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Part 1: Why Form a Chapter?

Chapters play a vital role in helping to further the goals of the Society, promoting an understanding, appreciation and wider use of the native plants of Texas.

Chapters across our state offer programs that help to educate the general public as well as members within their community about the rich botanical heritage of Texas and their specific area. Chapter activities might include regular or specially scheduled speaker programs, meetings to exchange plants and ideas, field trips, seminars on plant propagation and identification, planting projects around public buildings and the development of plant lists.

Another advantage to forming a chapter is the opportunity to meet and work with people with similar interests, both locally and at the state level. Longtime members value the friendships that develop within an organization devoted to a shared goal. Whether budding amateur gardeners or professionals in the field, members have information, experiences and enthusiasm to share.

Locally, each chapter operates semi-autonomously, yet all have the built-in advantage of administrative support and the nonprofit status of an established 501(c)(3) organization. Each chapter also has direct representation on the State Board: each chapter president (or another individual selected by the membership of that chapter) shall serve as a director on the State Board.

What are the Criteria for Chapters?

You may form an official chapter by attracting a minimum of 10 memberships (a family membership, though more than one person, counts only as one membership) who join the state organization and choose to affiliate with your chapter.

Once you have reached a minimum of 10 memberships, the next step is to ask the State Board to formally accept the chapter as a chapter. If at all possible, try to time the formation of your chapter to coincide with an upcoming State Board meeting so as not to delay access to resources. The board meets four times a year—always at 10 a.m. the third Saturday in January, April, July and at some time during the state symposium in October.

What Kind of Help Will The Chapter Receive?

The state organization will offer numerous resources to your new chapter.

A state officer—the Vice President-Chapter Liaison—is designated specifically to help you start your new chapter. To find out who that person is and how to contact him or her, go to npsot.org or call the State Office.

Once the State Board accepts your new chapter, then the chapter will receive $200 in startup funds—money you’ll probably need to help defray expenses from a public kickoff event you’ll need to have.

Also, each fiscal quarter, the state office will rebate to your chapter 15 percent of all dues received from your members during the previous quarter. Each chapter must file a quarterly financial report before its rebate will be sent.

The State Office will supply your chapter with such outreach materials as membership brochures, past copies of the official state newsletter and bumper stickers.

You will also receive a copy of the Chapter Leader Handbook. In addition, chapter leaders will be able to access a private website, www.npsot.org/private/LeaderWeb, which offers a vast array of resources, including current membership rosters, email addresses of members, the downloadable state Administrative Handbook (including the state bylaws and standing rules), an adaptable set of chapter bylaws, information on chapter financial reports, downloadable versions of our state logo and much more. Access to LeaderWeb requires a username and password, which are assigned to each chapter.
Part 2: What Are The Steps Involved In Starting A Chapter?

Contact the office to let them know your plans to start a chapter. Also contact the VP-Chapter Liaison to let him or her know your plans. The VP-Chapter Liaison will serve as your resource for getting the chapter up and running and also can call on a member or members nearby to help you.

The structure of chapters varies across the state, depending on the region and the talents and needs of the chapter members themselves. A proven formula to starting a new chapter is to plan an organizational meeting and then a larger public kickoff meeting featuring a prominent speaker. But you have to take a few steps before you can hold either of those.

First, gather names (and contact information, preferably email addresses) of anyone and everyone in your area who might be interested in joining a chapter. You probably already have started this step, but you’ll need to build on it. The state office can supply you with a list of any members in your vicinity who might not already be affiliated with another chapter. You might wish to contact those within reasonable driving distance for help in organizing the meeting.

Make contacts with any resource people available locally: extension agents, teachers, garden clubs, park and nature center administrators and the environmental or gardening editors of any local newspapers.

Then, host a meeting of everyone you can gather together interested in forming a chapter. You might call this the steering committee. Create a sign-in sheet for all attendees, with spaces for name, address, phone numbers and email addresses.

If those in attendance are not already members, have them complete a membership application (complete with new chapter name, see below) and give you or a designated person a check for the appropriate membership fee. (Mail those applications and checks to the state office the next day so they can be processed as quickly as possible.)

