



# VISTA MATTERS

-May 2024 Edition-



If you were there on Saturday, April 13, then you know what a wonderful day it was for us as we celebrated our 10th anniversary at 13572 South Village Drive. **The weather was perfect, we gave many tours of the garden and the woodland, we enjoyed Nicole J's tasting tables, we appreciated our vendors' knowledge, we competed for all the silent auction items, we learned about VISTA's history,** we received a commendation from our County Commissioner Ken Hagan, and we planted three Loblolly-bay trees! To read about our history and how VISTA Gardens came to be what it is today, click [here](#).

# Commendation

## VISTA Gardens

The Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners is pleased to recognize VISTA Gardens on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its grand opening on South Village Drive, a prosperous decade serving as Hillsborough County's First Garden Park.

Founded in 2008 by Bill West, and as a result of a joint project of the three Carrollwood Village Home Owners Associations and partnership with Hillsborough Parks & Recreation, the Village Institute for Sustainable Technologies and Agriculture, known as VISTA Gardens, serves as a model for organic gardening, native landscaping, and related technologies. The all-volunteer staff of the 3.31-acre garden park provides numerous opportunities to participate in healthy outdoor activities, responsible environmental leadership, growing organic food, and community building. It is truly amazing and inspiring that what began as six garden plots grew substantially into a 180-foot nature trail, a 2,000-gallon freshwater pond, and 65 prolific garden plots, all of which are tended and nurtured by members who provide fresh produce for their families and friends. Two of the raised beds are tended by volunteers, who contribute all the harvest that is donated to the nearby Community Food Pantry. In addition, VISTA is home to fertile flower and herb gardens, a Monarch Waystation, and a series of pollinator gardens that support bees, birds, and the migration of butterflies. After 10 successful years, VISTA Gardens is a healthy, beautiful haven for nature lovers and all who desire fresh, delicious produce.

The Board of County Commissioners of Hillsborough County, Florida, does hereby commend VISTA Gardens on its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Hillsborough County, and wishes it many years of continued success.

Awarded this 13<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2024



Ken Hagen  
Chair  
Michelle Oen  
Vice Chair  
Donna Cepeda  
Chapman  
Harry Cohen  
Awen Myers  
Patricia King  
[Signature]



## VISTA Gardens Then and Now

### Then



### Now!





## VISTA's gratitude to student volunteers ...

We are thankful beyond measure for the countless hours of service by students at Sickles and Steinbrenner high schools, the University of South Florida (USF) and University of Tampa (UT). Angela Kaloger, who gardens in AE5 and volunteers for VISTA's Volunteer Committee, shared her "list of admiration" of Sickles High School National Honor Society members who regularly volunteer at VISTA:

- ready to go early on Saturday mornings
- respond enthusiastically to any given task
- quick learners
- can bend and stretch without moaning
- take pride in jobs well done
- repeat performers speak of positive experiences ("I feel better after working in the fresh air.")
- honest love of nature, gardens, and creating beauty

USF Rotaract members volunteer at VISTA almost every other Sunday, and Gail Myers, a VISTA Social Member and member of the Woodland Committee, values their consistency in participation and effort. "They have made significant contributions to VISTA initiatives, such as the Wildflower Garden and Woodland Restoration. Their enthusiasm is contagious, and they take ownership in the projects they work on."

### Plant Feature

**Loblolly-bay, *Gordonia lasianthus***, is an attractive evergreen tree found in swamps, bayheads and cypress domes throughout much of Florida. One of only two camellias native to Florida, its fragrant showy flowers bloom spring through summer and attract a variety of pollinators. We are grateful to the Moonlight Garden Circle of the Tampa Bay Garden Club for their generous donation of our three Loblolly-bay trees. [Read More](#)





## Meet Our Gardeners

Nicole Jagusztyn gardens in AW5 and serves as Chair of VISTA's Education Committee [Read More](#)

# Events and VISTA Committee Updates

## Mark Your Calendars

### *May Calendar of Events*

#### **Friday, May 3, 8-10a**

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

#### **Saturday, May 11, 8a-11a**

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

#### **Monday, May 20, 8a-8p**

Wildflower Gardening Day - Come for 30 minutes and enjoy working in our garden along South Village Drive.

#### **Wednesday, May 29, 6p-7p**

Everything You Need to Know About Cover Crops for your Summer Bed and free seed giveaway. (will be repeated Saturday, June 8, 9a-10a)

#### **Wednesday, May 29, 7p-8p**

Stay for Happy Hour BYOB after the Cover Crops session!





**At the Pond,** VISTA is proud to congratulate Janet and Barbara, who with the help of Mary Ellen, submitted a grant request to the Riverview Garden Club for funds to complete the plantings around the pond. The River Garden Club, in awarding the grant, emphasized how impressed they are with the work already done and the innovation for the project ahead. The committee will now move ahead to put their vision in place for this tranquil and unique feature at VISTA Gardens. The patio area adjacent to the pond is now larger so that VISTA members and guests can enjoy the lily pads and flowers, watch for goldfish and listen to bird songs. We hope that a family of wrens occupies our new wren house, generously donated by USF Rotaract, USF Alumni Association and Dr. Sara Ferrari from the Rotary Club of Tampa. We are grateful to them and to Linda Schocken for her bighearted donation of the Water Wiggler for our bird bath. This solar powered device simulates rippling water to attract birds and prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs.

