

**SEED STRATEGY MISSION:** To grow and sustain an adequate supply of affordable Florida native ecotype seeds produced by a profitable and responsible industry in the State of Florida (*La Florida*, the Land of Flowers).

**RATIONALE:** Despite the substantive private investments in the Florida Wildflower Growers Cooperative and its long partnership with the Florida Wildflower Foundation, the unmet demand for native seed drives the Foundation to initiate and steer a native seed partnership and strategy. Routinely, large quantities of native seed are needed by property owners, forest and wetland restoration and management professionals, water supply and erosion and flood control agencies, developers, mitigation bank operators, and plant nurseries. Establishing a Florida native seed strategy is the necessary first step towards growing and sustaining an adequate supply of affordable Florida native ecotype seeds produced by a profitable industry in the State of Florida. Strategies and partnerships like this are gaining momentum and strength in Texas, Nevada, California, Georgia and elsewhere throughout the country..

Our *land of flowers'* natural botanical diversity, which includes more than 3600 species of native plants, is important to our state's culture and history. Native plant seeds are needed to replenish and restore degraded ecosystems and habitat, our natural heritage. Due to lack of availability, adequate amounts of desired seed cannot be purchased.

Sparse science on commercial seed production in Florida handicaps Florida farmers who have experimented and failed to produce enough seed to meet the demand. Dated state agency rules prevent lawful and responsible collection of native seed on most public lands. The gap is widening between supply and demand. There is general awareness and acceptance that growing the supply of Florida native seed is in everyone's best interest.

**START HERE:** The Florida Wildflower Foundation, Inc. is committed to establishing a Florida Native Seed Partnership to develop and coordinate a native seed strategy that pulls together.... universities; local, regional, state, and federal agencies; non-governmental organizations; farmers; industry; landowners; and native plant and wildflower enthusiasts. This strategy and partnership stems from a quarter century of entrepreneurial trial and error, is modeled on successful seed strategies and partnerships in other states and is inspired by the public-private partnerships supporting other vital commodities in our own state. Initial Strategy Goals & Objectives proposed for consideration and discussion include:

1. Identify research needs.
2. Establish a university-based research center and educational programs to transfer knowledge to the next generation.
3. Increase collaboration for collection of native seed from wild spaces.
4. Quantify the supply and demand for Florida native seed and identify critical species of need.
5. Create tools to connect native seed supply with demand and encourage market stability.
6. Develop best management practices and a certification process to ensure sustainable collection protocols and the ecoregion origin of seed.