 Decide on a chapter name. A short name is good, but the name should reflect the community you live in. You can use your city name, your county name or choose some regional name, particularly if you will be trying to draw members in from several communities. For a list of current chapter names, see npsot.org.

Give each person at the meeting defined responsibilities. Find out who will be willing to serve as what officer. If you don’t complete a full slate of officers to be offered later at the organizational meeting, then let the empty slot ride until your organizational meeting when you will have more new members to choose from. (See Election of Officers, further on in this section, for ideas on what officers you might need.)

It’s important at this point to have someone dedicated to publicity, so notices of meetings will be printed and aired on every available media outlet—newspapers, radio, TV, cable and any others. This person will need Internet access, because most media outlets these days rely on emailed information.

Also at this meeting, you will need to decide on a meeting date and location for your organizational meeting. Give yourself a couple of weeks, if possible, to have time to notify as many potential members as possible and to get newspaper announcements published.

Before your organizational meeting, notify all the people whose names you have gathered as contacts and invite them to attend the organizational meeting of the brand-new Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas. Ask them to bring their gardening friends. Send press releases about the meeting to every media outlet in your membership area. Also notify the state webmaster (webmaster@npsot.org) of your upcoming meeting.

At the organizational meeting, if you have reached your minimum of 10 memberships, you can go ahead and elect officers so people can start carrying out their duties officially. If you do not yet have your 10 minimum memberships, then you will want to delay elections until you have reached at least that goal. It’s also a good idea to serve refreshments, because it helps people relax a little and begin the bonding process that will be so important in forming a strong chapter.

At every meeting, if a new person attends, give him or her an opportunity to join the Society. Always have membership brochures on hand, and offer to gather and mail applications with their checks to the State Office. Be
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prepared to tell potential new members at these meetings why native plants are important.

Begin deciding on a regular meeting time, date and location for your chapter. If other chapters are nearby, consider meeting on a different day than when those chapters meet, in case their members want to visit your chapter or vice versa. Most chapters meet monthly, but the frequency of your meetings will be up to your chapter. Some meet every other month; some don’t meet in summer; some don’t meet in December. Chapters should decide what they need.

Look for a meeting room that is free of charge, if possible, because your chapter funds will be limited until you have time for fund-raisers. Locations to search include fellowship or parish halls of local churches; community centers; nature centers, botanical gardens, local parks, public libraries, museums or businesses (especially nurseries) with meeting rooms; community rooms of local banks; county or city annex buildings; or meeting rooms in buildings owned by other nonprofit organizations.

Besides officer elections and discussing regular meeting times, the organizational meeting is the time to start planning a large, public kickoff event. Brainstorm on locations for the kickoff. You will need to find a room, preferably free of charge, large enough to hold at least 50 people (larger if you live in a metropolitan area).

You also can brainstorm about a speaker for the kickoff. The VP-Chapter Liaison will be able to offer you some ideas for a speaker, too. Once you contact the speaker, find out if he or she requires an honorarium and, if so, how much. Be resourceful in finding ways to pay for a speaker—ask for donations from members, assign members to seek sponsorships from local businesses or even ask nearby chapters to help sponsor the program. (Keep track of all donations and expenses. Your treasurer will need to report these on the quarterly report.)

Set a date for the kickoff, along with a couple of backup dates, in case the speaker you choose or the location you need isn’t available. You’ll probably need to hold one or two more meetings to keep everything coordinated. Assure new members that once the chapter is up and running, meetings will be no more than once monthly. Take advantage of email to keep everyone informed of developments and progress and to seek input between meetings.

As soon as possible, settle on a date, location, time and speaker. Give yourself plenty of time to get the event well-organized and to generate plenty of publicity. A minimum advance time would be four weeks, though two months would be ideal. See “How to Plan a Great Kickoff” for tips on making your event a success.

During this time of planning for your new chapter events, be aware that the exact sequence of events might vary, depending on your region and your set of local resources. You might get your beginning 10 or more memberships, then go before the State Board for approval, then hold your organizational meeting, followed by a big kickoff event. Or, if the State Board meeting is a couple of months away, you might go ahead with the organizational meeting and your kickoff, then seek formal board approval.

