



# VISTA MATTERS

-February 2024 Edition-

## Where Does the Time Go?!



Without you, our members, donors, partners, and supporters, VISTA wouldn't be what it is today.

Let's celebrate this wonderful growth and achievement together on **Saturday April 13 10a-2p.**

**2007**-It all started in our founder Bill West's backyard with a few members and a variety of experimental vegetable beds.

**2008**-Bill scouts the community for open land that could become a more permanent home for VISTA Gardens and finds 13572 South Village Drive. Bill convinces the County to let us lease the land to build a community garden.

**2008**-VISTA files Articles of Incorporation, adopts Bylaws, and receives its not for profit 501(c)(3) designation.

**2014**-After six years of tough work to clear the overgrown property and numerous meetings with the County, VISTA Gardens opens with just six plots and not much else except the little red shed, the well, a generator, some tools, tanks and hoses, and the gate and sign.

Looking at VISTA today with its 65 beds, a greenhouse, the pavilion, the pond, four pergolas, bee hives, and numerous beds filled with Florida native and wild flowers... it's hard to believe where we were back in 2014.

## **VISTA Gardening Angels** *by Susan Baxter Gibson*

Seven years ago, when my husband was diagnosed with cancer, I struggled with taking care of my garden. I was sent an angel, Lori Vella, who volunteered to tend my garden until I could get back to it. I am still so very grateful for the help Lori gave me and my family during a very difficult time.

Almost a year ago I discovered a garden bed that needed some upkeep and found it belonged to one of our members who had just had major surgery and could not come to the garden. Laurie Kleiner jumped in, and we rejuvenated the plants. That got us thinking that it would be nice to have a group of members *at the ready* to help other members whose lives get in the way of gardening due to medical issues, family commitments or even vacations. That is what being part of a community is about!

Many thanks to VISTA gardening angels Cabell, Dianne, Helen and Lori who have helped recently. If you would like to participate, contact [Susan Baxter Gibson](#). Likewise, if you find life getting in the way and need help with your garden, contact me to arrange for a Gardening Angel.

*"I had the fortunate opportunity to travel to Italy for two weeks. Unfortunately, my trip coincided with the planting of my seedlings. The gardening angels were instrumental in not only keeping my seedlings alive, but allowing them to thrive! What a fantastic service!" -Marcy*

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





# Plant Feature

Dune Sunflower, *Helianthus debilis*

Bright flowers attract a variety of pollinators, including butterflies, moths and bees and its dense growth pattern provides cover for many small animals, while its seeds are eaten by birds. **A great color groundcover for landscapes with no foot traffic!**

<https://www.flawildflowers.org/flower-friday-helianthus-debilis/>

## Meet Our Gardeners

Marcy Biller gardens in the 4x8 raised garden bed located at BW3-North. Marcy is co-chair of the Anniversary Celebration committee. [READ MORE](#) about Marcy in our Meet the Members section of the website.



## Events and VISTA Committee Updates

### Mark Your Calendars

#### *February Calendar of Events*

##### **Friday, February 2 8a-10a**

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

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

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

##### **Saturday, February 10 9a**

Join Will Stone from the Hillsborough County Extension Office on a **Bug Walkabout**. There will be a short presentation on beneficial bugs and pests common to the area, followed by a walk around the garden where Will will answer questions from gardeners about insects in their plots.

##### **Saturdays, February 10 and 24 9a-10a**

Yoga in the Garden - bring mat and hydrating drink. Donations welcome.

##### **Sundays, February 11 and 25 8:30a-11a**

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



**The Woodland Committee** began 2024 with the Tampa Bay Estuary mini-grant. We started wildflower seeds, with plans to plant later in the spring. The major focus of this month's effort is removing **Brazilian pepper**, an invasive tree that is crowding out native plants in the woodlands. With the help of enthusiastic and hard-working volunteers from Sickles High NHS, USF Rotaract and Hillsborough County master gardeners, we chopped, uprooted and dug up numerous trees.

## **Garden Committee Notes...**

### **Weeding**

Help keep the garden beautiful. You are required to pull all the weeds around the outside of your bed. In addition, as part of your two-hour monthly commitment to VISTA, also help by pulling weeds in all the common areas (pathways, around the shed, etc.).

### **Signs**

In order to help maintain the health of all the gardens, VISTA will begin putting little signs on any bed that needs specific attention. If you get a sign on your bed and need help, please do not hesitate to ask.

**Communications Committee** member **Theresa MacNeil** (D6E) administers a new Facebook group for VISTA members to ask questions or give updates about what is going on at the gardens. Please look for us on Facebook and join the group. It is called VISTA Gardens.



### **From the Herb Garden...**

Looking for ways to add flair to your Valentine's Day cheese board? Look no further than VISTA's Herb Garden! Fresh Ladybird nasturtium blooms can be found in the pot next to the herb spiral and are both flavorful and flashy when paired with soft, white cheeses like goat cheese or brie. Combo any harder, aged cheeses like Parmesan or Gruyère with fresh sage and thyme, both of which can be found growing plentifully in the zone just north of the pergola. If you have an idea for an herb that would be perfectly placed on your cheese or charcuterie board, reach out to Rita or Kathy who will find it a loving home in the Herb Garden.



