



VISTA MATTERS

-March 2024 Edition-

Yes, You Can Help Make April 13th a Success. Here's How!

April 13 is fast arriving. Our 10th anniversary celebration planning committee is busy with all the details. But we can use your help and resources. There are many opportunities for you to help. Contact Committee Co-Chair **Marcy Biller** to tell her what you can contribute/lend to help make this event a huge success:

- Folding tables (6-8 ft) and card tables.
- 6 vendor type tents.
- Clipboards for the silent auction.
- Donations of new items for the silent auction. Ideas: Unopened seed packets, healthy seedlings. Nature/food/cooking items. Plants. Artsy-crafty items. Garden tools. Children's gardening items.
- Donations of gift cards for the silent auction (ask your favorite restaurants, retailers, area nurseries, and garden centers).
- Cash donations to cover expenses.
- Someone to coordinate taking photos/video during the event and assembling afterwards.

Remember that as a non profit 501(c)(3) organization, all donations to VISTA are tax deductible to the extent of the law and we will provide you with a letter of thanks for each donation.

Companion Planting

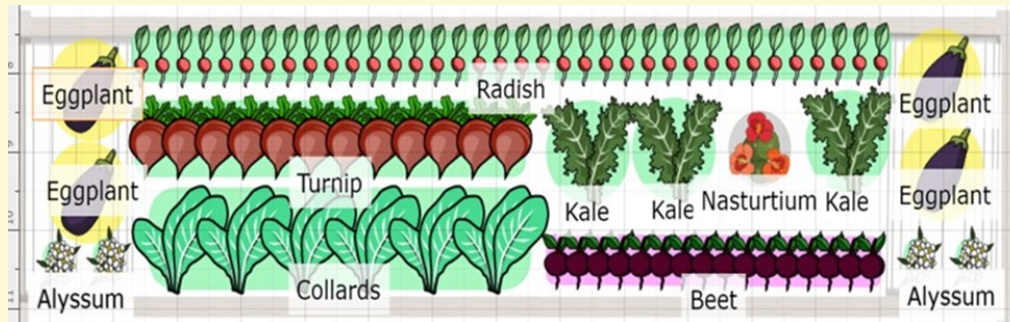
Successful gardeners maximize garden space, control pesky plant pests and produce more and tastier vegetables by companion planting.

During VISTA's Spring season, watch "three sisters" growing in Rolfe's and Mark's gardens (AE1, BE4). First, they plant corn and when it is five inches tall, alternately sow bean and squash seeds around each corn stalk. The corn stalks serve as natural trellises for beans, while squash provides ground cover to suppress weeds. Historically, Native Americans grew these companions that became known as the "three sisters" that flourished together.

Many VISTA gardeners open files attached to the [Vegetable Information Sheets](#) on our website to find compatible and incompatible plants for the vegetables they grow.

For example, those who grow [Burgundy Mini Broccoli](#) click the relevant "Download File" to find helpful information about planting, irrigating, fertilizing, and harvesting their broccoli plant, as well as information about companion plants.

Online garden planners such as the [Southern Exposure Seed Exchange Garden Planner](#) help gardeners space plants, as well as choose helpful companions so their vegetables flourish and produce well. For more information go to <https://www.vistagardentampa.org/learn> and click on Companion Planting.



Save the Date!
Saturday, April 13 10a-2p
VISTA's 10th anniversary celebration

Plant Feature

Coontie, *Zamia integrifolia*

It was here before the dinosaurs!

A member of the prehistoric [cycad](#) plant family, Coontie, *Zamia integrifolia*, remains a

hardy shrub adding visual "evergreen" to





hardy shrub adding visual evergreen to landscapes in Carrollwood, Northdale, Lutz and beyond.

Interestingly, fossil records reveal that Coonties existed 298+ million years ago during the Permian period of the Paleozoic Era – before dinosaurs.

The Coontie is the preferred host plant of Atala butterflies. [Hear the story](#) of the butterflies returning to Florida as more Coonties are planted.

Caution: This is not one of our edibles at VISTA! Every part of the Coontie can be toxic. Some even advise wearing gloves when harvesting and planting the interesting orange Coontie seeds. [Read More](#)



Meet Our Gardeners

Yvonne Scalise gardens in one of VISTA's two highly elevated garden beds located by the great old Live Oak tree. Yvonne co-chairs VISTA's 10th Anniversary Celebration planning committee. [Read More](#)

Mark Your Calendars

March Calendar of Events

Friday, March 1 8-10a

Join volunteers maintaining the new native plant garden at Carrollwood Village Park.

Saturdays, March 2 and 16 8a-11a

Volunteer to work alongside Sickles HS National Honor Society members as they complete planned projects at VISTA.

Saturday, March 23 9a

Tea in the Garden - gather in the Pavilion for a tea party! Collect your own mixture of herbs from the herb garden, and brew your tea onsite with local honey, lemon and ginger. Stay for cookies and a game of herb trivia with the Education and Herb Garden Committees.

Sunday, March 24 8:30a-11a

Volunteer to work alongside USF Rotaract members in the Woodland and UT PEACE volunteers in the Wildflower Garden at VISTA.