The basic idea is that at some point in the process of forming the chapter, you must get at least that minimum number of memberships, get State Board approval, hold an organizational meeting at which you elect officers and hold a big kickoff event for the public to attract a rush of new members.

Your chapter might start small or it might start large. Many factors affect a chapter’s size. Don’t be afraid to organize with a small group. A formally organized group that meets regularly will attract new members more easily than a group still in the planning phase.

Just get started!

Part 3: How Do You Proceed In Organizing Your Chapter?

Election Of Officers

Once the chapter has the required minimum of 10 memberships, you’ll need to elect a president and other officers. Once the chapter is approved by the State Board, your president or other chapter representative then becomes a voting member of the board. You also will need a treasurer with access to the Internet (see Money Matters for Chapters further on in this section, for detailed information about financial reporting). Most chapters also choose a secretary, along with chairmen for programs, publicity and other functions depending on your group’s size and scope of activity. Often, the vice president serves as program chair, but your chapter might have other duties to assign the

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vice president, instead.

**Bylaws**

You may write your own bylaws as long as they do not conflict with those of the state organization. A “skeleton” set of bylaws is available for adaptation as your chapter desires through the LeaderWeb website. Whether you write your own bylaws or adapt the skeleton set, do define and limit the terms of office. Try to place all non-officers on committees, to involve everyone and to help share responsibility for programs, outings and administration. Please email a copy of any bylaws you adopt to the State Office. Also email the names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of your current officers to the State Office.

**Money**

Your chapter will need a bank account, and your treasurer will need to make quarterly financial reports to the State Office. See Money Matters for Chapters further on in this section.

**Money matters for chapters -How are chapters funded?**

Chapters receive money from three sources. First, as mentioned above, you are entitled to up to $200 reimbursement for start-up expenses, from the State Office. To receive this money, your chapter must first sign on 10 memberships and go before the State Board for approval.

Second, on a quarterly basis, your chapter will receive a 15 percent rebate on all dues the State Office receives from your chapter memberships paid the previous quarter.

Third, the chapter may raise money itself by selling plants, seeds, books or other items, by charging for seminars or workshops, by asking for donations, etc.

**How do chapters handle their money?**

Once your chapter has selected officers, you should open a bank account.

Shop around your city or community to try to find a bank or credit union that will forgo service fees, or charge minimal fees, because you are a nonprofit organization. If you make minimal withdrawals, a savings account with limited check-writing privileges might be less expensive than a regular checking account.

When opening a bank account, refer to the tax ID number (listed on the Introduction page (I:1) of this handbook). While it is not essential, it is recommended that you require two signatures on all checks written on your chapter account. Your signature card should bear the signatures of the current chapter president and chapter treasurer and should be updated whenever new officers are elected. (In addition, some chapters put a third signature, such as the vice president’s, on the card, in case one person is not available to sign a check. This will avoid having to wait perhaps another whole month until the next meeting for a check to be issued.)

Note: Some banking institutions require a set of chapter minutes in which the election of officers is noted, along with the names of those officers, before allowing a nonprofit organization to open an account and set up signature cards or to change the signature cards.

**Are chapters tax-exempt?**

Yes and no. Chapters share the "nonprofit" status of the parent organization.

From a tax standpoint, this means that individual chapters are exempt from federal income tax, and from paying state sales tax on items purchased for the organization's own use or for resale. For example, when you buy stationery and other supplies, refreshments for chapter meetings and purchase books or novelty items you plan to resell later to raise funds for your chapter, these items are exempt. In other words, you don't have to pay sales tax on what you buy. (After making copies of our Sales Tax Exemption Certificate [in Section VII], leave one at each place of business where you pay for chapter supplies.)

But, while you don’t pay tax on purchases, it is important to understand that even nonprofit organizations must charge, and in turn pay to the state comptroller, sales tax on items they sell.
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There is one exception to this rule: a nonprofit organization, and each chapter of that organization, may hold two one-day sales or auctions per year during which sales tax does not need to be collected. This means that every individual chapter may elect two tax-exempt sale days of its own.

