



Seedlings for Schools 2023–24 Final Report

Rose Kinane, Program Coordinator



FLORIDA
Wildflower
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Program Description, Criteria and Timeline

The Seedlings for Schools grant provides an assortment of Florida native wildflowers, classroom resources and professional guidance on garden establishment to pre-K through 12th grade schools throughout Florida. The goal of the program is to increase students' awareness of Florida's native wildflowers and their role in Florida's natural ecosystems through outdoor classrooms.

Grant applications were accepted between March 1 and April 30, 2023. To qualify, teachers submitted an application along with three photos of their prepared garden site. Criteria for eligibility includes a suitable area for growing wildflowers and a commitment by teachers to use their garden as a tool to teach students about the importance of Florida native species.

Recipient teachers are required to complete a fall survey and submit three photos of the planted garden. Teachers are asked to describe the success of their gardens and the interaction of the students as they planted and cared for their wildflowers. Information is also gathered about the use of the garden in achieving Florida curriculum standards. Those who demonstrate a commitment to the program and complete the fall survey are given the option of receiving an additional seedling shipment in the spring.

Grant Awards

The Florida Wildflower Foundation (FWF) was pleased to award more schools this year than in the previous year. Forty-three schools were awarded out of 46 that applied. The schools selected were the ones that applied earliest and provided the best quality applications. Schools were made up of:

- one PreK-Kindergarten
- one PreK-5
- one PreK-6
- five PreK-8
- three K-8
- one K-12
- one 2-8
- 19 elementary schools
- one middle school
- two 6-12
- one Environmental Education Center
- seven high schools

A total of 9,455 students reportedly utilized the gardens. Some schools had multiple classes that worked directly in the garden, while others had only one class work in the garden. Many teachers expressed that the impact was much greater since all students have access to the garden, and the educational opportunities encompassed the whole school. One teacher accounted for 28 students assigned to the garden as part of their curriculum, but 960 students at the school had access to the garden, many of whom spent time there. When asked how many students benefited from the garden in the fall, teachers reported 14,385. Of that number, 8,643 participated in a free lunch program.

Native Butterfly Flowers Nursery in Melbourne supplied and shipped the seedlings this year. Each school received eight seedlings each of Leavenworth's tickseed (*Coreopsis leavenworthii*), Spotted beebalm (*Monarda punctata*), Scorpionstail (*Heliotropium angiospermum*) and Tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*). Due to limited availability, some schools received Partridgepea (*Chamaecrista*



Fall seedlings (Left to right): Leavenworth's tickseed, Tropical sage, Scorpionstail and Forked bluecurls

fasciculata), Blue porterweed (*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*) or Forked bluecurls (*Trichostema dichotomum*).

The 35 schools that qualified for spring shipments received an assortment of Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*), Lanceleaf tickseed (*Coreopsis lanceolata*), Leavenworth's tickseed (*Coreopsis leavenworthii*), Swamp twinflower (*Dyschoriste humistrata*), Tall elephant's foot (*Elephantopus elatus*), Narrowleaf yellowtops (*Flaveria linerias*), Scorpionstail (*Heliotropium angiospermum*), Snow squarestem (*Melanthera nivea*), Tropical puff (*Neptunia pubescens*), Southern beeblossom (*Oenothera simulans*), Narrowleaf silkgrass (*Pityopsis graminifolia*), Tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*), Lyreleaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*), Helmet skullcap (*Scutellaria integrifolia*), Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*), Blue porterweed (*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*), Stokes' aster (*Stokesia leavis*), Rice button aster (*Symphotrichum dumosum*), or Frostweed (*Verbesina virginica*).

Garden Sites and Conditions

Garden sites varied from grow boxes to ground plots larger than 100 square feet. More than half of the garden sites were in full sun, receiving more than six hours per day. Half of the garden sites were occasionally moist. Four were reported as being wetter soil, while the others were relatively dry. About half of the sites used an organic bagged media mix to supplement the soil.



