



Promoting sustainable change is up to us all

The last of winter's leaves have fallen, rains have washed oak pollen from the air, and wildflowers are popping up everywhere.

It's spring in La Florida, Land of Flowers.

The season of rebirth means bustling activity for the Florida Wildflower Foundation. Over the last two months, our speakers have given presentations at more than a dozen meetings and events, such as March's Florida Wildflower &

Garden Festival in DeLand, attended by 8,000 people. During question-and-answer sessions at some of these events, it's become very apparent that there is an enormous disconnect between much of our society and the natural world.

When did we become so far removed from the land that we know little about where our food comes from or how it's grown? Why is it that we obey like automatons when we're told we need the perfect lawn, even if it means squandering precious water resources and using chemicals that pollute our lakes, rivers and springs? Why is it that few of our children play outside anymore?

One woman who attended a recent talk I gave told the audience that her organization had just awarded the Yard of the Month to a gardener whose landscape was defined by lush St. Augustine grass. Why do we keep rewarding such unsustainable practices? she wondered aloud.

Indeed. We discuss the detrimental effects of nitrogen and phosphorous runoff from fertilizers, cumulative damage from pesticides and herbicides, Nature Deficit Disorder among our youth, and the staggering loss of native ecosystems, but is anybody really listening?

I believe that, increasingly, they are.

In this age of so much competing clutter, though, we often must hear a message repeatedly before it sinks in. Sometimes it

takes the plucking of a personal heartstring – such as the sight of cherished woods being torn down to make way for a strip mall – before the light goes on.

It's all about education, and it's up to each of us to spread the word that there are better, healthier, more sustainable ways of doing things – from landscaping with

native wildflowers and plants to spending quality time outdoors with the kids.

It's up to us all to keep change in motion. Each of us must speak up, get involved, and support environmental organizations. Attend meetings and events held by the Florida Wildflower Foundation, Florida Native Plant Society, Sierra Club, Audubon Society and local-food organizations. Patronize native plant nurseries. Talk to the people closest to you – your family and neighbors – to increase their awareness



More than 8,000 people attended this year's Florida Wildflower & Garden Festival in DeLand. Photo/MainStreet DeLand

La Florida grant applications due May 13

The application period of the La Florida, Land of Flowers, Community Grant Program is open until May 13. The program is designed to aid counties that have adopted a Wildflower Resolution increase the presence of native wildflowers.

To date, grants are exclusively for government agencies within the counties of Putnam, Lake, Marion, Brevard, Gadsden, Wakulla, Leon, Taylor and Volusia. Any other county adopting an acceptable Wildflower Resolution before the application period closes are eligible.

Grants will be awarded in the form of a \$500 certificate to purchase Florida



Enriching lives with
Florida's native wildflowers

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of what's going on in the environmental world. It's personal to you – find a way to make it personal to them.

Change is a chain reaction. If we keep leading by example and educating along the way, we can create a ripple that crescendos into the tidal wave of the future.

- Lisa Roberts
Executive Director

native wildflower seeds or plants (but not both) from Florida's Wildflower Seed Co-op or the Association of Florida Native Nurseries. This is a matching grant program; applicants must provide evidence of in-kind or monetary contributions of \$500 or more.

While the recipient and manager of these grants must be a government agency, applicants are strongly encouraged to partner with local community groups, non-profit organizations and businesses.

For more information on the program, visit www.flawildflowers.org/planting.php.

Spring in the Wildflower Garden — a time of renewal, planting and planning

by Claudia Larsen

clarsen@flawildflowers.org

“Like a great poet, Nature knows how to produce the greatest effects with the most limited means.”

— Heinrich Hein, German poet (1797-1856)

Who doesn't love spring? It puts us in a happy place to see plants bursting forth with new green leaves and a promise of growth. For gardeners, it's a very busy time as we plan, pull weeds and plant.

If you have an established garden, it's time to remove unwanted clumping and creeping grasses. If possible, dig out root systems with a narrow shovel that does not disturb nearby plants. It's also time to remove plants you have too many of. In my own garden, I recently removed about 15 clumps of spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*) that looked like a colony of gnomes. They were easy to dig, though the roots are an amazing array of spidery tentacles (which probably gives them durability in the garden). I left clumps of three here and there because their gorgeous three-petal purple flowers, which bloom early, contrast well with the yellow *Coreopsis*. (Did you know that “wort” is an old English word *wyr̥t* meaning plant?)

There may be small unplanned annual wildflowers popping up in your garden now. Although they may look unkempt to you, take a moment to admire them. Venus' looking glass (*Triodanis biflora*), for instance, has a showy star of blue-purple flowers and rounded leaves that encircle each stem. These small plants are visited by tiny pollinators.