If you are planning a major plant fundraising sale, for example, you may elect that date. The comptroller’s office does not require you to report which days you are selecting, though you should be sure to document all sales with dated receipts in case a question ever arises.

Exempt-days aside, what must you charge sales tax on? Basically, any tangible personal property: that includes books, plants, food (if it is heated or packaged for single-sized servings).

What is not taxable? Contributions from your members: some chapters “pass a hat” during meetings to help support chapter activities. (You do need to report all such income, but it is not taxed.) The proceeds from a raffle are another non-taxable source of income; a number of chapters sell chances on donated items such as plants during their meetings. Bake sales, with whole cakes, breads, pies and other food products such as cookies or doughnuts wrapped in quantity, are exempt (but if the products are packaged or sold as individual servings, they are taxable!)

If you aren’t sure about when and if tax must be charged, give us a call and we can check it with the comptroller.

What is the minimum amount of tax you need to report? Pennies! While the trifling sums sometimes involved may seem hardly worth bothering with, it does matter collectively, and the organization is responsible for reporting and paying to the state all sales tax due.

What financial reporting is required of chapters?

Each chapter is required to report its income and expenses and sales tax information to the State Office. These reports need to be completed and submitted online on a quarterly basis, with a check for all sales tax collected during that period, along with copies of corresponding bank statements for that quarter.

Online forms for the chapter financial reports are available on the LeaderWeb page. Even chapters that have had no financial activity during the period must still complete and return the quarterly financial reports indicating the balance on hand.

If you fail to submit your quarterly financial report, you will not receive your quarterly membership rebate until your records are complete and up to date. We rely on each chapter to provide accurate and timely information to the State Office, for we, in turn, are responsible to the Internal Revenue Service and the State Comptroller’s Office for the entire organization.

It is vitally important that every chapter comply with the reporting requirements, lest the organization incur penalties or even risk loss of its nonprofit status. If you have any problem in completing the forms, please contact the State Office for help.

A document titled “Chapter Financial Reporting—Requirements and Guidelines” fully explains all financial reporting requirements. It is available on LeaderWeb page. All chapter presidents and treasurers should review this information.

Part 4: How to Have A Great Kickoff Event

Sometime early in the organization of your new chapter, you will want to host some sort of public kickoff event that will serve as a membership drive.

Most chapters organize a seminar, of sorts, with a speaker and information on how to join the Native Plant Society of Texas and any details that might be already established about your local chapter, such as when and where you meet.

Here are some ideas chapter have used successfully in the past.

The first three things you’ll need are a:

- Speaker
- Location
- Date

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These are all dependent on one another. The speaker you want might be available only on certain dates, and the location you want might not be available on those dates. Also, take into consideration the dates of any other local events going on, such as a festival or a seminar that might draw away your potential target audience.

**Speaker**

The speaker, of course, should be someone knowledgeable about native plants. A common topic for these events is a “general” talk on why it’s important to use native plants in the landscape and/or what some of the local native plants are. If the speaker has “credentials” that you can publicize, you’ll attract an even bigger audience. Examples of credentials include authorship of a book, longtime work in a particular area of native plants, a professor or teacher or even a self-taught botanist/horticulturist who has experience speaking and teaching about natives.

The VP-Chapter Liaison will be able to help you find a suitable speaker. Also talk to leaders of nearby chapters or various leaders of to see if they have ideas for a speaker.

When you invite your speaker, find out if he/she will need an honorarium or some other fee, such as travel expenses, for the talk. It’s OK if the speaker needs a fee; he or she will have spent time and effort preparing information to give your audience—and will be helping your chapter get off to a healthy start by influencing more people to join.

For the speaker fee, you can use some of the $200 startup funds you’ll receive from the State Organization, but you might want to seek donations to pay any needed honorarium. You might ask for donations or even sponsorships from your members who have already joined or from local businesses or organizations. Many times, banks or hospitals, for example, will have community outreach funds available for such events. If your group of chapter organizers includes any business owners, this would give them an opportunity to get a little publicity (you’ll thank them publicly at the kickoff and also in print with a printed program). You might even ask any nearby chapters to consider sponsoring or co-sponsoring your speaker.