Sunrise Elementary students plant their seedlings

2023 Seedlings for Schools Grant Award Winners

Beachland Elementary, Vero Beach
Bonnevile Elementary, Orlando
Bridges Montessori, Stuart
Children's House Montessori School, DeLand
Compass Outreach and Education Center, Fort Lauderdale
Cranberry Elementary, North Port
Crossroads Academy, Belle Glade
Dorothy C. York Innovation Academy, Apollo Beach
Eagle Creek Elementary, Orlando
East Lake Elementary, Kissimmee
Golden Gate Elementary School, Naples
Goldsboro Elementary Magnet School, Sanford
Hancock Creek Elementary, North Fort Myers
Horizon Elementary, Port Orange
Innovation Montessori High School, Ocoee
Jim Allen Elementary School, Cantonment
Lake Mary Elementary
Little Flower Montessori School, Wilton Manors
Magnolia School, Orlando
Nova Blanche Forman Elementary School, Davie
Orlando Gifted Academy
Plumosa School of the Arts K-8, Delray Beach
Reedy Creek Elementary, Kissimmee
River City Science Academy, Jacksonville
Round Lake Charter, Mount Dora
Sabal Point Elementary, Longwood
Sand Lake Elementary, Orlando
Satellite High School, Satellite Beach
Seminole High School, Seminole
South Plantation High School, Plantation
Springs Coast Environmental Education Center, Spring Hill
St. Mary Magdalen Catholic School, Altamonte Springs
St. Paul's Catholic School, Jacksonville
Summit Questa Montessori School, Davie
Sunrise Elementary, Orlando
The Playgarden, Jacksonville Beach
Timber Springs Middle School, Orlando
Tutor Time Learning Center, Jacksonville
University High School, Orlando
Vineland Elementary School, Rotonda West
Wellington High School
West Melbourne Elementary School for Science
W.T. Dwyer High School, Palm Beach Gardens

Challenges and Successes

Weather is a consistent and unavoidable challenge in Florida. Some schools struggled with the heat during planting, and some struggled with excessive rain. A few of the shipments arrived during the week of Hurricane Idalia. One of the schools had to close, which interfered with their ability to plant and tend the seedlings. Because of this, the seedlings had a tough start. Unfortunately, hurricanes are always a risk during this season.

Teachers prepared the garden sites before the summer, but weeds flourished with the heavy summer rains. One solution to address this would be to sheet mulch, which entails layering biodegradable material like cardboard, newspaper or soil over the area before summer.

One school was devastated when grounds workers tore up the seedlings. Having signage is encouraged to avoid this issue and to educate others about the native plant garden. Animals were also a common threat to the seedlings this year.

Thirty-nine schools out of 43 completed the required fall survey in December. Of those, 35 accepted a spring shipment. A few schools were undergoing campus renovations, which did not allow for a spring garden site. Teachers reported that all successfully established gardens would remain a permanent fixture at the school to support curriculum.



Left to right: Bridges Montessori, Little Flower Montessori and Dorothy C York Innovation Academy

Gardening Partners

Many resources were employed during their grant year, in addition to those provided by FWF, including those found on our classroom resources page. Some schools sought out grants from other organizations as well to maximize the impact of the garden. Schools sought guidance from local native nurseries, Florida Native Plant Society chapters, master gardeners, garden clubs, science teachers and parents. Some formed a Green Committee or school garden club composed of parents, teachers and students to steward the garden.



Nova Blanche Forman Elementary School

Gardens as Educational Tools

While the gardens were primarily used in science curriculum, they were incorporated in a wide variety of studies and subjects, including:

- Reading
- Math (measurement, counting, perimeter and area)
- Observation skills (comparing and identification)
- Social and emotional learning
- Descriptive language
- Nature writing
- Research
- Technology (plant identification apps)
- Engineering
- Horticulture and agriculture
- Plant life cycles and plant anatomy
- Pollination
- Sustainability
- Conservation

Students learned wildflower names, growth habits and growing conditions from the plant profiles provided to teachers when seedlings were shipped.

Amy Friedrichs of Bridges Montessori explained their curriculum:

“The garden is integrated into a class called Sustainable Studies. Grades 1-3 take this class once a week to learn about all aspects of gardening, agriculture and food preparation throughout the year. The first half of the year focuses on soil, seeds and roots as well as propagating plants by seeds and cuttings. The second half of the year focuses on leaves, flowers and fruits as well as gardening for birds and pollinators. We do several pollinator activities and flower dissections in the spring. First graders complete the ‘Botany on Your Plate’ curriculum throughout the year and keep a botany journal. Kindergartners have just started taking the class once a month. So far, we have focused on propagating by seeds, colors in the garden, and shapes in the garden. I design most of the lessons, but am inspired by several organizations, such as Agricultural in the Classroom, Shelburne Farms’ Cultivating Joy and Wonder, Edible Schoolyard Project, LifeLab, and UF Extension.”



