2018 Seedlings for Schools Final Report

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FLORIDA WILDFLOWER FOUNDATION Seedlings for Schools Administrator
Applications and awards

Applications were accepted March 15-June 15, 2018

- Each teacher filled out the Seedlings for Schools application via Wufoo survey and had to submit three photos of their garden area.
- Photos were added to the application in 2018 to discourage schools that did not have adequate planting areas to support a permanent wildflower garden.

Thirty-two schools were awarded grants on June 30: 17 elementary, 4 middle, 2 high schools and 9 other. All but one school were in Central and South Florida. Three additional schools from the waiting list were added when they completed their garden preparation in the fall.

Sept. 1: Teachers were notified of shipping dates for wildflowers and reminded to have their gardens prepared for immediate planting. Each school received a “Tips for Garden Maintenance” handout and an information sheet with each species’ photo and description of plant growth. Some teachers asked for personal advice on garden preparation, mulching and specific plant info via emails or phone calls.

Sept. 24: Plants from Sharon Dolan, Maple Street Natives, Melbourne, were shipped via UPS. Wildflower species included in each (20 plants): Dyschoriste humistrata, Coreopsis leavenworthii, Rudbeckia hirta, Salvia coccinea, Senna ligustrina, Chamaecrista fasiculata, Phyla nodiflora, Vernonia gigantea, Solidago sempervirens, Asclepias perennis.

October: I confirmed receipt of plant shipments and sent a link to the Wild About Wildflowers! Activity Guide curriculum for teachers to use or adapt for their lesson plans.

Dec. 3: Teachers were asked to complete a final survey and submit three garden photos as they agreed to in their initial application. Schools responding in a timely manner could request a second shipment of wildflowers to be received around March 2019 (they agreed to also complete a second survey and send three additional garden photos).

Three reminder emails and a text message were sent to seven non-responding schools.

Report from 31 responding schools:

- The gardens were used by about 6,121 children. At 16 of the awarded schools, more than 75 percent of students participate in a free lunch program.
- School gardens were quite varied in location and degree of preparation. There were seven grow boxes, four in-ground gardens of more than 100 square feet, and the rest in-ground of less than 100 square feet.
- This year, most teachers had help from parents, garden club members or Master Gardeners.
- This was a very successful growing season. All but five schools had plants that bloomed in November and December, and they reported best success with Coreopsis, Chamaecrista fasiculata, Rudbeckia hirta, Senna privet, Salvia coccinea, Solidago sempervirens and Phyla nodiflora.
- Seven schools reported that all of their plants were successful and healthy.
- Four schools reported their plants were not as good as expected, describing small plant size and stems broken in shipping. The other schools were very enthusiastic that plants were in great shape and bigger than expected.
When asked how their gardens were prepared, most schools had removed weeds and grass by hand, then mulched area with bark chips, leaves or pine straw. Only six said weeds were a problem. The gardens mostly received weekly attention, which helped diminish plant competition.

- 10 schools planted additional bedding plants, including non-native Tropical milkweed.
- 13 schools made additional signs or plant tags.
- All but one school said their garden was a permanent outdoor teaching area.
- Most teachers used garden for science curriculum and had extra lessons in the garden about pollination, native and invasive plants, insects and ecosystems.
- Half the teachers reviewed the *Wild About Wildflowers! Activity Guide* and eight adapted its lessons and activities for use in their classroom.
- Nine schools publicized their garden on school social media – newsletter, website, school TV, etc.
- Encouraging “condolence” emails were sent to teachers with unsuccessful gardens. Included were suggestions for better techniques, such as not over-mulching or -watering. Suggestions were based on teachers’ descriptions of what they were doing. These emails also thanked teachers for giving their students the opportunity to learn about gardening and wildflowers and encouraged them to continue with their school gardens.

**Report Attachment**

Pertinent comments from teachers are included that show how the gardens have influenced their outdoor and indoor teaching experiences

**Garden Pictures:** A Powerpoint of pictures is available. Teachers sent many pictures of single blooming plants rather than a garden overview. These are nice but not very helpful.