Sometimes speakers who normally command a certain fee will either waive the fee or reduce it for events such as yours. If that’s what your speaker does, you might want to consider trying to come up with some level of honorarium anyway—maybe half of the speaker’s usual fee—just as a good-faith effort to let the speaker know you appreciate his/her time.

**Location**

The location of your kickoff might or might not be the same place as your regular chapter meetings. It depends on how large your regular meeting room is.

Try to find a free location, because you don’t have a lot of money at this point. At the very most, find one that has only a nominal charge. The size room you will need will depend on the level of publicity you’re planning and the population concentration where you’re located. At the least, plan for 50 people. If you can or will do more publicity and you know you will be able to reach a wider audience, then plan for 75 to 100 to attend. If you live in a metropolitan area, you should plan to be able to seat at least 100, maybe more—again, depending on your level of publicity.

Think big! Don’t be surprised at how many people will come out to hear your message and see what “native plants” are all about.

**Date**

The date you set for your kickoff will depend on several factors—the speaker’s calendar and the availability of your location, along with your region’s calendar of events and the time of year. (The heat of summer and dead of winter aren’t great times for a kickoff.)

Give yourself plenty of time to organize the kickoff well and to generate a good bit of publicity, yet don’t plan it so far in advance that your chapter loses momentum. A comfortable time frame is somewhere between one and two months.
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Remember: The speaker, location and date are all dependent on each other. Settle these points as soon as possible! Other areas to address as you plan your kickoff include:

Publicity

Publicity will be the key to a large turnout for your event. Don’t overlook any possible source—big or small—for publicity.

You’ll need someone dedicated to overseeing publicity for your kickoff. Make sure this person has Internet access and understands this is a vital task to undertake.

Most media want your information sent via email, because it saves time re-entering the information into their computers. It’s better for you, because it reduces the chance of typographical errors being introduced. A few—such as radio stations—might prefer a fax. Your publicity chairman will have to contact each media outlet to learn exactly what each needs. (Ask him or her to make a list of media, contact info and submission criteria to make future publicity easier.)

Media outlets to cover include:

- Newspaper (print and online)
- Radio (all formats in your area)
- TV (on-air and online)
- Cable (community calendar or local-access channel)
- website
- Social networking sites

Provide all newspapers within your target region a comprehensive press release about the kickoff. (See “How to Write a Press Release” on LeaderWeb page.) Make sure you include information about who your speaker is. If you have one, provide a close-up photo of the speaker. Also mention any other “draws,” such as refreshments, door prizes, gift bags, etc.

Most television stations and cable TV stations offer community calendars that are posted on-air and also online at their individual websites. Go to the TV stations’ websites and submit the information in whatever format they require. To access the cable calendars, you might have to call the cable station to find out who takes care of the community calendar, then call that person and ask exactly how to submit the information.

Radio and TV stations are required by law to provide air time for public service announcements. So, offer a shortened version of your newspaper press release as a PSA to broadcast media. Call the stations and ask how to get your PSA on air. You probably will be asked to email or fax the PSA to a particular person.

If a local TV or radio station has a talk-show-type program that promotes community events or if your cable station has a local-access channel with such a program, ask to be a guest and talk about the kickoff, the Native Plant Society and the importance of gardening with native plants.

Because of the processing time required, submit your information for an event this important at least a month in advance. Call after you send the information to make sure it was received.

*Hint for dealing with the media: Be polite and don’t give the impression that you have a “right” to publicity from them. Newspapers, especially, are not governed by any laws requiring certain news content, and broadcast media usually have plenty of PSAs, so they don’t necessarily need yours. Work with each media outlet’s submission requirements and respect its deadlines.*

In addition to media outlets, make announcements about the kickoff at meetings and/or in newsletters of local garden clubs, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, other nearby NPSOT chapter meetings and those of like-minded organizations, such as Audubon/ornithologists, organic farmers, etc.