Bridges Montessori

Sharon Pitts from Children’s House Montessori School expresses gratitude for the garden:

“Thank you for providing my students with this wonderful learning opportunity and for providing seedlings for a beautiful native wildflower garden for our school! This was a wonderful experience for my students.”

Emily Rodriguez from Golden Gate Elementary commends how the program connects students to their natural surroundings:

“The school garden provides educators and students a chance for fresh air, a change of scenery, hands-on discovery, and alternative ways to learn and teach. Gardens with native and regionally appropriate plants boost biodiversity, which strengthens ecosystems. The students got to think about themselves as part of the ecosystem, and that includes the school garden, backyard and our community.”



Children’s House Montessori School

Promoting Gardens to Others

The native wildflower gardens were praised on school Facebook and Instagram pages, and in newsletters, yearbooks and messages to parents. Some school gardens were recognized by their counties and other agencies, including the Magnolia School, who received recognition from Orange County Public School’s Green Schools and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Green School designation program.

Florida Wildflower Foundation Resources

Teachers were provided a link to FWF's classroom resources web page (www.FlaWildflowers.org/classroom-resources). The page features FWF's downloadable Wild About Wildflowers! Activity Guide, a comprehensive curriculum featuring activities designed to help students achieve educational standards in math, science and language while learning about native plants, pollinators and ecosystems. The activities are aligned to third- and fourth-grade Florida state standards but can be adapted to other grades and ages. The classroom resources page also provides suggestions for books on nature education. Other resources provided include a guide for preparing a wildflower garden site, additional information on planting Florida wildflowers and links to resources on attracting birds and insects with native plants.

Most teachers used some of the classroom resources on the FWF website. More than half of teachers reported using the Wild About Wildflowers! Activity Guide. In the spring, 90 percent said they reviewed the guide. FWF is in the process of expanding this guide to include lessons that emphasize the importance of Florida wildflowers for habitat connectivity and ecosystem health, and to teach students how to identify wildflowers, where to find wildflowers, how they are named and much more.



Survey excerpts

Following are teacher comments from the December 2023 and May 2024 surveys that demonstrate how students have connected with the school gardens.

Beachland Elementary, Vero Beach; Aurora Stein

The children question every time new plants go in if they are native or non-native and if the plant is invasive. I enjoy listening to the passion in their questions because they now understand how plants can affect the world around them. We went from having a few bees in this space to now having many different species including ladybugs, frogs, hummingbirds, clearwing hummingbird moths, buckeyes, atalas, zebra [longwings], gulf fritillaries, giant swallowtails, monarchs, wasps and more bees, along with the larvae that come with adding host plants. We already have seed pods from the Partridgepea! We will grow those out and place them in other parts of the garden. We are grateful for the opportunity to enjoy these plants. We look forward to the years ahead of growing our garden. Thank you!

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*— Aurora Stein,
Beachland Elementary*

Bonneville Elementary, Orlando; Susan Avella

We learned about our digital footprints and what that means, how we can decrease it in our school and at home. We explained to the students which plants we were planting and asked them to do their own research during one of our club meetings.

Bridges Montessori, Stuart; Amy Friedrichs

Students in grades 1-3 helped to remove weeds, dig holes, apply worm castings to amend the soil, plant the initial seedlings, and water. Seedlings were delicate, so they needed some assistance.

[Students] watered and matched the homemade signs with the seedling they transplanted.

The extra flowers helped fill-in from the fall plantings. We did lessons to connect native plant habitats to the animals they support. We printed pictures of the flowers, along with the name and which animal it attracts.

We focused our studies on seed sorts, seed dissections and identifying plant parts. Students created a seed booklet that described the seed parts. Students were able to identify the seed coat, cotyledon and embryo through dissections.

Children's House Montessori School, DeLand; Sharon Pitts

Creating a native wildflower garden with my students was fulfilling. I was grateful for the opportunity to share this amazing project with them. Seeing the excitement on their little faces as they planted a seedling and witnessing the pride they exhibited afterwards warmed my heart. Although planting was the most exciting part of the project for the students, I enjoyed sharing information about the particular wildflowers and why selecting native plants is a good option. Creating a Florida native wildflower garden with my students was an amazing experience for myself and the students. Garden time is many students' favorite time of the school day.

