappear, p. 4), discusses a proposed MD bill regarding protection of vernal ponds. Janette Rosenbaum's article (Laws About Lawns Are Changing and You Can Help, p. 8), explores the history of legislation on lawns and highlights a 2021 MD law that prevents Homeowners Associations (HOAs) from requiring manicured lawns instead of allowing native plantings. In addition, we plan to hold several short training sessions on advocacy to help people effectively address proposed legislation (see page 2 for details).

During my tenure, I plan to leverage my work with native plants and invasive species, my legislative advocacy experience, and my connections with like-minded non-profits. Together with the Board and other MNPS members, I hope to make the Society an increasingly vibrant organization and a stronger voice for native plants and ecosystems. Above all, I am interested in hearing your ideas and partnering with you to achieve our shared goals.

Judy Fulton, President

2025 MNPS
Fall Conference
attendees showing
love for the Eastern Shore.
Photo by C. Niciporciukas.