**Comments:**

Garden sites are much improved from SFS prior years, but no two are alike, making it difficult to choose proper plants to fit sites. Teachers use the materials available to them or try to claim a permanent area in courtyards or near parking areas.

Success will be determined by the wildflower species that are most adaptable to conditions. It is uncertain how long wildflowers will last in shallow grow boxes, but they are easy to care for.

A few schools have great resources and volunteers for their gardens, but most just carve out little plots in the school ground or use boxes. Although these are not ideal, it’s the best they have at this point, and the desire to garden with their students is apparent. Even if the gardens look puny, their comments reveal they are using the opportunity to talk about wildflowers, pollination and plant biology. Their commitment is there because most wanted another shipment of flowers in the spring. It seems as if all age levels benefit from the program as well.

Although we advertise for new schools, it is important to keep supplying wildflowers to successful schools. There are two or three that regularly take advantage of SFS grants.

Many teachers used our resource list and reviewed the *Wild About Wildflowers! Activity Guide*.

Teachers in this year’s grant program were certainly enthusiastic and knowledgeable about native plants and pollinators and love taking their students outside for “real time” learning
experience. Even gardens that are not extremely successful reported that children had a great learning experience and the gardens connect them with classroom learning opportunities.

**Spring 2019**
Sharon Dolan has been contacted about shipping plants to the 23 schools with successful gardens in April. Schools’ participation will be confirmed in March before sending plants. Final surveys will be sent May 15 with a June 1 deadline.

New 2019 Seedlings for Schools applications will be accepted March 15-June 15, 2019.

Program Manager Stacey Matrazzo and I discussed possibly offering *Wild about Wildflowers!* activity kits to schools with 3rd- and 4th-grade levels to tie in with their Seedlings for Schools grant. Or we could choose schools with excellent, promising SFS applications.

Teachers would need to offer some follow-up reports or comments. Future discussion is needed.

First-graders at Learning Gate Academy in Lutz are using their wildflower garden as a learning landscape.
Sheridan Hills Elementary, Hollywood FL — Joanne Ewart
I started a second grade garden club at my school this year. These students helped to get the grounds ready for the wildflowers. We had to take up the grass and smooth out the earth. We added a plastic tarp for a week to kill all the nematodes and other parasites in the ground. Before the plants came, we looked at the list and planned the best location for each plant based on size and sun needs. When the plants came, the students planted them according to plan. We used pine bark mulch as a cover. We had a lesson on mulch and tied it to conservation in regards to cypress mulch. The children found that very interesting. We learned about the native plants and the benefits of planting native plants for the wildlife and the land.

Gove Elementary, Belle Glade FL — Gayle Zavala
The wildflowers were planted by our after-school Garden Club for the enjoyment and native study of our entire school population (700 students). It is maintained (watered and weeded) by both our Garden Club and our K-2 grade Special Education Class. We recently added a Holiday Tree decorated with ornaments of Endangered Everglades Animals (i.e. manatees, panthers, sea turtles, wood storks, spoonbills) in the same area of our wildflowers. We qualified this year as an Everglades Champion School - Gold Level and our Wildflowers was part of making this possible.

Our Garden Club recently mentored our Pre-K students, and they assisted in watering the wildflowers. In five weeks, I will be starting my Plant Unit during my STEAM classes, which will allow me to engage all 700 of our students in studying a variety of plants and pollinators, including the wildflowers.

Murdock Middle School, Port Charlotte FL — Samantha Gentrup
My students researched the plants to come up with where exactly to plant them. They also researched to see what insects were attracted to the plants.
The project has gone amazingly well. I teach 140 students, and they all saw the plants when they arrived in the box. Then the Kindness Club stayed after school to work in our school garden, and they planted all of the seedlings. A local garden group brought a short fence to mark off the area to keep foot traffic from harming them. My students mapped out the area for the little fence and secured it in the ground. They water three mornings each week. The garden has been a huge success, and my students are excited to get even more plants to add to it. Faculty and staff members are all noticing and are happy to see the butterflies and life in the courtyard on campus.