The wildflower garden was originally a grassy area surrounding our patio area. Grass was removed by an adult (me) as it was very thick and too difficult for the students. However, students helped with preparation by routinely weeding and loosening the soil prior to planting. All of the seedlings were planted by the students, with my supervision. Everyone enjoyed watering the seedlings. Our Florida native wildflower garden exceeded our expectations and is a beautiful addition to our outdoor garden area. My students were so excited to receive, plant, and care for the seedlings. Together we expanded our knowledge and created many wonderful memories. We are looking forward to maintaining our garden and enjoying its beauty.



Bridges Montessori

Seeing the excitement on their little faces as they planted a seedling and witnessing the pride they exhibited afterwards warmed my heart... Garden time is many students' favorite time of the school day.

*— Sharon Pitts,
Children's House Montessori School*

Cranberry Elementary School, North Port; Laura Kemble

This is such an amazing program! One of my plants, the partridgepea, came to me as a broken little plant. I planted it anyway, and now it is a beautiful, flowering, bush. Just observing the progression of growth of some of these plants has been inspiring. I love going out to my garden each day!

Our whole grade level of 2nd graders prepares and maintains the garden with me. This has been the best year yet for our wildflowers thriving, blooming and reseeding themselves. I get so many compliments about our wildflowers. The students are learning their names and studying the pollinators that live on them. This has been a great season!

Crossroads Academy, Belle Glade; Juliette Franklin

We enjoy learning about the different wildflowers and all their pollinators! Thank you!

Students helped plant the seedlings and helped with the regular maintaining of the garden by weeding and watering as needed. We used the garden to stress the importance of sustainability and the benefits to our native pollinators to have native host plants.

Dorothy C York Innovation Academy, Apollo Beach; Jerry Turner

Your kindness, flexibility with the resending of flowers, and endless generosity has provided our campus with an irreplaceable resource which extends past our campus and into our student's homes. We look forward to working more with Florida Wildflowers in the future!

Our project experience was an amazing one to say the least!

Eagle Creek Elementary, Orlando; Jacqueline Schauer

Our school had a fabulous experience! Thank you for the opportunity to plant seedlings in fall and in spring! Our students loved the opportunity to learn about each of the seedlings and watch them grow throughout the year. Students from National Elementary Honor Society helped plant and learned about each of the seedlings from the Florida Wildflower Foundation website.

Our garden is used during a variety of times, including during the reading block, observational drawings in art, and the life cycle for science. Thank you for providing this opportunity for our students! They loved planting the seedlings, learning their names and watching them grow. The flowers of Scorpionstail are a crowd favorite. After seeing pictures of the Forked bluecurls, they are waiting for the blooms, and they love smelling the Dotted horsemint.

Thank you for providing this opportunity for our students! They loved planting the seedlings, learning their names and watching them grow.

*— Jacqueline Schauer,
Eagle Creek Elementary*

East Lake Elementary, Kissimmee; Tiffany Perry

The garden club students were very eager and excited about transplanting sproutlings to our garden bed. They removed any weeds and debris from the garden bed. They added two bags of soil to the bed and made holes for the sproutlings to go into. Using what they've learned in garden club about properly and carefully removing small plants from starter trays and pots, they transplanted the sproutlings into the bed and made sure that they were properly watered all the weeks that followed.

Golden Gate Elementary, Naples; Emily Rodriguez

The wildflower garden experience has been amazing and has gone above our expectations. The wildflower garden has enhanced our outdoor learning site with beautiful flowers and vibrant wildlife. It creates a more pleasant and enjoyable atmosphere for students, teachers and parents. Teachers use the school garden as a living classroom to teach standards for all subjects.

The Seedlings for Schools program has been an incredible asset to our educational efforts this year. The grant of wildflower seedlings transformed our school garden into a vibrant, living classroom that sparked curiosity and enthusiasm among our students. The beautiful array of native wildflowers not only enhanced the aesthetic appeal of our garden but also provided a rich, hands-on learning environment that brought our environmental education curriculum to life. Our students were captivated by the opportunity to observe the growth and development of the wildflowers as well as the presence of diverse pollinators visiting the flowers. The wildflowers have thrived in the garden, adding vibrant colors and attracting various pollinators, just as we had hoped.

The garden has become a beautiful and educational addition to our school, providing a serene environment for both students and staff to enjoy. This project has truly enhanced our school grounds and provided a living classroom for learning about nature and the importance of plant diversity.

The Seedlings for Schools program exceeded our expectations in every way. It provided the resources needed to create an engaging, educational garden space that continues to benefit our entire school community.