Woodland

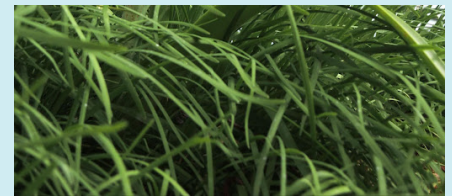
There is steady progress in restoring VISTA's Woodland. These photos show the removal of invasive Brazilian peppertree and [Japanese climbing fern](#) with the help of many volunteers. The area is no longer quite so impenetrable—we can see the cypress swamp!



Education

If VISTA had Academy Awards, Nicole Jagusztyn, Education Committee Chair, would win Best Short Subject for this [Irrigation Video](#)

If you missed the irrigation workshop, this new video is always available on the VISTA website with everything you need to know to install a new irrigation system in your garden plot! Brava, Nicole!



Herb Garden

Spring has sprung! It's time to get your cleaning done, push forward your clocks, and make this [herby, lemony pasta dish](#) using fresh herbs from our very own

We have plenty of chives growing underneath the pergola in VISTA's herb garden!

Feel free to get creative with this recipe! While it calls for chives, some fresh lemon thyme or Italian parsley certainly wouldn't be out of place here. Garnish with basil, or use fresh dill in combination with the chives. If there's a fun twist you'd like to add to your pasta, but

don't see it growing in the

herb garden, reach out to Rita or Kathy! We'll plant it, so you can add it to your dish.



Wildflower Garden

A Bluebird House and squirrel-proof bird feeder welcome birds to VISTA's Wildflower Garden just in time for **nesting season**. The Wildflower Garden Committee met in February when Linda Schocken shared valuable information on optimizing habitats to stem the **decline of the bird population**.



Have You Seen This at VISTA?

VISTA Gardens was selected as one of 15 farms and gardens by USF's Geography and Environmental Science Programs for an exciting research project focused on studying insect biodiversity in urban and suburban environments. The project aims to understand how

biodiversity in urban farms and community gardens. The research aims to contribute valuable insights into the local insect communities and their roles in sustainable agriculture. The students and their professor are conducting insect collections using small, harmless insect traps (pitfall traps). And will be collecting several samplings at each participating farm/garden this semester. The traps will be in place until May. So, please look but do not disturb these insect traps. And thank you Cabell, Susan/Terrisa, Cecilia, Karen, Barb and Monarch Waystation for allowing USF to place their traps in your beds. To see VISTA in the news about this USF insect study, visit <https://www.tampabeacon.com/news/carrollwood/>

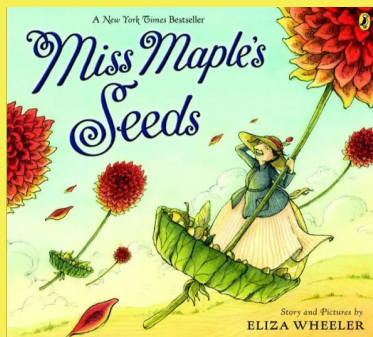
VISTA Question & Answer

Q: I am new to organic gardening, and I am unsure of which products are safe to use on my bed. Where can I go to learn more?

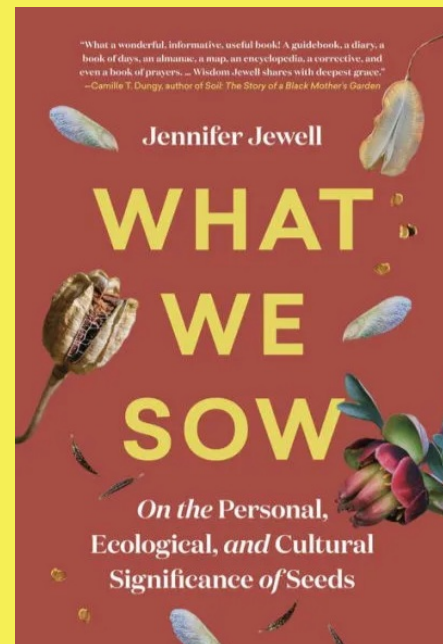
A: There is a fantastic website dedicated to organic operations. Please checkout [OMRI, The Organic Materials Review Institute](#). Here you can search products to ensure they meet organic standards. For local supplies and information, you can also visit Urban Roots (where VISTA members receive a discount).

New in the Little Free Library

VISTA and our community appreciate Forever Friends for the grant to purchase books for the Little Free Library



“Miss Maple's Seeds” by Eliza Wheeler
This stunning New York Times Bestseller introduces the kind, nature-loving Miss Maple, who celebrates the miracle in each seed—perfect for fans of Miss Rumphius!
Ages 3-5 [READ MORE](#)



“What We Sow: On the Personal, Ecological, and Cultural Significance of Seeds” by Jennifer Jewell

“A fascinating discourse on seeds, how we

use and abuse them, and how to forge a more sustainable relationship with the

more sustainable relationship with the seeds we depend on.” Douglas Tallamay, author of “Nature’s Best Hope” [READ MORE](#)

Don’t panic, it’s organic! —Andy Lopez

[Click here](#) to submit your photos and stories for future editions of VISTA Matters.

VISTA Gardens
13572 South Village Drive
Tampa, Florida 33618

Connect with us



VISTA Gardens | 13572 South Village Drive, Tampa, FL 33618

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