The pink flower of Carolina cranesbill (*Geranium carolinianum*) is tiny, too, but it deserves a closer look with a magnifying glass to see its intricate markings. Its deeply lobed leaves make it easy to identify. It's known as a “weedy invader,” but since its seeds are enjoyed by songbirds, it is definitely staying in my garden.

If your garden receives four to six hours of sunlight or more, you have excellent habitat for most Florida wildflowers. Flowers can be started from seed, but may have delayed emergence if they need stratification by nature. Plants from containers will thrive, but remember to get them established by watering as needed for two to three weeks. Water deeply to penetrate root systems. Give plants 18 to 24 inches of room so they can mature without crowding. Taller species can be planted two to three feet apart.

Early spring wildflowers for your garden include *Coreopsis* (any species), *Penstemon spp.*, *Verbena spp.*, blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium atlanticum*), beebalm (*Monarda punctata*), coralbean (*Erythrina herbacea*), wild indigo (*Baptisia spp.*), Florida greeneyes (*Berlandiera subacaulis*), Atamasco lily (*Zephyranthes atamasca*) and fleabane (*Erigeron spp.*).

A shady site can be enhanced with wildflowers too. Try violets (*Viola spp.*), partridge berry (*Mitchella repens*), twinflower (*Dyschoriste spp.*), coralbean, elephant's foot (*Elephantopus elatus*), columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), Dutchman's pipe (*Aristolochia tomentosa*), rouge plant (*Rivina humilis*), salvias (*Salvia spp.*) and petunia (*Ruellia caroliniensis*).

Because some of these plants have non-native relatives that have naturalized in Florida, it's important to shop by the scientific name. To locate native nurseries in your area, visit the Association of Florida Native Nurseries Web site, www.afnn.org.

Happy gardening!

Plant Profile

Purple Thistle (*Cirsium horridulum*)

Thistles have a bad reputation for their spiny personality, which is reflected by this scientific species' name “horridulum.” However, they shine as favorite nectar plants of butterflies. The large flowers are very showy and bloom in hues of purple. This wildflower also has beautiful leaves with purple markings. There are seven species of thistle in Florida, and although this one prefers dry sites, there are several species found in wet, boggy areas.

Family: Aster (Asteraceae)

Hardiness: North, Central and South Florida

Growth Habit: Basal leaves 12-18 inches wide that form a round rosette. Flowers grow on 1- to 3-foot flower spikes in springtime. All parts of the plant, including seeds, have sharp spines.

Soil: Thistles are very drought tolerant.

Exposure: Full sun or light shade

Garden tips: Preserve natural stands of thistles that occur in areas not regularly mowed. They coexist well with lovegrass, and their flowers are long-lived. After flowering, the plants retain interest by forming cottony white seed heads that shatters to the wind. Swallowtail butterflies visiting thistles make a great photograph.



Photo/Walter K. Taylor

Calendar



Join us at these events:

May 14: Panhandle Wildflowers Mini-Symposium & Plant Sale, Quincy. Details: www.flawildflowers.org; 850-491-0910.

May 19–22: FNPS Annual Conference, Maitland – Join the Foundation at the Florida Native Plant Society Annual Conference, which will feature presentations, field trips, social events and a plant sale. For more information or to register, visit www.fnps.org/pages/conference.

June 2: FWF Executive Director Lisa Roberts will speak at the Keep Florida Beautiful conference in Cocoa Beach. Details: 321-631-0501.

July 14: FWF Executive Director Lisa Roberts will speak at the Florida Trail Association's Central Florida Chapter meeting at 7 p.m., Leu Gardens, Orlando. Details: 407-739-1201.

For more information on upcoming events, visit flawildflowers.org/news.php. To schedule a speaker for your event, contact Lisa Roberts at lroberts@flawildflowers.org.

Look for spring's best blooms in moist areas during this warm, dry season

by Jeff Norcini



Sneezeweed (*Helenium pinnatifidum*)
Photo/Gil Nelson

As in years past, wildflowers began blooming in South Florida in late February and March. The “spring show” gradually travels northward to culminate with peak blooming in the Panhandle in mid- to late May. This year in the Panhandle, however, wildflowers may peak a bit earlier because abundant late fall/early winter rain and above normal temperatures in March have accelerated flowering by a week or two, at least for some species.