*— Emily Rodriguez,
Golden Gate Elementary*

The Seedlings for Schools program exceeded our expectations in every way. It provided the resources needed to create an engaging, educational garden space that continues to benefit our entire school community. We are incredibly grateful for this opportunity and look forward to seeing the long-term impact it will have on our students' understanding and appreciation of the natural world. Thank you for making this possible!

Goldsboro Elementary Magnet School, Sanford; Mary Hess

The students were excited to receive wildflower plants. This year we used the plants to fill in the bare spots where the flowers did not grow in the past. So far it has been a success. Students were able to get their hands dirty and enjoyed learning about the importance of Florida wildflowers and pollination.

First graders use the garden to wonder and make observations on a rotation. Fourth grade has many benchmarks that include pollination and dissection of flowers. This year we invited the Ecology Department at UCF to come teach the fourth graders about pollinators. We used the garden to collect insects to see the pollen, then released them.

Our gardens on campus continue to thrive thanks to the Seedlings for Schools program. We are so thankful for the opportunity to participate year after year, using the flowers to teach about our native flowers and the importance of pollinators. We appreciate all you have done for the school and the students.

Hancock Creek Elementary, North Fort Myers; Vanessa Rice

Thank you so much for the plants! We really did appreciate them, and I know our students will learn a lot from them and the garden in the spring and in the years to come as they reseed. The biggest excitement for us has been the addition of the newcomer Partridgepea.

Our Honor Society students planted the spring shipment and they LOVED that opportunity. By far the best part was being able to have our students get the opportunity to be in on the planting. They also helped a few times a month with upkeep for the garden. We were able to put some of the plants in the Pine Flatwoods demonstration area, which was awesome. I feel like it was very successful and we really appreciated both shipments and the experience.

Horizon Elementary, Port Orange; Bill Strickland

Students did much of the prep work and all of the maintenance work. They watered and weeded when necessary. We watered the garden daily for the first two weeks and then every few days. Students did almost 100% of the work. We will be placing informational signage in the garden for students to read as they enter campus. Information on pollinators and the importance of them will be included.

Jim Allen Elementary, Cantonment; Holly Reynolds

Students and myself enjoyed the experience of potting and planning our garden. Our plans are to maintain and grow for many years to come. The garden was framed with landscape timbers, and cardboard was used as a base to cover the bottom. We topped cardboard with dried leaves and donated soil/compost. When spring comes, we plan to continue to measure rain and growth for our plants. We would also like to add to our native garden. A fellow teacher retired and bought a bird bath for our garden. Students are very proud of what has been accomplished.

Students were so excited to receive the seedlings. We made sure that we set aside the time to plant them the day after we received them. Students were put into small groups and given a few plants to add to the native garden. The garden was watered at least once a week and students enjoyed going outside to keep a check on their progress. Students wrote stories about what they wanted to gain from the garden and how it was



Jim Allen Elementary

going to help the beneficial bugs and pollinators in our area. The garden is a success! Pine straw has been added as bedding to maintain moisture.

The website was awesome and I printed out all of the native plants and pictures, and we discussed them and hung them in our classroom. Great job with resources! Thank you. We love our garden and want you to know how much we appreciate our seedlings, which provided us with this outdoors activity. Thank you!

Lake Mary Elementary, Lake Mary; Eevee Johnson

The students and I prepared the garden for two weeks before the seedlings arrived. We weeded the bed and refreshed the soil. The week before the seedlings arrived, we sectioned off the garden in 12X12 squares. Once the seedlings arrived we planted each seedling in their own square. Our seedlings grew so well and have attracted many butterflies, birds and other creatures.

Our expectations met reality and we absolutely love our garden! We used our garden and the curriculum provided through the Florida Wildflower Foundation. We studied about our seedlings in our garden and even dissected a flower to see all of its parts. There are a few more lessons we are going to do using the curriculum through the Florida Wildflower Foundation.

Little Flower Montessori School, Wilton Manors; Lisa Cassanelli

The children participated in the preparation of the planters and have been almost entirely responsible for the care and tending of the garden. Older students measured plant growth and made bar graphs/charts. We also were able to introduce other kingdoms of the living world when we noticed slime mold appear in our second planter. The children were surprised to learn that slime mold is not a fungus but a member of the protist kingdom. Younger students studied the margins and venation of the leaves in the garden as well as the various types of aerial stems.

We also used the garden for several language activities, including an introduction to adjectives and nature writing. The students were happy to learn about native species of plants and also the native species of animals (and non-native iguanas) that were drawn to our garden. They were so keen to care for and tend to the plants on a daily basis that they most probably over-watered the garden on several occasions. They became quite aware of the amount of rain we receive in South Florida and were ultimately grateful that plants can do so well even in the autumn months.



