



# VISTA MATTERS

-June 2024 Edition-



## **Cowpeas and Sunn Hemp: Six Easy Steps for your Summer Bed**

Soon, all your tomatoes and eggplants and peppers will be harvested and it will be time to allow your raised garden bed to rest. Your soil has done the hard work since September of growing seeds and seedlings into beautiful and robust producers of fruits and vegetables.

Just like you do, your soil now needs a vacation to restore itself and revive for the next planting season. To give your soil that well deserved regeneration:

1. In June, remove all vegetation by cutting each plant at the soil level, leaving the roots underground, where the roots will quickly decompose helping to 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. (If you have invasive nut sedge weeds in/around your bed, [click here](#) for information on how to remove.)

2. Add soil from the pile in the green concrete bins if your soil level is more than an inch below the top of your bed. In addition, VISTA has plenty of black gold compost for everyone to add a full yellow bucket to their beds as you plant your cover crops this month.

3. Plant your cover crop seeds according to the instructions on the envelope you received at the education sessions on May 29 or June 8. Soak the seeds in room temperature water 12 hours before planting. Before planting each seed, water the spot the seed will go in, then cover with soil and water again. Water every day to keep the soil moist. Seeds need moisture to grow.

4. After about a week your seeds will become seedlings and need less of your attention. They mature quickly. They don't need fertilizer and will be drought resistant.

5. Check your plants weekly to ensure they are not flowering. Chop-and-drop sunn hemp foliage that is above three to four feet tall. Gently scratch the chopped leaves into the soil. They will decompose quickly and add nutrients to your soil. Do the same for cowpeas when they are about 2.5 feet above the ground, before they flower.

6. At least two weeks before you plant your fall seeds and seedlings, remove your cover crop using the chop-and-drop method. Scratch the chopped greenery lightly into the soil.

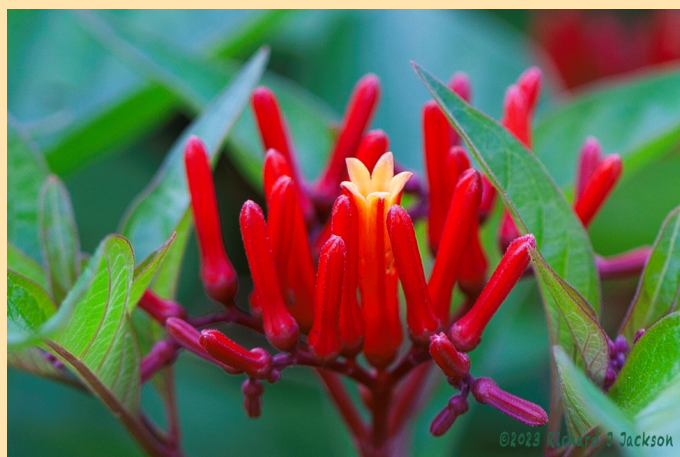
*That's it: Your cover crops will be doing all the hard work of preventing erosion, suppressing weeds, sequestering carbon, and creating and cycling soil-borne nutrients using the power of the sun. Your soil will thank you for giving it a rest and allowing it to gain the important nitrogen and organic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

## Plant Feature

### **Firebush, *Hamelia patens* var. *Patens***

At VISTA, find the Firebush south of the pavilion, as well as much larger ones east of the pond, and in the Monarch Waystation Garden. Firebush typically bloom spring through fall, although they can bloom year-round when the climate is warmer.

Note: Avoid non native varieties of Firebush, particularly *H. patens* var. *glabra* (frequently sold as African, Dwarf or Compact firebush), as they may interbreed with the native firebush. Calusa firebush is a native cultivar ("nativar") that may be used if a more compact size is desired. [READ MORE](#)



# Meet the Members



## Beverly Stansell

Beverly Stansell gardens in AW7-North and leads New Member Orientations at VISTA. In this photo, Beverly is sporting a warm jacket and scarf during a trip to Iceland! Learn more about her activities [here](#).

## Events and VISTA Committee Updates

### Mark Your Calendars *June Calendar of Events*

#### ***Wednesday, June 5, 4p***

New Member Orientation at VISTA

#### ***Friday, June 7, 8a-10a***

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

#### ***Saturday, June 8, 730a-9a***

*Community Work Day at VISTA!*

Fulfill your monthly volunteer requirement by helping with various garden tasks.

#### ***Saturday, June 8, 9a-10a***

*Everything You Need to Know About Cover Crops for your Summer Bed and free seed giveaway.*

#### ***Saturday, June 8, 10a-11a***

New Member Welcome Event!

#### ***Sunday, June 9, 9a-11a***

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

#### ***Saturday, June 15, 9a-11a***

New Member Orientation at VISTA

### ***Committee Updates***

#### ***From the Board***

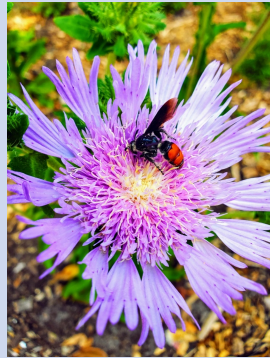
A huge welcome and appreciation to our new Marketing committee Co

*From the Board ...* A huge welcome and appreciation to our new Marketing committee Co-Chairs, Ruchi Amin and Sara Rodriguez. If you have marketing, outreach, fundraising ideas, please **contact them**.

