



VISTA MATTERS

-January 2025 Edition-

Yes, Be a Leaf Thief



The leaves you bring to VISTA Gardens provide essential fuel for our composting process, as well as natural mulch around Florida native plants at VISTA. See bags of leaves along the roadside? We can use them! Simply put the bags in your vehicle and add the bags to the pile you see under the compost tent. The volunteer team will take care of the rest!



Oh My! Where Did the Time Go?

That's what it feels like when you commit time to satisfying your member volunteer hours requirement. Need ideas on how to help keep VISTA looking as good as possible? Look no further

than below for the Committee Updates info from several of our committees and their Chairs. All [committee chairs](#) are featured on our website. Making VISTA as vibrant as possible is the work of all of us. Pitch in today to help VISTA continue to be the best community garden in Hillsborough County!

VISTA Pays it Forward

After our recent hurricanes, Apollo Beach Community Forest Garden reached out for help. Their entire garden was washed away, destroyed by wind and salt water. VISTA's compost committee stepped forward and agreed to donate four large galvanized cans full of cured compost, the Black Gold that is so precious to successful gardening. In December, VISTA Board member Keshia Arlinghaus delivered the compost gift to the team in Apollo Beach. VISTA thanks Co-Chairs Becca and Rolfe and their compost committee members for this generous gift to our sister garden.



Plants and Pollinators

Rick Jackson photographed one of many [Cardinalflowers](#) (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

blooming beautifully in VISTA's Wildflower Garden and near the Pond this past autumn.

Do you have a water garden or even a drainage depression at home? Do you live along the edges of a stream? As we did last year, we are raising this unique wildflower in the House of the Rising Seeds.



Meet Our Gardeners

Vivian Fernandez gardens in DE1-North and volunteers with the Herb Committee.

[Read More](#)

Mark Your Calendars

January & February Calendar of Events

Fri Jan 3 10a

Join volunteers maintaining the Florida Native Plant garden at Carrollwood Village Park.

Sat Jan 4

10a New Member Orientation - Reserve with [Beverly S.](#)

1030a Join us under the pavilion as we celebrate the New Year with our garden buddies and learn something new, too! Bring a HEALTHY dish to share and your favorite drink.

Wed Jan 15 4p

New Member Orientation - Reserve with [Beverly S.](#)

Sat Jan 4 and 18 8-11a

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

Sun Jan 19 9-11a

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

Tues Jan 21 11:30a-9p

VISTA Gardens Day at Terra Sur Restaurant on West Village Drive. VISTA receives a percentage of every purchase, all day!

***Sat Jan 25 10a* MEAD-ing: Education with a Buzz.** Join the Education Committee for a short session on fertilizing followed by a Q & A where gardeners can ask any questions. There will be samples of freshly brewed mead, made from VISTA Gold honey and snacks.

Sun Feb 2 9-11a

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

Sat Feb 8 and 22 8-11a

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

Sun Feb 16 8:30a-12:30p

Join USF Rotaract members volunteering in the Woodland alongside [Oyster River Ecology.](#)

Wed Feb 18 5:30-6:30p at the Carrollwood Cultural Center

Join fellow VISTA gardeners and bring along friends and neighbors for a visually delightful, fun, and educational presentation about the relationship between bugs and blooms! John Lampkin, avid naturalist and nature photographer, shares how insects and plants co-evolved and survived.



VISTA Gardens' Butterfly Garden now has a new sign that provides information to members and visitors about butterflies in our ecosystem. Vicki Kuse, VISTA's Certified Master Gardener, who leads activities in our Native Plant Landscape and Monarch Waystation Gardens, says, "The sign highlights the plants and environments that butterflies need to thrive, especially native flowers. The photos on the sign, from VISTA's Rick Jackson, show beautiful butterflies and cute caterpillars and encourage people to observe them in this natural habitat. The sign also encourages the readers to take steps in their own gardens to create butterfly friendly spaces by planting natives and reducing pesticide and chemical use."

VISTA Gardens' Communications Committee welcomes Abbey Galloway as the new Chair of Communications. For Abbey, VISTA represents a community-driven commitment to sustainability, education, and the preservation of our natural environment. She says, "To me, VISTA is more than a garden or an organization; it's a place where innovation meets tradition, where organic gardening practices and sustainable technologies inspire both action and awareness. As Chair of Communications, I aim to broaden VISTA's reach, sharing our knowledge and resources with a larger audience. My goal is to emphasize the transformative power of sustainable practices and highlight the incredible work our members do every day to nurture both our environment and our community. *I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Marc for his leadership and dedication as the previous Chair of Communications. His efforts have laid a strong foundation for all we've accomplished so far.* I'm also incredibly grateful to Simone Johnson, Danielle Fiore, Stephen Bagley, and Nicole Jagusztyn, whose creativity and hard work make our social media and online presence vibrant and impactful. Together, I look forward to amplifying VISTA's voice and mission in the months to come."