Climatologists have been predicting a warm, dry spring. If that holds true, best blooming will tend to be in sunny moist areas – ditches and swales, moist prairies, and edges of streams, lakes and ponds. In addition, wildflower viewing generally will be better in rural areas where there are more natural stands of wildflowers and lower public expectations for manicured landscapes.

In moist areas, look for white rain lilies (especially early in the spring), true blue prairie iris and yellow Southeastern sneezeweed. Other common species in moist areas are Leavenworth's tickseed and black-eyed Susan, although black-eyed Susan tends to occur in drier habitats in the Panhandle than in Central and South Florida.

Despite the anticipated dry weather, expect to see swaths of goldenmane tickseed that adorn roadsides and fields in May in North Florida, as well the pinks and purples of naturalized annual phlox. Annual phlox is a familiar roadside wildflower throughout the Big Bend and as far south as Tampa, including Interstate 75. Both species put on a good show every year regardless of weather extremes.

When you are out and about enjoying the spring beauty that Mother Nature has blessed us with, please don't pick wildflowers. If you want to preserve the memory of a wildflower, take a picture – it will last longer. Many of our native wildflowers reproduce only by seed. Picking a flower reduces the ability of that plant to reproduce and for that population of wildflowers to sustain itself. If you want to pick wildflowers, plant some in your yard or in containers on your patio or porch. Wildflower seed packets are

available from the Florida Wildflower Seed and Plant Growers Association. To order, visit www.floridawildflowers.com. Seed packets of Florida native wildflowers also may be available at garden centers specializing in Florida native plants. To find a native garden center near you, visit the Association of Florida Native Nurseries' [Web site](#).

For specific locations to view wildflowers, please visit [What's in Bloom](#) for recent photos, or drive one of the wildflower routes identified by the Foundation:

Panhandle Wildflower Route

- Liberty County – State Road 65, County Roads 379 and 67
- Apalachicola National Forest, Forest Roads

For specific locations, download the [Wildflower Route report](#) and [Panhandle route map](#).

More reasons not to pick wildflowers

- Picking the flowers of any endangered or threatened species is illegal in Florida. For details, see Florida Statute 581.185 Preservation of native flora of Florida.
- Stopping along a roadside to pick wildflowers can be hazardous to you and other motorists.

Big Bend Wildflower Route

- Dixie County – County Roads 357 and 358
- Lafayette County – State Road 51; County Road 357
- Levy County – County Roads 345 and 347

For specific locations, see the [Wildflower Route report](#) and [map](#).

Southwest Florida Wildflower Route (to be finalized later this spring)

- Collier, Hendry and Lee counties

This Route is comprised mainly of important natural areas that are connected by major roads and highways: Corkscrew Swamp Audubon Sanctuary, Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) Trails, County Road 832 in Hendry County, Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest, Koreshan State Historic Park, and Six-Mile Cypress Slough Preserve. For details about these locations, click here for [Wildflower Route interim report](#).

Other places to see wildflowers:

Statewide

- Along the Florida National Scenic Trail (www.floridatrail.org)
- Florida Water Management Districts lands (www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/watman)
- Florida State Parks (www.floridastateparks.org)
- National Forest lands (www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/florida)

North Florida

- Florida Caverns State Park, Marianna
- State Road 9A, between Gate Parkway and Baymeadows Road, Duval County
- State Road 26, west of Gainesville
- State Road 100, Keystone Heights; also between Bunnell and Palatka
- State Road 228, just north of State Road 23, Duval County
- State Road 500/ U.S. Highway Alt. 27, Chiefland to Williston
- U.S. Highway 27, from north end of Perry for about 3-4 miles
- U.S. Highway 27, Suwannee County
- U.S. Highway 27/98, Dixie and Levy County
- U.S. Highway 90, between Lake City and Live Oak
- U.S. Highway 301 at the Florida/Georgia border, Nassau County
- St. Johns River to the Sea Loop (Flagler, St. Johns, Volusia, Brevard and Putnam counties, including the A1A Scenic and Historic Byway south of St. Augustine, which in 2007 received a grant from the Florida Wildflower Foundation to plant roadside wildflowers. For the complete account of wildflowers along the cycling and driving route, click here for the [Bike Loop report](#) and [Bike Loop map](#).

Central Florida

- Ocala National Forest (www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/ocala/index.php)
- I-75, Pasco County
- Florida's Turnpike
 - Okahumpka Service Plaza
 - Mile Markers 272 and 280.4, northbound
 - Mile Marker 236 to 193, southbound
- Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
- Longleaf Pine Preserve, Volusia County (www.volusia.org/growth/longleaf.htm)
- Seminole State Forest, Lake County (www.fl-dof.com/state_Forests/seminole.html)
- Wekiwa Springs State Park, Apopka.