Create a flier announcing the kickoff. Keep the wording simple so you can use large type that can be easily seen by passers-by. Spell out “Native Plant Society of Texas.” Make sure you include a local phone number for more information, along with the state website, npsot.org. Keep the state webmaster (webmaster@npsot.org) informed of...
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your progress so he/she can post your information on the website.

Post the flier all over your target community—especially nurseries/garden centers, local colleges or universities, high schools, Texas AgriLife Extension office, parks used by local residents, any community bulletin boards and high-traffic businesses such as grocery stores or convenience stores. (Don’t stick them under people’s windshields, though—that usually just annoys the receiver!)

Ask businesses with electronic signs to include your event. Have your organizing members ask for the information to be placed in their church bulletins. Ask to speak to any local business clubs, such as Lions, Kiwanis or Business & Professional Women. Set up a table at any local festivals, fairs or home-and-garden shows; give out your fliers, plus the brochure and any available lists of local native plants. (Information-only tables are often free for nonprofits.)

Also post the kickoff details on any social networking sites to which your organizing members belong. Be creative. Almost any place with a mass of people offers potential for publicity for your new chapter.

**Sign-in table**

At the kickoff meeting, have a sign-in table near or just inside the door of the meeting room. Prepare blank forms with spaces for the name, address, phone number and email address of all attendees. (Have plenty of ink pens on hand.) This is the perfect place to offer your guests their door prize tickets and/or gift bags, if you’ve decided to give either.

**Membership table**

Have a dedicated table somewhere inside the meeting room (and separate from the sign-in table, to avoid confusion) where audience members can join. Ask the State Office to mail you a supply of blank membership forms (also available for download on npsot.org). You will need a cashier and possibly a helper. Make sure the cashier has enough cash on hand to make appropriate change. Checks can be made out to “NPSOT”. If you elect to conduct a new-member survey (see details below), have the cashier offer the questionnaire to members as they join. (Another place to have extra pens available.) Make sure you leave plenty of time on the meeting agenda for new members to enroll!

**Refreshments**

Refreshments always make audiences feel more welcome, and they don’t have to cost a lot. You can keep them simple—coffee, inexpensive punch and cookies. If your meeting is in an incorporated city, you’ll need to obey any city health codes for serving food.

**Door prizes**

These aren’t necessary, but they can help generate audience interest, and they can be an incentive for a potential member to attend. Assign an organizing member or a small committee to be in charge of door prizes.

Ideas for door prizes include: native plants, native seeds, garden tools, garden gloves, books about natives and birdhouses. Potential donors include: members, nurseries or garden centers (natives only, please!), bookstores, gift shops or home-improvement/hardware stores. Do keep the prizes appropriate to the subject; you wouldn’t want to include a gift certificate to a salon or a gym, for instance.

**Gift bags**

Gift (or goodie) bags also are not necessary, but they also can be an incentive for attendance. Giving your audience a gift instantly makes them feel included, a part of what is going on—and that brings your chapter one step closer to new members. Assign another organizing member or a small committee to be in charge of gift bags.

For the actual bags in which to place audience freebies, check with your chamber of commerce or local banks or
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credit unions. Someone will have a supply of bags you can use.

Items to place in the bags include: the brochure; a flier with a map and details of your chapter's regular meeting time, date and location; a note pad and pen (so attendees may take notes); a packet of wildflower seeds (natives only, please!); wildflower seed catalogs; and any appropriate advertising novelties from local or member-owned businesses. Brainstorm with members to come up with other ideas.

Sources for freebies include: banks, credit unions, hospitals, local colleges or universities, printers, seed companies, Texas Parks & Wildlife, your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office, local native nurseries, botanic gardens, nature centers, convention & visitors' bureaus and member-owned businesses.

“Stuffing” the gift bags doesn’t take long if you create an assembly line. This can be a quick project at a meeting you’ll probably hold anyway a few days before the kickoff.