Christa McAuliffe Middle School, Boynton Beach FL — Carley Siegel
Garden Club learned how native plants are beneficial to plant to support the native wildlife and pollinators. We also learned that they grow with greater ease, needing less attention in the way of water or fertilizer (we didn't use any).

Sheehy Elementary, Tampa FL — Christine Danger
My students covered the ground with black cloth, let the grass die, and scraped away the grass. They then laid a layer of newspaper and we added a layer of topsoil and compost. While waiting for our flowers, the weeds flourished and we recovered the ground with black cloth. We wound up leaving the cloth and cutting holes in it to plant our wildflowers. All of the plants were planted by students. They also made markers to label them and are in charge of watering them. I hope to remove it after our plants are bigger and more numerous. I wonder if it is okay to leave the cloth and if it will prevent plants from reproducing.

Our students are learning about native and invasive species and the effects they have on habitats. They are learning about plant and animal adaptations. They are also learning about the importance of pollinators.

Visible Men Academy, Bradenton FL — Peg Hughes
We planned to plant our wildflowers along our picket fence in our edible garden. I tilled the area, and the boys helped pull up weeds and shift through the tilled soil. The plants arrived, and were in the ground within 3 days of arrival. However, according to our Master Gardener and wildflower expert, the plant's quality and substance and amount were not as expected. That said, we planted what we had [about 6 plants]. Then, I am very sad to say, the lawn care guy cut them down to nubs - 2x. They have not revived at this point. So the actual reality of our wildflower garden did not match what we intended. I still want that area to be wildflowers, so we intend to get that up and going as visualized.

Clay Springs Elementary, Apopka FL — Kristen Reilly
My expectations were exceeded. It was such a great experience for our students. They helped prep the areas taking out weeds and grass. We continue to weed and make sure they are properly watered. For the first time in years, we are seeing a new pollinator in our garden - we are seeing bees! It has helped our tower garden. The bees are pollinating the vegetables that we have planted, and they are quickly producing vegetables. We were very excited about this.

They [plants] were much to my delight bigger than expected. I thought they were going to be seeds, or sprouts, but I loved that they were more mature plants. It made growing much easier.

Goldsboro Elementary Magnet, Sanford FL — Mary Hess
All 160 fifth-grade students participated in researching the best pollinator plants for the area to be developed. Selected fifth-graders were chosen to work with a Master Gardener to prepare the site, plant and mulch the area. This provided a hands-on experience that targeted many Florida science benchmarks.

Thank you for this opportunity for our school to learn more about FL native plants. The kids were really into it and learned a lot! The only thing I would do differently next time is send plants for the area
suggested. I received two plants that required more water than the others and had to plant them elsewhere on campus.

**Creation Kids Village, Celebration FL — Gemma Wise Beaumont**
Yes, the students were involved in the garden preparation and planting. The garden has been growing successfully since then. Once the plants are more mature, we will implement the Florida Wildflower Foundation curriculum in the classroom, using plant specimens from the garden. The students feel proud of creating a garden that helps promote a native ecosystem and support pollinators. Thank you for this opportunity!

**Greco Middle School, Tampa FL — Kerri Ladd**
We built a garden box, laid cardboard down to kills grass and weeds, waited a few months then filled the boxes with compost donated from Busch Gardens, we prepped the soil with organic worm juice, donated from KZ Farm.

The wildflower garden project has been a wonderful experience for my students. The students hauled a compost mix to the garden bed they built outside the classroom. The students took turns planning on plant placement, researching the growth pattern of the plants, and placing the plants accordingly. An exciting outcome of the garden, is one student took second place in the Temple Terrace Annual Art show. She photographed her favorite flower in the garden. The photo contest was open to 10 photos, judged by a professional photographer.

The children have learned responsibility in caring for the garden, weeding and watering.

**Forest Hill Elementary, West Palm Beach FL — Susan Wise**
I actually thought there would be more plants. Some were great and some were broken due to being smooshed in the box.

The plants have and will be used to teach plant parts, photosynthesis, life cycles and food chains. We have been talking about the Everglades and the importance of native species.

**Palm Beach School for Autism, Lake Worth FL — Teressa Tramaglio**
We have a wooden sign which reads - ‘Caterpillar Cafe’.

