



# VISTA MATTERS

-August Edition -

## Readying Your Bed for Fall 2024 *Four Easy Steps*



**Soon, it will be time to plant your tomatoes and eggplants and peppers. Your soil has rested and revived this summer under the watchful eye of your cover crops. In September your seeds and seedlings will grow to become beautiful and robust producers of fruits and vegetables. Here's how to get your bed ready for the Fall planting season:**

1. Two to three weeks BEFORE you plant your seeds or seedlings, remove all cover crop vegetation by chopping-and-dropping each plant. Using clippers and/or loppers found in the equipment shed, starting at the top of the plant, chop the leaves and stems into smaller pieces and allow them to drop to the soil. Gently spread the chopped leaves and stems across your soil. They will decompose and add additional nutrients to your soil. Chop only to the soil level, leaving the roots underground, where the roots will quickly decompose helping to further feed the soil and you won't be disturbing all the good and helpful microbes. They like

to stay in the dark and do their thing underground. Remember to rinse and sanitize your equipment before returning it to the shed.

2. Add soil from the concrete block bin if your soil level is more than an inch below the top of your bed, leaving room for compost. By hand or with a rake, gently work the new soil in among your dropped cover crop leaves.
3. Add compost to your bed. From the storage bins under the compost tent, use the yellow buckets to bring one bucket full for a half bed, two buckets full for a whole bed. In August you will find a bag of Coast of Maine raised bed mix at the end of your raised garden bed. By hand or with a rake, gently work this, along with VISTA's compost into your top layer of soil. Divide and use 1/2 the bag if you have a 4X8 section.
4. Add OMRI certified mulch to cover the soil in your garden bed. Many VISTA gardeners use GROW!T Organic Coco Coir Chips. Note: We never use the mulch from VISTA's mulch pile for growing edibles. It is only used to cover the pathways: Weed the area around your bed, and add no more than two inches total of mulch from the concrete bins around your bed IF the existing mulch has decomposed from the summer rains. Once the mulch becomes too sparse, the area around your bed will become muddy and weeds will start to take over.

**That's it:** Your cover crops have done all the hard work of preventing erosion, suppressing weeds, sequestering carbon, and creating and cycling soil-borne nutrients using the power of the sun. Your soil thanks you for giving it a rest and allowing it to gain the important nitrogen and organic matter it needs to help Fall planting season be the best it can be!

## VISTA Garden Recognized

VISTA Gardens is proud to be recognized as a People's Garden. This USDA initiative celebrates collaborative gardens across the country and worldwide that benefit their communities by growing fresh, healthy food and supporting resilient, local food systems using sustainable practices and providing greenspace. And that's exactly what VISTA is! For more info, see [People's Garden Initiative](#)



## Meet The Gardeners



Jane and Rick Jackson garden in BW5 (when Rick isn't taking wonderful photographs at VISTA Gardens!)

[Read More](#)

Rick Jackson's photo of a White Peacock Butterfly nectaring on Cosmos (*Cosmos sulphureus*)



## Berlandiera subacaulis

Not only are Florida Greeneyes (*Berlandiera subacaulis*) pretty, their flower has a slight aroma of chocolate. Find them growing in the Wildflower Garden near the sidewalk along South Village Drive. On a breezy day, pedestrians detect their scent! In addition to our neighbors, Greeneyes attract many different kinds of pollinators - bees, wasps (beneficial, non-stinging) and butterflies.

Photo credit: Mary Keim/Florida Wildflower Foundation





## Mark your Calendar! August Events

**Friday, August 2 8-10a**

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

**Saturday, August 3 10a**

4 Easy Steps: How to prep and plan your bed for September/October planting

**Wednesday, August 7 4p**

New Member Orientation at VISTA

**Wednesday, August 7 5p**

Repeat-4 Easy Steps: How to prep and plan your bed for September/October planting

**Sunday, August 11 9-11a**

Volunteer to work alongside USF Rotaract members as they complete planned projects at VISTA.