Audio/video equipment

If your meeting room doesn’t come equipped with a microphone and a projector for PowerPoint presentations, you’ll need to procure these. Try to borrow them, of course, rather than renting. Don’t overlook the importance of a microphone—even a relatively small meeting of 50 people will have a lot of collateral noise. Have organizing members ask around to find a portable sound system. Ask your speaker if he/she has a projector, or maybe one of your members is affiliated with a company or school that has one that can be borrowed.

Printed program

A printed program is simple to produce even with only basic word-processing software. It gives your meeting instant importance and professional polish. You can feature the bluebonnet logo, which is available for download on the LeaderWeb page of the state website, or you can create your own chapter logo.

Besides the day’s agenda, be sure to list and thank any business or person who made donations to sponsor the kickoff or speaker and any business or person who contributed a door prize. Thank the speaker if he/she waived a fee. If you have room, you might also list your elected officers, details about your regular meetings and/or the mission statement.

Membership survey

One way you and other chapter leaders can learn valuable information about what your chapter needs is to ask your new members to answer a short survey.

Simply create a short questionnaire for all new members. With this tool, you can:

• Assess chapter skill level
• Learn areas of particular interest
• Evaluate publicity efforts
• Learn other valuable information you’re interested in knowing

See below for a sample membership survey that can be customized for your chapter.

Display table

Set up a display table(s) for your audience to peruse while waiting for the meeting to start. You can include information about the Society, your chapter and/or local native plants. A trifold display board is a great way to display photos of native plants. Or bring in labeled cuttings or potted plants to display. Use your imagination for ways to start educating your new members.

Meeting signs

Make sure attendees know exactly where your kickoff is being held. On the day of the kickoff, set out large-lettered signs at crucial street corners and outside the building where the meeting room is located. If the way to the meeting...
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room isn’t obvious once inside, post signs directing attendees to the room. Make it easy for people to find you!

Wrap-up

You’ll probably need to hold a few extra meetings to check on progress in various areas and to make sure everything stays coordinated. Take advantage of email to keep your organizing members posted. Do plan one last meeting a few days before the kickoff to take care of any last-minute issues that might arise.

After the kickoff, be prepared to mail the completed new membership forms, along with all membership fees (you might write a check to cover any cash that was collected), to the State Office as soon as possible—preferably the next business day. Make photocopies of the membership forms for your own records.

Whether you choose all the “bells and whistles” or have just a simple talk, make sure the event is well-organized and that you are prepared. Be as professional as possible while still creating a welcoming atmosphere. Remember you are representing the Native Plant Society of Texas to your audience.

Be sure to stick to your agenda as listed in the printed program. Don’t keep your audience longer than you’ve promised.

Remember to relax and enjoy your event. Be upbeat. Let the audience know how exciting it would be to learn more about native plants and how much fun they would have doing so if they joined the Native Plant Society of Texas.

And, finally, don’t forget to take lots of photos. Your new chapter will want to remember this important event for many years to come.

New Chapter Quick Checklist

Organize with at least 10 memberships and get State Board approval for chapter.

Elect officers. (Will need at least president and treasurer.)

Set up chapter bank account. (State Office can help chapter treasurer, if needed.)

Ask State Office to deposit $200 start-up funds into account.

Ask State Office to mail a supply of membership brochures, bumper stickers and past issues of official state newsletters.

Get chapter username and password to access private LeaderWeb page on state website. Contact State Office (state@npsot.org) or state webmaster (webmaster@npsot.org) for this information.

Email State Office and webmaster the names, phone numbers and email addresses of chapter president and treasurer.

Have president or a chapter representative attend quarterly State Board meetings—10 a.m. third Saturday in January, April, July and at state symposium.

Have chapter treasurer submit quarterly financial report online—due April 30, July 31, Oct. 31 and Jan. 31. (See LeaderWeb for guidelines and to enter report.)

Have chapter president write annual Chapter Activity Report—a one-page report on chapter activities for the past year. Due Sept. 1 each year. (See LeaderWeb for guidelines and for other chapters’ reports from past years.)

Download copy of Chapter Leader Handbook from LeaderWeb.

Email State Office copy of any chapter bylaws.