**In the Woodlands,** work is progressing well, and we expect the spring and summer months to include more planting and weeding. Come join us on Tuesday mornings! We added a sign-up for members in **VISTA's online volunteers calendar** We also plan to develop a field guide and a virtual tour of the woodland area as part of our grant activity, and are seeking volunteers with an interest in graphic



**From the Education Committee:** Soon, all your tomatoes and eggplants and peppers will be harvested and it will be the season for regeneration. 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 to restore itself and revive for the next planting season. We'll give you everything you need to know on how to give your soil that well deserved regeneration, and we'll distribute free cover crop seeds. Join us on ***Wednesday, May 29, 6p-7p, for Everything You Need to Know About Cover Crops for your Summer Bed (will be repeated Saturday, June 8, 9a-10a).***

In consideration of the birds and the bees Linda Schocken's recent presentation on birds to the Wildflower Garden Committee is available on VISTA's website for all to see, including 7 Simple Ways to Help Birds. <https://vistagardentampa.org/learn#bird-resources>

**May 20 is World Bee Day:** Did you know that bees will travel a 1-3 mile radius in search of food? Our garden is not enough to sustain our current VISTA bee population, so they will travel all around Carrollwood gathering nectar and pollen for the hives. Limiting herbicides and pesticides both at

the garden and at your home is the best way



design, photography or video production. If interested, please contact **Vicki Kuse** or **Elizabeth Warner** Enjoy our blog posts with photos and information about the **Woodland Restoration**.

**In the Wildflower Garden**, we invite you to come for a few minutes on May 20. Join our committee members as we spruce up the plantings and landscaping along South Village Drive. Easy, intermediate, challenging gardening tasks will be available. In addition to opportunities to learn about Florida native plants, you can observe nature at work. As you sweep the pathway, train a vine, prune a shrub, mulch the garden border, refine auto-irrigation drip lines, etc., we will encourage you to pause and admire butterflies and other pollinators. Contact **Roberta Owens** with a time when you would like to join us on May 20.

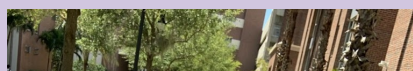
to protect the bees. This helps keep the hive healthy and ensure lots of "VISTA Gold" - the honey collected by our own beekeeper, David Schneider.



### **In the community**

Missy, Rita and Taylor represented VISTA Gardens at the PEACE Volunteer Center's 30th Anniversary kickoff event to foster a culture of service and social awareness at the University of Tampa. These VISTA seasonal gardeners (H3 and CW6, respectively) donned VISTA shirts, gathered and set up a display of vegetables and flowers, along with photos of UT PEACE volunteers in service at VISTA Gardens from 2019-2024, and engaged with students. They even shared cuttings of herbs and Calendula blooms. Thank you, Missy, Rita, and Taylor!

In good company! Notice that the neighboring table featured "The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times" by Jane Goodall and Douglas Abrams, that reappears in VISTA's Little Free Library.





## VISTA Question & Answer

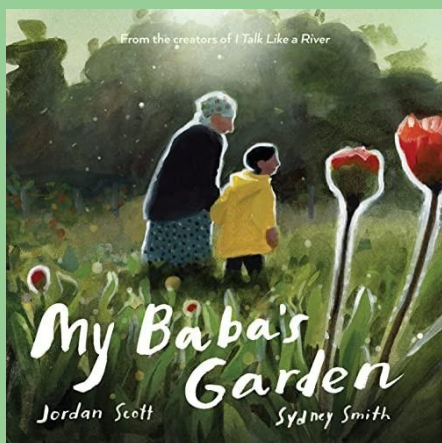
**Q:** I am new to organic gardening, and I am unsure of which products are safe to use on my bed. Where can I go to learn more?

**A:** There is a fantastic website dedicated to organic operations. Please check out OMRI, The Organic Materials Review Institute. Here you can search products to ensure they meet organic standards.

<https://www.omri.org/omri-search>. For local supplies and information, you can also visit Urban Roots, where VISTA Gardens members get a 15% discount (just mention that you're a member).

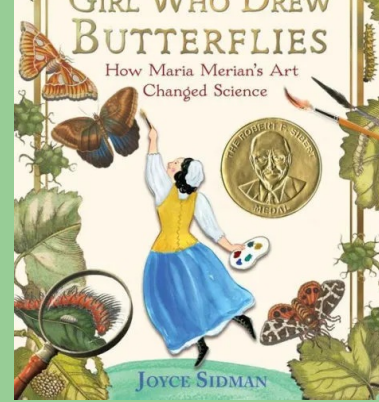
## New in the Little Free Library

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



[More Information](#)





[More Information](#)

**What wild creature is more accessible to our eyes and ears, as close to us and everyone in the world, as universal as a bird?  
– David Attenborough**

**The bluebird carries the sky on his back. – Henry David Thoreau**

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

**VISTA Gardens**  
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