

Seeds of Knowledge 2024–25 Final Report

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Program Description, Criteria and Timeline

The Seeds of Knowledge Library Demonstration Garden Grant provides up to \$750 in funding to Florida public libraries to establish or enhance small native plant demonstration gardens. Grant funds are used primarily to purchase Florida native wildflowers, grasses, shrubs or vines, and may also support educational signage or related materials. Participating libraries additionally receive native seeds twice a year from the Florida Wildflower Foundation to distribute through their existing seed libraries. The program's goal is to increase public familiarity with native plants, demonstrate their landscaping potential, provide community access to native wildflower seed, and highlight their value in supporting pollinators and other wildlife.

Applications are accepted annually between Jan 1 and Feb 15. Eligibility is limited to Florida-based public libraries that can demonstrate the ability to install and maintain native plantings and offer educational programming aligned with the garden's purpose. Libraries are encouraged to partner with community volunteers or organizations such as Master Gardeners, Florida Native Plant Society chapters or garden clubs to assist with garden establishment, maintenance and outreach.

Plantings must be located in publicly accessible areas on library grounds and be properly prepared prior to installation. All plants and seeds must be native to Florida,



The native demonstration garden at the Winter Park Library was installed in partnership with Orange County UF/IFAS Extension.



Native wildflowers and friendly signage help Bay County Public Library visitors – and one curious rabbit – learn about Florida's native plants.

suitable for the site and region, and sourced from approved native plant nurseries. Each garden must remain in place and be maintained for at least one year following installation.

Educational and outreach components are required and include interpretive signage provided by the Foundation featuring a QR code that links to a dedicated garden information page. Libraries must also offer at least one public program on native plants or a related topic, along with plant identification materials and informational handouts or brochures. Grantees are expected to secure at least one media feature — such as an article, blog post or video — within 60 days of installation and to distribute native seeds provided by the Foundation twice annually through their seed libraries.

Grant Awards

This year, six libraries (selected from 12 applications) were awarded full grants through the pilot program. The awardees were:

- **Bay County Public Library,**
Panama City
- **Fort White Branch Library,**
Columbia County
- **Hernando County Library,** Brooksville
- **City of Tavares Public Library,**
Lake County
- **Winter Park Library,**
Orange County
- **New Port Richey Public Library,**
Pasco County

In total, more than 4,500 square feet of garden space were newly planted or enhanced with 100% Florida native plants and more than 600 packets of native wildflower seeds have been distributed to library visitors. Hundreds of patrons have enjoyed the gardens and participated in a variety of educational activities, including monthly programs, family events, wildflower walks and homeschool class visits.

Libraries partnered with Master Gardeners, UF/IFAS Extension, Florida Native Plant Society chapters, Audubon chapters, horticulture staff and community volunteers to support garden installation, maintenance and educational programming.



The Fort White Branch Library converted an existing garden to an all-native showcase. The space includes a footbridge, birdbath and other inviting features.



A vintage card catalog finds new life hosting the Hernando County Library's seed library.

Grantee Reflections

Following are comments from grantee surveys that demonstrate how the community is connecting with and utilizing the garden:

“Our demonstration garden provides educational opportunities every day! Signage identifies the plants, and passersby can learn about the plants and see how they change throughout the year.”

— Robin Shader, Bay County

“A homeschool group visits every Monday as part of their nature curriculum, engaging directly with the native plants.”

— Rebecca Campbell, City of Tavares

“We participated in the Great Southeast Pollinator Census, where adults visited the garden and counted pollinators that visited specific plants.”

— Patty Street, Columbia County

“We meet as a group once a month to maintain the gardens and to have a brief discussion on one of the species growing in the garden, or to discuss a pollinator of the month. When the weather cools off, I will be incorporating this garden into seasonal classes that I teach at the library, too.”

— Heather Kalaman, Winter Park



A burst of native blooms greets Bay County Public Library visitors.



A welcoming spot to read outdoors at the Hernando County Library, framed by native plants and a vibrant mural.

Acknowledgments

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