

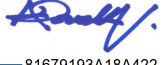
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Department of Transportation

## WILDFLOWER PROGRAM

### AUTHORITY:

Sections 20.23(3)(a) and 334.048(3), Florida Statutes (F.S.)

### REFERENCES:

- Article II, Section 7(a) Constitution of the State of Florida, Natural Resources and Scenic Beauty
- Landscape Policy, 000-650-011
- Florida Transportation Plan
- Title 23, Chapter 1, Subchapter H, Part 752, C.F.R., Landscape and Roadside Development
- Title 23, Chapter 3, Section 319, U.S. Code, Landscaping and Scenic Enhancement
- Title 23, Chapter 3, Section 329, U.S. Code, Eligibility for control of noxious weeds and aquatic noxious weeds and establishment of native species

### PURPOSE:

To develop and implement integrated vegetation management practices on roadsides and other transportation right of way, including reduced mowing, for the benefit of pollinators, while developing and maintaining safe, cost effective and efficient transportation corridors and systems. To establish the responsibilities of the Florida Department of Transportation's (Department) Central and District office staffs for the Wildflower Program.

### SCOPE:

This procedure applies to the Office of Maintenance (OOM), District Maintenance Engineers (DME), District Wildflower Coordinators (DWC), District and Central Public Information Offices (PIO), and District Secretaries.

## **BACKGROUND:**

For nearly 60 years, the Department has sustained the State's oldest and most visible wildflower program. In 1999 with support from the Department, the Florida Legislature authorized the production and sale of the Florida Wildflower License Plate. Thereafter, the Florida Wildflower Foundation was established. Using proceeds from the sale of the plate, the Florida Wildflower Foundation has become a supporting partner with the Department.

### **1. DEFINITIONS**

**1.1** Wildflower: A native or other desirable plant with conspicuous flowers. For the purpose of this procedure the definition does not include trees and other woody plants.

**1.2** Florida Native Wildflower: As defined by the Florida Wildflower Foundation, any flowering herbaceous species that grew wild within the state's natural ecosystems in the 1500's when Florida's first botanical records were created. The Foundation is also an advocate for flowering native shrubs, vines, trees, grasses and grass-like plants.

It also recognizes as a "Florida native wildflower":

- Species that may have been introduced prior to the 1500's by Native Americans through trade and travel.
- Species introduced to Florida without the aid of human intervention (for example, via tropical storms, floods, animals, insects, etc.), regardless of when these species were first officially documented.
- Any cultivated selection or horticultural variety that: 1) meets the criteria described in this document, 2) was collected in a natural Florida ecosystem, and 2) was not intentionally manipulated to alter any characteristic.

**1.3** Wildflower Areas (WA): Area within the right-of-way consisting of naturally occurring, restored, or planted native and other desirable flora; some showy, some not. Some will require no exceptional care other than carefully timed site and species specific mowing practices. These areas may also be locations where there is a desire or opportunity to manage naturally occurring species, or a desire to establish or restore native wildflower meadows by sowing seed. Due to the nature of wild species and constantly changing environmental conditions, showiness and diversity of species will be variable.

#### **1.4** Types of Wildflower Areas

**Natural Stands:** These areas exist naturally in the Department's right-of-way. They are extensions of remnants of neighboring natural areas that contain high densities of showy wildflowers. These areas have high ecological value and are managed passively.

**Roadside Meadows:** Areas of right-of-way that will be established and maintained as long blooming wildflower areas. These areas will be composed of custom species mix best suited to the individual characteristics of the site and will provide for the longest bloom period possible. These areas will most resemble a natural mix of wildflowers.

High Impact Plantings: Areas identified as being in a high impact location will be planted and maintained to make a bold visual statement. These areas will be composed of selected species that provide visual interest and accent or compliment the surrounding landscape.

## 2. PROGRAM COORDINATION

**2.1** The Wildflower Program is an integral part of the Highway Beautification Program. The OOM is responsible for the Wildflower Program. DWCs assigned by the DME will be responsible for roadside wildflower management activities, which may include planting and other duties assigned by the DME. The DWC shall have knowledge of Florida native plants and plant communities and appropriate roadside management practices.