*From the House of the Rising Seeds and the Student Volunteers Committees ...* We need you! After many months of dedicated effort, energy and commitment, Mark Gardiner (HRS), and Mike Arnold (Volunteers) are leaving their posts as Chairs of these committees. We thank Mark and Mike for their leadership of these vital committees. Now, it's your turn to step up and enjoy the rewards of volunteer activity at VISTA. For info, contact VISTA President **Jennifer Grebenschikoff** or by phone at 813-842-2772.

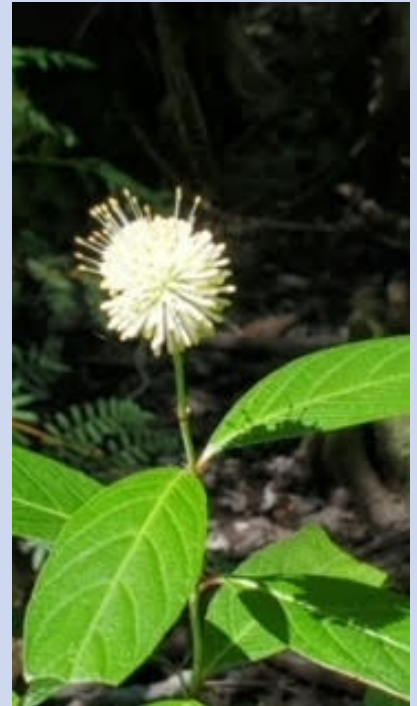
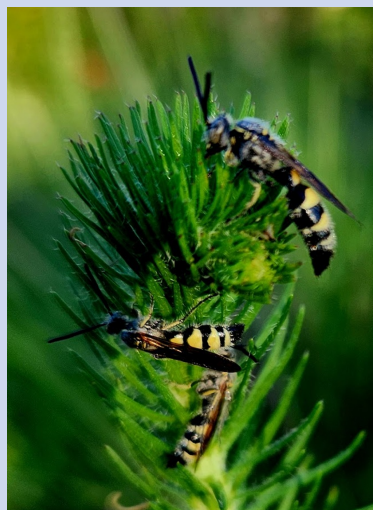


*At the Pond ...* our gratitude to the Riverview Garden Club for funding recent improvements and to Sickles High School National Honor Society members for their service. They cleaned and added river rock, spread Florimulch, and transplanted Florida native plants on a very warm Saturday morning. Here's to Janet Stanko and Barbara Kane for orchestrating this volunteer event and their wonderful work in beautifying the southeast corner of VISTA Gardens. Can you find them among the youth? Volunteering at the Pond keeps one young!



*In the Wildflower Garden...*

watch for scoliid wasps that maintain healthy ecosystems by preying on beetle and grub larvae. Natural regulators of pest populations, scoliid wasps prevent overpopulation and subsequent damage to crops, grasslands, and gardens. This species only sting when humans are aggressive toward them. Below, Swarm of scoliid wasps *D. plumipes* on Blazing star [\*Liatrix gracilis\*](#)



*In the Woodland ...* We've planted over 200 native plants since the first of the year, and this month we are hand watering the newest ones during the dry season. We're also taking advantage of the dry season to remove debris in the swamp. We've seen spring blooms with Buttonbush, swamp azalea, and elderberry trees. Check out our project, VISTA woodlands, on [iNaturalist](#)

## VISTA Question & Answer

**Q:** I would like to help around or I have a friend who would like to help around the garden, but I

am not sure where to start. What should I do?

**A:** Great! On June 8 730a-9a, join our Community Work Day. There will be plenty of tasks to complete. VISTA is run completely by volunteers, so we are always excited for additional support. Also, please contact the [committee chair](#) who leads the respective committee you are interested in.

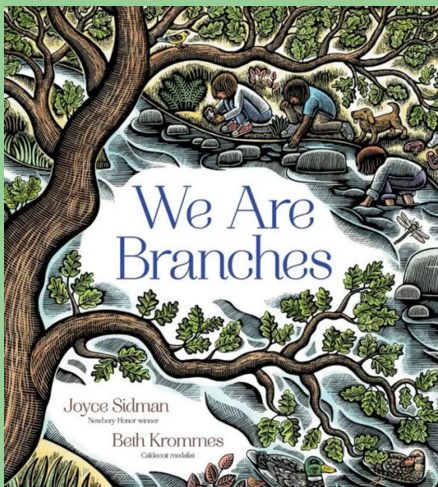


### Thanks but No Thanks....

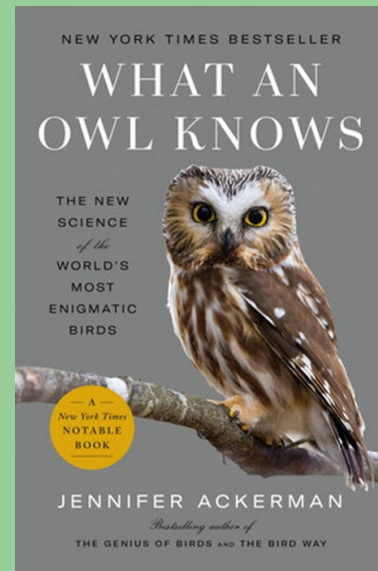
*VISTA Gardens loves donations... but not plastic chairs. They crack and fall apart and have become a safety issue. Please find another worthy home for your used plastic chairs.*

## New in the Little Free Library

**VISTA and our community appreciate [Forever Friends](#) for the grant to purchase books for the Little Free Library**



[More Information](#)



[More Information](#)

### Quote

**There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments.  
—Janet Kilburn Phillips**

**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 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!