Little Flower Montessori School

Thank you very much for your generosity and support with this project! We look forward to creating a maintenance plan for our garden and working with future students and families next year!

Nova Blanche Forman Elementary, Davie; Raquel Reyes

We created labels with pictures for each type of plant. The labels were posted in the window next to the plant so passers-by could match the plant to the name. The garden helped facilitate teaching Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Students were coached to collaborate with their peers and work as a team to achieve goals. Students enjoyed different roles in garden maintenance: weeding, watering and planting. We focused on the traits of responsibility by having students take care of specific plants or sections of the garden.

Our students researched and identified the native plants in our garden. We discussed the importance of maintaining genetic diversity in native plant populations. We emphasized the benefits of planting native species in home and school gardens. We also talked about water conservation and how native plants are often well-suited to local climates.

This was a wonderfully accessible and engaging way to bring hands-on science into our classrooms and school. Thank you for a great experience!

Orlando Gifted Academy, Orlando; Giovanna Ortiz

The garden was used for enrichment during our advanced academics courses. Some students were asked to complete independent research projects on plant growth and maintenance of Florida native ecosystems. Through gardening club, we have used several of the provided curriculum items to teach the students about native plants and Florida ecosystems.

Plumosa School of the Arts, Delray Beach; Sally Smollar

We pulled out all of the non-native plants in the garden bed, including non-native porterweed, snake plants, etc. Then they weeded the area and planted the wildflowers, added mulch and watered them in. [Students] enjoyed the planting experience and encountered lots of reptiles and insects, which they loved. The students learned about the reasons for planting natives and pulling out invasives. They know it is important for creating food and habitat for our native wildlife. We appreciate the opportunity and can't wait to see them grow.



Plumosa School of the Arts

River City Science Academy Middle High School, Jacksonville; Jarred Shaw

The students in the garden club took part in the planting of the seedlings. Separating them and then cultivating them until they grew bigger was part of a certain science class. Then the garden club planted them. Students did a scavenger hunt identifying native plants using plant id apps and then researched the plants.

Round Lake Charter School, Mount Dora; Summer Dominick

Our project went really well! The students gathered cardboard from the cafeteria and front office. They flattened the boxes, removing all the plastic tape. The cardboard was placed on the ground as weed barrier adjacent to the middle school entry sidewalk (60' x4'). Montage potting mix was ordered in bulk and delivered to the school. The driver placed three large piles onto the cardboard and the students spread it out using shovels and rakes until it was about 8" thick (mounded garden). The next step was adding the irrigation system. Luckily there was a hose bib near the building at the end of the garden. The students set up the irrigation time, added the backflow preventer, pressure regulator, and hose connection. They ran the flexible pipe down the center of the garden until it reached the end. The students used a yard stick to space the heads every four feet, poked a hole in the pipe, installed the smaller tubing, riser and irrigation heads. After the bed was prepped, the students placed the plants, being mindful of spacing requirements, and planted them. The garden has not required much maintenance as the thick cardboard layer has kept out the weeds.

We love this program and we love the plants. They have been a great way to help transition our campus from a barren space to a thriving wildlife habitat. We are seeing more and more birds, bees, butterflies and even dragonflies.

*— Summer Dominick,
Round Lake Charter School*

The garden was used specifically with our environmental stewardship elective students.

Students learn about the impact and importance of environmental protection, plants, wildlife and actions to take to make positive impacts in the world. Having the students create a garden from scratch gives them real world experiences on how to create a pollinator-friendly habitat. We also added a rock garden in the bed with stones created by middle school students during their mental health week. The stones have drawings and positive encouraging words on them.

We love this program and we love the plants. They have been a great way to help to transition our campus from a barren space to a thriving wildlife habitat. We are seeing more and more birds, bees, butterflies and even dragonflies.

Sabal Point Elementary, Longwood; Cherie Bazemore

The Native Florida Wildflower project experience has been an excellent hands-on learning experience for my students. The students took an active part in the garden preparation and planting. They researched each plant to gain knowledge and understanding of what each plant needed, especially with regards to placement and watering needs. Based on what they learned, the students then decided placement for each plant within the garden bed. The students worked in small groups to convey their knowledge by creating a Powerpoint and presenting it to the class. The class then compared and contrasted ideas to decide on the final placement.