VISTA's Herb Garden welcomes Marcy Biller as its new Chair, and thanks former Chair, Rita Mouradian, for her devotion to helping to make the herb garden so special for all of us! Marcy welcomes you to the herb garden where the Herb Committee has been working diligently to restore the garden after our recent storms. Marcy reports that, "Unfortunately, Hurricanes Helene and Milton had other plans for our little seeds. We were lucky enough to get some seeds to sprout and to procure seedlings and plants to regenerate some of the beds and containers. However, we still have some empty spaces. In order to produce healthy plants, we will also be germinating seeds under grow lights. Thank you, kind members, for your patience." In the interim, if you have any interest in a specific herb, please reach out to [Marcy Biller](#). Marcy suggests this [UF/IFAS info](#) for gardeners interested in growing common culinary herbs and spices used to flavor food.

VISTA Education Committee Chair Nicole Jagusztyn provides these updates:

1. A new educational video (created by Nicole) is coming soon to the VISTA website! Do you know someone interested in the garden, or are you a new member who wants a refresher on the garden basics? "Intro to VISTA Gardens" [video](#) will be added to the [Educational Videos](#) section of the VISTA website.

2. Come to the *MEAD-ing: Education with a Buzz*. On Saturday, January 25th at 10am, join the

Education Committee for a short session on fertilizing followed by a Q & A where gardeners can

ask any questions. There will be samples of freshly brewed mead, made from VISTA Gold honey and snacks.

3. This spring, VISTA will host a Flower Fest, with interactive experiences for the broader Carrollwood community centered on the flowers, herbs and vegetables of the garden. There will be craft projects, educational tables, tea tasting and more. If you are interested in having a large or small role in the festival, contact Nicole Jagusztyn at 813-500-1810. Event date is TBD.

VISTA Gardens Partners with Community Food Pantry

On Facebook, the Community Food Pantry featured the partnership between the pantry and our gardens with this post: On the tenth day of Christmas, the Community Food Pantry gave to me... VISTA GARDENS

Did you know that the Community Food Pantry composts? When our fresh, nutritional produce begins to decay, we partner with a local garden to return it to the earth !

VISTA Gardens' robust garden and compost program transforms non-edible produce into fertilizer, which helps grow MORE food. The Community Food Pantry is always accepting donations.



VISTA Question & Answer

Q: What should I do if a freeze is forecast?

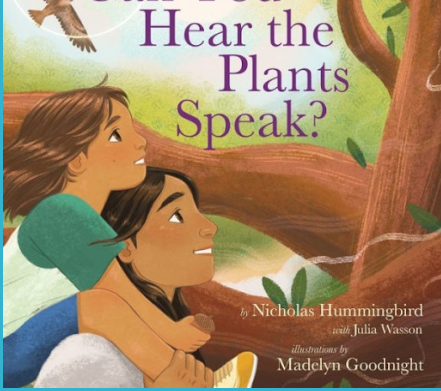
A: Savvy gardeners prepare in advance for possible freezing temperatures by:

- Taking cuttings from favorite tomato plants and rooting them in water as “insurance” in case of plant loss from freezing temperatures.
- Covering soil with a layer of organic mulch (not from the mulch pile) for insulation and moisture retention.
- Watering regularly, as moist soil helps plants tolerate cold temperatures more easily.
- **Composting** (VISTA “Black Gold” compost, Lobster compost, etc.), as soil with sufficient organic matter is more likely to hold heat on cold nights.

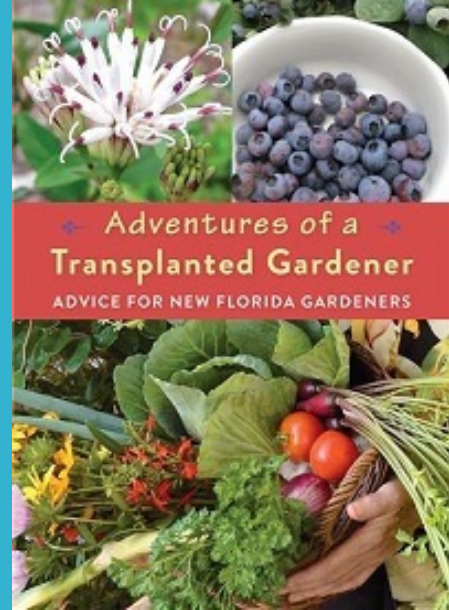
New in the Little Free Library

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





Indigenous plantsman Nicholas Hummingbird calls on the legacy of his great-grandparents to remember how one drop of rain, one seed, and one plant can renew a cycle of hope and connection—for him and for each of us. [READ MORE](#)



Guide for readers learning to cultivate plants in Florida's unique natural environment. Botanist and lifelong gardener Ginny Stibolt shares insightful stories, advice, and tips from her own experience moving to Florida, where she discovered that the rules she had followed for years did not apply. [READ MORE](#)

“Good people working together can change the world for the better.”
-Margaret Renkl

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

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