**2.2** OOM will assist activities of the DWCs. OOM will update the Department's ***Guide for Roadside Vegetation Management*** as needed to implement this procedure.

**2.3** OOM will make sure this procedure remains compatible with the Maintenance Rating Program.

**2.4** The DME and DWC will be responsible for review and response to written requests from local agencies that are accompanied by a resolution similar to the model resolution found on the Florida Wildflower Foundation website.

**2.5** DWC will coordinate with their Maintenance Yards' and Operations Centers' Wildflower Plans, and when necessary supplement or replace displaced wildflowers, and respond to requests from local agencies.

## 3. MANAGEMENT OF WILDFLOWER AREAS

**3.1** Throughout the state, managing naturally occurring roadside Wildflowers Areas is the Department's preferred means of increasing the abundance of wildflowers. Guidance for establishment and management of Wildflower Areas can be found in the Department's ***Guide for Roadside Wildflower Management***, available as a supplement to ***A Guide for Roadside Vegetation Management***.

**3.2** Determining the start and end points and shape of a Wildflower Area will be the responsibility of the DWC and the DME. Wildflower Area locations will be documented in the District Vegetation Management Plan (Management Plan).

**3.3** The OOM and DWCs, will develop guidance for planning and implementing best management practices to facilitate natural regeneration of planted wildflowers and management and care of WAs. DWC and DME will include WAs in the Management Plan and appropriate maintenance contractor documents. WAs will be managed to accommodate safety and operational requirements as the integrity of the transportation facility is paramount. WAs will be managed to control woody and weedy species that make a WA appear to be unkempt. Desirable

outcomes include increasing the extent, species diversity, and showiness of native plants and wildflowers.

**3.4** The DWC in coordination with the DME will ensure that mowing frequencies for identified wildflower areas are included in the Management Plan and appropriate maintenance contractor documents. In addition, these documents will reflect that herbicide application within 100 feet of any identified WA shall be coordinated with the DWC.

## **4. PURCHASING AND PLANTING WILDFLOWER SEEDS**

**4.1** OOM will develop statewide best practices for wildflower seed purchase, selection of experienced contractors, planting, and management.

**4.2** Annually, the DWC, with input from OOM available upon request, will prepare or update District Wildflower Planting Plan (Wildflower Plan) a written or graphic Wildflower Plan describing locations to be planted and identifying species, quantities of seed, schedule, methods, and equipment needed to fulfill the Wildflower Plan.

**4.3** OOM will develop and implement an annual schedule to coordinate with DWCs to purchase seed used to supplement and support each District's Wildflower Plan. All seed shall be purchased by scientific (Latin) name.

**4.4** OOM will coordinate with the seed production industry to increase the value, quality, and availability of Florida ecotypes of native wildflowers.

**4.5** Landscape and roadside management may be approved as part of construction costs for a Federal aid highway project. When Federal-aid highway funds are used for a landscape project, at least one quarter of one percent of funds expended for such projects must be used to plant native wildflower or grass seeds or seedlings or both, **23 U.S.C. §319**. This requirement may be waived under appropriate circumstances.

## **5. EVALUATION AND DOCUMENTATION**

**5.1** OOM will develop and recommend a simple and effective method for DWCs to document the location and condition of WAs.

**5.2** The OOM, upon request from DWC, will review and provide comments on all draft Management Plans and Wildflower Plans.

## **6. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**

**6.1** Public comments and questions about the planting, establishment, and management of WAs should be directed to the DWCs.

**6.2** OOM will maintain a Department Wildflower Program web page, [www.fdot.gov/maintenance/wildflowersinfo.shtm](http://www.fdot.gov/maintenance/wildflowersinfo.shtm) and other informative materials. The webpage will include a directory of DWCs.

**6.3** DME or District PIO may assign staff to photograph WAs. Digital copies of photographs should be made available to Central PIO and may be posted on Department websites.

**6.4** To supplement the Department's knowledge of and expertise with Florida native wildflowers, OOM, and DWCs are encouraged to reach out to organizations with interest and expertise in wildflowers, including the Florida Wildflower Foundation, Florida Wildflower Cooperative, Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Florida Association of Native Nurseries, and Florida Native Plant Society.

## **7. TRAINING**

No training is required.

## **8. FORMS**

None