I think that the actual reality of the garden exceeded our expectations. We encountered no problems implementing the garden into fruition. The garden was used with the gifted curriculum to help meet the Florida Frameworks for Gifted Learners goals and objectives. The garden was used to educate students about the need and use of Florida native plants, pollination and how both help the environment. The garden was a vital part of the students' hands on learning experience.

Saint Mary Magdalen Catholic School, Altamonte Springs; Mina Harper

We have two second grade classes. We take turns watering the plants and pulling weeds. We have had so much fun planting, watering, taking care of our plants and watching our flowers grow and bloom. Also, when the students see a butterfly near the flowers, they get so excited and most of the kiddos talk about the butterfly being a pollinator. This has been so engaging, educational and fun.

Our second-grade students have learned so much about the importance of Florida wildflowers and so have I. We hope this continues for next year. In science, we had a unit on life cycles of living things. We made a diagram of the life cycle of a plant. We also learned all about pollinators and the importance of bees and butterflies. We discussed how our garden could help the living creatures, and the students really want to help bees and butterflies by creating a garden for them.

Both second grade classes planted the wildflowers for the two shipments that we received. We watered the wildflowers every day by allowing two students at a time in rotations so everyone was actively involved. About every 2-3 months, we would weed the garden together to help make it look pretty and cared for.

The garden has been very successful, and the children have truly enjoyed and taken pride in their hard work to keep everything alive and blooming. I feel that the students learned so much this year with the help of the Florida Wildflower Foundation. We have so much fun watering the plants and looking at them outside together! I had no idea this would be so much fun!!! Such an awesome experience for our second grade students.

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*— Mina Harper,
Saint Mary Magdalen Catholic School*



St. Mary Magdalen Catholic School

Sand Lake Elementary, Orlando; Laura Stockwell

My students prepared the bed by pulling weeds. They also planned how to space and plant the seedlings based upon the maturity size and color of the flower. My expectations were exceeded, and the students were very engaged and excited to learn about Florida wildflowers. It was interesting to learn about new species of flowers and to raise awareness that these plants use fewer resources

than “regular” flowers. I’ve enjoyed this project sooo much. My students have been very engaged in the garden and love to see them grow and bloom. This is the first year in many years our garden has looked great. I’m excited to add another bed next year and continue to grow Florida native plants. On a personal note, I plan to implement Florida natives into my home landscaping.

Satellite High School, Satellite Beach; Heather Pierce

Students researched native plants for our school’s memorial garden curation. The students had a good time setting up our garden and enjoyed the actual planting process.

Seminole High School, Seminole; Jerry Cantrell

The students decided the location of the garden. They have worked collaboratively with educators for the locations as these plants are in a common area between classes. The students have prepared the grounds for planting. Math, science, language arts and engineering are collaboratively working with students with respect to the gardens.

South Plantation High School, Plantation; Jody Berman

In our 9th grade research classes, students learned about plant identification as well as proper planting techniques. As an environmental science magnet school, students conduct a variety of projects that involve citizen science projects focused on the scientific skills of observation, species identification and data collection.

The garden was very successful. We planted it with an afterschool club of 30+ students in grades 9 through 12. They learned a lot about planting, weeding and garden maintenance. As we planted the garden in a prominent location for the magnet program, classes from our entire program were able to enjoy the flowers and the pollinators that they brought in. They are excited to watch the garden grow and develop in the future.

Springs Coast Environmental Education Center, Spring Hill; Cheryl Paradis

Students weeded and prepared the garden boxes. We had established plants in the garden and made space for the new little plants. Students planted the new little plants and watered them daily using the water from our rain barrels. This gave us a chance to learn about using captured water to water plants. The students were proud and took photos of the plants they planted. We ask students to identify the names of wildflowers in the garden during a trail walk with sixth grade students. We ask second grade students to water the plants using rain water. We ask fifth grade students to photograph the plants. We ask fourth grade students to chart the growth and health of the plants. When students say they want to grow plants at home like this, we know we have made an impact. I think this is an exceptional program to inspire students to fall in love with the beauty of Florida’s wildflowers!

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*— Cheryl Paradis,
Springs Coast Environmental
Education Center*

St. Paul’s Catholic School Riverside, Jacksonville; Nancy Parliament

The children participated in all of it including watering, deadheading, weeding and planting. It has been fabulous and aligns with our science curriculum. The children plant and water and oversee weed plucking, etc.