**Saturday, August 17 10a**

New Member Orientation at VISTA

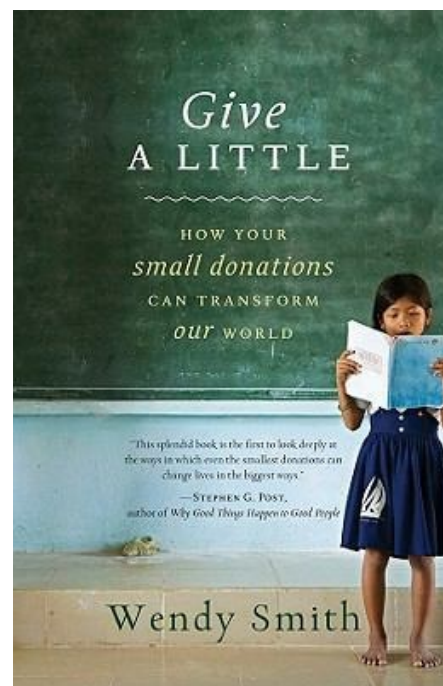


## New in the Little Free Library

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



Anthony secretly leaves veggies at his grandmother's doorstep and she, in turn, decides to share them by hosting a feast for the villagers. Readers ages 4-8.



Dimes destroyed polio. Five bucks can beat malaria. Stories of how small donations are making an extraordinary difference in the lives of millions in the US and around the world. Readers ages 14-104.

# Committee Updates

## House of the Rising Seeds

VISTA Gardens is so pleased to announce that Susan Baxter Gibson volunteered to become the new Chair of House of the Rising Seeds. Thank you, Susan!

## Volunteers Committee

VISTA awaits a member to lead the Volunteers Committee. Is The Infrastructure Committee is adding valves in VISTA's irrigation system, in order to isolate distinct zones and troubleshoot leaks. Water may be unavailable from time to time. Fortunately, the cover crops are drought tolerant once they are established.

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## Herb Garden



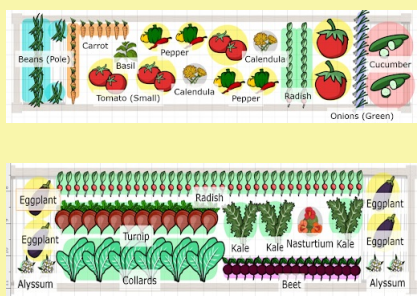
**Herbs, oh my!** August is here, which means we're more than halfway through summer! While you're visiting the garden checking on your cover crops, why not take some lemon balm leaves (pictured above) from the full-sun zone of the herb garden? Use it to [make some refreshing iced tea!](#) They can also be incorporated into a simple syrup to add some bright green flavor to your favorite lemonade. Next to the lemon balm is plenty of lemongrass, which grows plentifully all year. Under the pergola, the chives are surprisingly plentiful despite the heat. And in the herb spiral, the oregano is back with a vengeance! Have an idea for an herb you'd like to see in the herb garden? Reach out to Rita to add it to the herb garden so you can add it to your lemonade!

## House of the Rising Seeds

New Chair, Susan Baxter Gibson, added new arrivals to VISTA's online store, including interesting flower seeds. She's also enticed you with a few mark downs among our array of "tried and tested" vegetable seeds. When using the online store the category listing (beans, carrots, tomatoes, peppers, etc.) and filters (A to Z, etc.) make shopping easier. Now is the time to order your seedlings and seeds for your Fall planting. Go to the VISTA Gardens website home page and click on the link to take you to all the amazing options for your Fall vegetable crops.

### **What will you grow in your garden?**

*Here are examples of 4x16 garden plans*



### In the Woodland

...we are enjoying summer blooms, such as the Swamp Azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*)



Photo credit: Mary Keim/Florida Wildflower Foundation

Read our latest [blog post](#) on VISTA’s website.

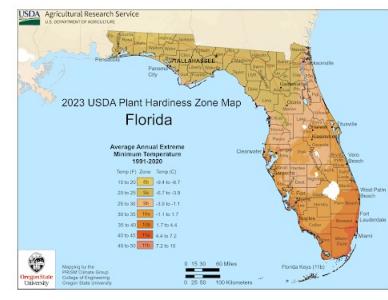
While human activity is slower this month due to the hot weather, we hope air potato vine beetles have good appetites to aid in biological control of this aggressive, invasive vine. Last year they were ravenous in the summer.



## USDA Plant Hardiness Zones

VISTA Gardens is officially located in zip code 33618, which is Plant Hardiness Zone 9b, although our immediate neighbors to the west and north are in Plant Hardiness Zone 10a.

## USDA Zone Map



## Q&A

**Q:** Why should I buy my seeds and seedlings from VISTA Gardens vs from a big box store?

**A:** We source our seeds and seedlings from companies that practice ecological gardening, including conservation, open pollination and organic growing, and they often offer disease- and insect-tolerant varieties to reduce pesticide use. We call our seeds “tried and true” because we continually learn what grows successfully in our region.

**“There’s always as much below ground as above ...” -Richard Powers**

**Click here** to submit your photos and stories for future editions of VISTA Matters.

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