South Florida

- Everglades National Park – Royal Palm Hammock



Blue flag iris (*Iris hexagona*)
Photo/Jeff Norcini

Send us your wildflower photos

If you've taken a great shot of Florida's native wildflowers on a roadside, in your yard, or in a native habitat, we'd like to share it on our Web site. Submit your photo to photos@flawildflowers.org with the photographer's name, the flower species pictured (scientific names are desired along with common names), the specific location (GPS coordinates are helpful) and a description of your experience – Were you on vacation? Were you hiking? What did you think about the flowers you found?

To see what others are submitting, check the What's Blooming page on our Web site at flawildflowers.org/bloom.php.



Welcome new members

License plate

Katherine Edison	Cheryl McKellips
John Means	Carlton L. Langford
Dana Winyinger	Cynthia Amoroso
Patti Parker	Jennifer Beirau
Sandy Iles	Jennifer Varhol
Tiffany Kyle	

General

Barbara McClure	Lois Troxell
Phyllis Collins	David Rakes
Garden Club of Orange Park	

Senior/student

Richard & Martha Curl	Carolyn James
Robert Epler	Carol H. Wood

Thank you, volunteers

Florida Wildflower & Garden Festival

Carolyn Schaag	Dr. Walter K. Taylor
Brightman Logan	Terry Zinn
Jeff Norcini	Donna Torrey
Anne Mackay	Larry Hutt

Seed Packets

Boy Scout Troop 28, Orlando	
Anita Larsen	Anne Mackay
Brightman Logan	Dr. Walter K. Taylor
Terry Zinn	Donna Torrey
Carolyn Schaag	Michael Gilkey

FWF gives "Learn-to-Plant" grant to Lake County

Recognizing Lake County's commitment to wildflowers, the Florida Wildflower Foundation in February presented the county with a "Learn-to-Plant" grant in February. The grant makes it possible for the county's roadside maintenance staff to learn best practices for establishing and maintaining roadside wildflower plantings from seed. Management protocol for naturally occurring wildflowers also will be included. The project will begin in late summer.

"Since adopting its Wildflower Resolution in 2009, Lake County has moved quickly

to establish itself as one of the leaders in Florida in the conservation and preservation of Florida's native wildflowers. This award, made at the discretion of the Foundation's board, will help the county maintain wildflower driving and cycling trails that can be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike," said Lisa Roberts, FWF executive director.

In 2009, Volusia County served as the site of the Learn-to-Plant program pilot project. Four plantings were established along roadsides and at cycling/multiuse trailheads.

Spring garden jobs

- ❖ Trim debris left from winter. Pruning old woody stems makes room for emerging leaves. Use this time to evaluate existing plantings – you may need to remove some and add new species or more of ones that are doing well.
- ❖ Give bird baths and feeders a spring cleaning, which will reduce disease potential for your visitors. Use a stiff brush and warm water, then rinse well. For mold and stains, use nine parts water and one part bleach, then rinse well. Allow feeder to dry before filling. Remember to occasionally clean up droppings below feeders or rotate feeders to others sites in your yard.
- ❖ Move any plant not in the right place. If a plant is not thriving, it may need an area with different moisture or light (be sure and water until established at the new site).
- ❖ Practice your seedling identification skills by looking for emerging plants.
- ❖ Check leaf shape, arrangement, color and texture then compare them to the Seedling Images guide on the Foundation's Web site.
- ❖ Reduce maintenance in large gardens by selecting larger plants. Several herbaceous shrubs or a group of tall wildflowers such as ironweed, cutleaf coneflower, frostweed or rosinweed will fill an area and create nice visual layers of height.
- ❖ Keep a list of butterflies that visit your garden – you can attract 30 species or more by adding nectar and host plants.
- ❖ April and May offer prime wildflower viewing in Florida, so take a break from gardening to visit your local and state parks to "see what's up."
- ❖ Plan ahead: If you are thinking about garden expansion, you can prepare new sites now by applying herbicide or smothering turf under cardboard. Finish with leaves or composted mulch so your site will be ready for fall planting.
- ❖ Add a chair. How about a pink Adirondack to match your flowers? You work hard in the garden, so why not add a resting spot where you can take in ever-changing views. And don't forget to send a picture to photos@flawildflowers.org – we'd love to see your garden!



As birds establish nests nearby, keep an eye out for new hatchlings, such as this mockingbird. Photo/Claudia Larsen

For more on wildflower gardening, visit the Foundation's planting Web page, flawildflowers.org/planting.php.

– Claudia Larsen