**Stanton-Weirsdale Elementary, Weirsdale FL — Lisa Decker and Kathryn Andriola**
We discussed the Seedlings for Schools Wildflowers chart. Many of the students were familiar with the flowers but did not know their names. We discussed the importance of protecting our wildflowers.
Sea Park Elementary, Satellite Beach FL — Dawn Maletzke
When the plants arrived, we looked at all of them and talked about the ones that were new to the students. We then took a tour of our wildflower spaces and decided where things were going to go. The teachers are finally getting used to having an outdoor classroom space. They are talking about the life cycle of plants and butterflies, and the students are loving it!

Learning Gate, Lutz FL — Jim McGinty
With our first-grade students, I focus a lot on butterfly life cycle and host plants for butterflies. I also plan to use the garden to teach about the native pollinators that visit the flowers.

Pine Jog Elementary, West Palm Beach FL — Karen Kennedy
Students illustrated their nature journals with the wildflowers and measured growth. We shared details on our morning news to ensure all students were watching and monitoring our new native garden space, as well as watching for some invasive rabbits who liked to nibble.

The student group that participated in the initial planting are the most protective of "their" wildflowers and look forward to adding additional seedlings to the space to continue expanding our outdoor learning classroom.

Signs have been placed by each individual wildflower, identifying the type and a photo of what it would look like mature/in bloom. Plans are being made for more permanent signage.

Yes, we were pleasantly surprised at the variety and condition of the seedlings we received. We would like to add to the collection in order for the varied types, staggered heights and groupings to have even more impact and cover greater area for the number of students visiting the space.

Atlantic Community High School, Delray Beach FL — Chelsea Cantwell
Some students were disappointed in the size of the plants, but many of them grew much larger over the course of a few months. There was much disappointment with a large amount that did not survive.

Harbour View Elementary, Summerfield FL — Charlotte Heasty
However, I did have two groups that did a science project on the effects of light on plants. The garden will be used more after January, and it will include the interdependence of plants and plants and animals. Research will be done on butterflies.
Woodrow Wilson Elementary, Tampa FL — Kenneth Coogan
Plants needed more water than we initially planned in the first week or two and some plants died back severely. Students learned about native species, ecosystems and life cycles.

Pineview Elementary, Tallahassee FL — Karen Kimel
There was so much excitement in my class when the wildflowers arrived. I noticed how seriously they took the planting of the flowers and how little experience they had in that kind of activity. They were really fascinated when they found a worm when digging!

**LATE SURVEYS – DO NOT QUALIFY FOR SPRING PLANTS**

Hidden Oaks K-8, Lake Worth FL — Robin Cascio
We were hoping that more of the seedlings would take to the garden, but unfortunately, we had a community garden club come out and remove some of the seedlings that looked like they were dying without our permission. After we found about it, we let them know that they were not to touch the remaining plants. We would love the opportunity to get more seedlings to add to our garden.

Coral Sunset, Boca Raton FL — Melissa De Pasquale
We are really trying to make this garden as successful as possible. Because of this, we are already reworking it and trying to partner with the community to help grow it. We met with PTA on Jan. 9 to discuss donations and a "landscape plan" to make it more successful. We are grateful for all of your support. THANK YOU.

KEC, Canal Point Elementary, Canal Point FL — Tedrick Patterson
The student helped to plant and water the garden, but our expectations of blooming wildflowers failed. The plants looked dried out prior to planting and I believe the soil needs to be replaced, but the overall experience of having students plant and water was good.

I educated students about native plants and how they affect the ecosystem.

Palm Beach Central High School, Wellington FL
Wildflowers were planted and thriving, but teacher transferred and did not pass on grant information to school administration for final survey and pictures.

Ben Gamia Charter School, Boynton Beach FL — Carly Siegel
Teacher got married in December and took leave.

Schools that do not want spring plants:
- Visible Men Academy and Clifford O Taylor Elementary
- Altha Public School – Altha FL  Dorothy Chaney (Garden destroyed by Hurricane Irma)

Schools not responding to survey request as of Jan. 15, 2019:
- James Anderson,
- Silver Ridge Elementary
- Lyman School