Springs Coast Environmental Education Center

Summit Questa Montessori School, Davie; Bonnie Kohner

The students participated in preparing the garden areas by weeding, organizing the layout, tilling the soil and measuring the spaces. Students cleared and prepped three garden spaces. They planned where to plant each seedling, sketching and labeling the spaces. They drew the different seedlings in their science notebooks when first received, how they look planted and how they have changed over the last month. Students learned the difference between native and invasive, the impact of each on an ecosystem, why different plants grow best in different locations, how native plants support the native wildlife, and how they have been used over time for medicinal and functional purposes. Thank you so much for the opportunity! My students loved the chance to stick their hands in the soil, get dirty, learn about something new and watch the flowers bloom! We just started to see pollinators and the students are excited to identify them and support them!

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*— Bonnie Kohner,
Summit Questa Montessori School*

Sunrise Elementary, Orlando; Kim Klein

Students prepared the garden bed to get it ready for the plants. The 4th graders did everything: planting, weeding and watering. They measured and marked where the plants should be planted. When the plants arrived, students used the gardening tools to plant the plants in the garden. Each class took turns measuring and rechecking if the measurements are correct. We used it for our science lessons and the school used it for part of their green school initiative. Our garden was successful, and the students love going there to check on it. They also like sitting there and reading. We are hoping with the colder weather coming we will continue to be successful. The students will be researching what to do for the plants during the winter. They took pride in their garden plot and loved looking at their plants.

The Playgarden, Jacksonville Beach; Laura Cruz

We are a play and nature based school so our curriculum is exploratory. Children can walk through the garden beds and investigate. They participate in the tending of the garden with weeding, watering and wondering. One class painted a Hummingbird Forest Class garden sign and recycled wood stakes to protect from foot traffic. Thank you so much for including us in this opportunity. As a play based preschool, although the children didn't do specific activities from your guide book, the information comes in very handy for our teachers who can then build their knowledge of gardening, native plants and growing confidence. This knowledge is passed down to the children and families in an organic capacity. Our expectations were not only met but exceeded. We enjoyed learning about new varieties to expand our garden's reach for pollinators.



The Playgarden

Timber Springs Middle School, Orlando; Lismaris Cornier Rosario

We have a huge outdoor learnscape with native plants, pollinators and fruit trees. Our garden initiative is managed by the Green School Team, which educates the whole school through the morning announcements on environmental awareness such as conservation and our schoolwide initiatives (including this seedling project). We have actively worked with Ideas for Us, the OCPS Sustainability Department, the PTSA, and master gardener parents who have contributed to the education process in regard to planting right and

tending to the garden. We taught our students about the different types of soil in our area and what plants thrive in the types and climates.

Tutor Time Learning Center #6042, Jacksonville; Missy Shipley

We talk about our plants all day. Anytime we can include them in an activity we discuss. Math skills, science knowledge and language have all been enhanced by adding this container garden to our classroom.

University High School, Orlando; Wanda Alvarado

Students in AP Environmental Science, AP Biology and IB Science were introduced to the school garden and informed of the goals of the project. As we continue to grow, we will continue to incorporate the school garden into experiential learning. With the additional wildflowers that we received we created a larger area for the flowers adjacent to our vegetable garden. Students labeled the plants so that visitors would be able to identify what was planted. Students have been able to track the growth of the plants on a weekly basis and are observing an increase of pollinators to the area.



Tutor Time Learning Center

Vineland Elementary, Rotonda West; Kathy Wylie

We discussed native host and nectar plants. Life cycle is part of our curriculum as well as habitats.

West Melbourne Elementary, West Melbourne, Ann Cook

Students learned the life cycle, flowering/nonflowering plants, seeds, etc. according to the Florida Science Standards. Later in our studies of migration, native plants were discussed as to how they support migrating birds who depend upon the plants.

Wellington High School, Wellington; Kristina Shatskin

It was used with English language arts and science to focus on the scientific parts of the flowers and their reproduction. Then, the students wrote about the progress and findings. We used it in our agriscience class for weekly participation and assignments. Students were expected to water the flowers and tend to them daily in class. In addition, some of our class assignments were centered around the flowers and bees to have the students conduct further research and understand their conditions and importance.

Program Coordinator Comments

This is the first year that seedlings were provided by Native Butterfly Flowers Nursery. They did an incredible job stepping up to this challenge. This was the first time the nursery has shipped seedlings, which is a delicate process. I am so grateful to them for the extra time and energy they expended to make sure that kids would be inspired by beautiful native wildflowers this year. We would not have been able to continue this program without them.

Acknowledgments

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