### **Compost Committee**

The Compost Committee had a wonderful 2023 with a lot of kitchen refuse and oak leaves to help us successfully produce a bounty of "black gold" for our VISTA raised beds. We need help sifting to rotate and free up the bins so that we have room in the two intake bins. If you can help sift, please contact **Rolfe** by email or 727-426-6032.

### **New compost additions in February**

Stay on the lookout for two new compost intake bins. Both will be metal trash cans to separately collect coffee grounds and eggshells. Please make sure eggshells are clean without any residual egg.

### **Black Gold availability**

We have plenty of Black Gold for everyone to add to your raised beds. Two full yellow buckets for a 4 x 16 bed and one full yellow bucket for a half 4 x 8 bed. There is enough for social members, too, but you will need to supply your own bucket.



*Photo Credit: Planet Natural*

## **Garden Committee talks about Tomato Wilt**

Some of our gardeners are experiencing tomato wilt, where the entire plant turns yellow and wilts. Occasionally the leaves will turn brown. There are so many answers online, it's hard to

know who to trust. Fortunately, we have experts to turn to at UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough County. **Will Stone** shares that symptoms of Verticillium wilt and Fusarium wilt are similar but Fusarium is the more common wilt in our area. Both are caused by soil-borne pathogens. Verticillium wilt has dark brown to black streaks through the center of the stem when cut diagonally. When cut lengthways, stems show brown flecking of the inner tissues, rather than continuous browning which is associated with Fusarium wilt infected plants. (Those little millipedes you see in your garden are not causing wilt. They eat organic and dead plant material.) There are no chemical options available for Fusarium wilt. Best solution is to remove the infected plant with the roots (and make sure to clean your tools!), bag the plant and take it home to your own trash can. Luckily, once a plant is infected, it usually will not spread to another plant in the same growing season. Will suggests **this site** for reliable info.

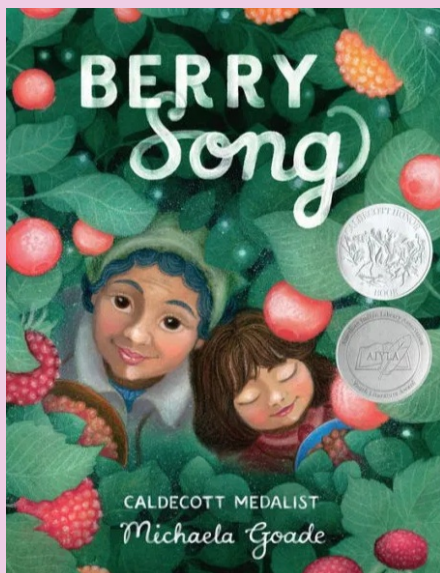
## VISTA Question & Answer

**Q:** Help! I am having an emergency with the garden's infrastructure: a pipe burst, the shed door won't close, the gate appears broken, etc. Who do I contact/alert?

**A:** We know, this can be scary! For assistance, please contact **Martin Kleiner, VISTA's Infrastructure Chair, at 813-404-3150.**

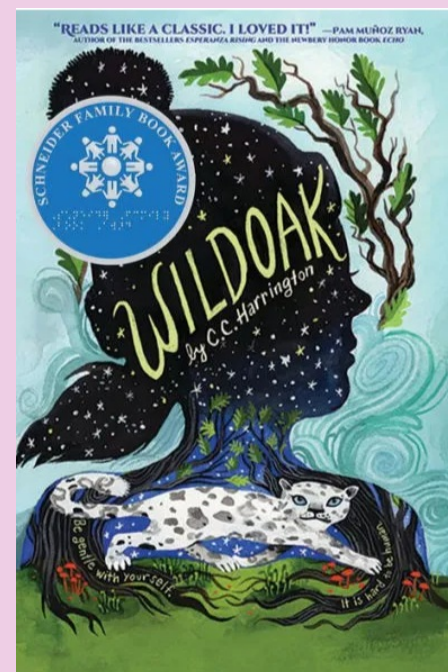
## New in the Little Free Library

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



On an island at the edge of a wide, wild sea, a girl and her grandmother gather gifts from the earth. *Berry Song* offers luminous renderings of water and forest, berries and

jams, which offer an invitation to readers, ages 4-8, to deepen their own relationship



Told in alternating voices, *Wildoak* shimmers with beauty, compassion, and unforgettable storytelling for readers ages 8-12 as it explores the delicate

ages 4-8, to deepen their own relationship with the earth. [READ MORE](#)

8-12 as it explores the delicate interconnectedness of the human, animal, and natural worlds. [READ MORE](#)

My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view.

—Fred Dale

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

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