



How Can We All Get Along? The Common Goals for the Diversity of Topics Relevant to the Florida State Horticultural Society’s New Agroecology and Natural Resources Section

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The new Florida State Horticultural Society’s Agroecology and Natural Resource Section provides a forum to link the shared goals of agricultural and natural land management.

Objectives

Agricultural and natural systems are inextricably connected. The renaming of the Natural Resources Section to the Agroecology and Natural Resources Section (ANR) is an attempt to bring that conversation to the Florida State Horticultural Society (FSHS). The Agroecology and Natural Resources Section will facilitate a program of research, extension, and professional contributors that can speak to the shared goals of agriculture and natural resource management.

Agroecology provides a framework that links the shared goals of agricultural and natural area management: sustainable production, resource conservation, and social responsibility. Well managed agricultural systems, or “agroecosystems”, can be productive and buffer impacts of human consumption on natural areas. Natural systems conservation, restoration, and enhancement are also essential to maintain suitable habitats for native flora and fauna and to provide critical ecosystem services transferred to agroecosystems.

The agroecosystem concept structures goal-oriented management plans that consider the environmental and ecological characteristics of a farm and the surrounding area. Agroecosystems are complex and challenging to manage and require a multidisciplinary understanding from specialties such as horticultural sciences, agronomy, economics, ecology, engineering, entomology, natural resource management, soil and water sciences, and sociology.

Findings

The Agroecology and Natural Resources Section inaugural session promoted a cohesive discussion and diverse presentations on management strategies for agriculture and natural resources through shared goals to maintain productivity, ecosystem health, and social responsibility. A facilitated discussion identified keywords associated with the core topics included in the section: Agroecology, Natural Resources, and Food Systems (Table 1). The terms “environment” and “money” were mentioned for each of the core topics. “Diversity,” “productive,” and “sustainable” are foundational principles of agroecology that were mentioned in at least two of the core topics discussed. System resilience is

another foundational principle of agroecology, which was not mentioned directly but can be associated with long-term outlooks of the terms “quality,” “regenerative,” and “security”. The social aspect of these core topics is also important to mention appearing as “aesthetic”, “choice”, and “responsible”. Overall, participants demonstrated appreciation for the shared goals of the section’s core topics. Presenters pointed out linkages to this discussion often throughout the day and offered ways their work fit within the goals of the FSHS Agroecology and Natural Resources Section.

Future Directions

The FSHS ANR had a strong showing of presentations and participation during its inaugural session. The intent of the morning discussion was to motivate future involvement in the section and a greater understanding of the relevant topics and purpose of the program. The section may continue to facilitate cohesion and linkages among presentations in future meetings through collaborative and interactive opportunities within the program.

Table 1. Words associated with the FSHS Agroecology and Natural Resources key topics.

Agroecology			
Agricultural	Ecological	Holistic	Organic
Productive	Regenerative	Responsible	Sustainable
Animals	Environment	Farms	Food
Money	Natural Areas	Plants	Resources
Society	Soil & Water	Systems	
Natural Resources			
Beautiful	Biodiverse	Dynamic	Limited
Native	Political	Renewable	Shared
Aesthetic	Animals	Conservation	Environment
Green	Habitat	Money	Plants
Quality	Recreation	Soil, Air & Water	Wild
Food Systems			
Available	Cyclical	Interactive	Local
Organic	Productive	Sustainable	
Access	Choice	Distance	Diversity
Environment	Inputs	Logistics	Market
Money	Safety	Security	Waste

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