



VISTA MATTERS

August 2025 Edition

Get Involved!



By now, you should have received your annual renewal email and dues reminder. Check your email inboxes for instructions that were sent on July 9-10. Didn't find it? Please send an email to our [VISTA Gardens inbox](#) with your name and email address.

As a reminder, VISTA is run 100% by volunteers. We require each member to contribute by joining one of our volunteer committees. Whether you have a green thumb, an event-planning knack, or just love working alongside neighbors, there's a place for you to help grow our community. For a full list of our committees and who to contact, please visit our [Board/Committees page](#), and click on the More Information box at the bottom of the page.

And... Please note our newly named Community member category for those VISTA members who choose to be involved but not rent a bed. (This was previously called Social membership.) We value all our members and partners and sponsors who help to make VISTA Gardens a vibrant and special place for all of us!

VISTA's [Online Store](#)

The House of the Rising Seeds (HRS) Committee carefully selects and purchases seeds to be grown organically.

Seed packets

Order seed packets to grow interesting varieties of beans, beets, carrots, cucumbers, radish, peas, etc. Click on “beets” to see varieties that have grown well at VISTA or click on carrots and choose a variety or two to try. Experience has taught us that these vegetables grow better when seeds are sown directly into your garden soil.

Transplant dates

For members who preordered transplants, the heat tolerant seedlings - tomato, pepper, eggplant, Chinese cabbage, collard and kale - will be available for pick up at VISTA on September 20 and 21. Plan to transplant them into your garden on one of those days. On October 18 and 19 the seedlings that thrive in cooler weather - broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, Early Jersey cabbage - will be available for pick up.

Readying Your Bed for Fall 2025

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 and October your seeds and seedlings will start growing to become beautiful and robust producers of fruits and vegetables. Here's how to get your bed ready for the Fall planting season:

- 1.** Four 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 concrete block storage bin 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. (Available with the VISTA member discount at our longtime partner, Urban Roots.) Note: We never use the mulch from VISTA's mulch pile for growing edibles since we don't know what those trees were treated with. That mulch 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 block bins to the pathways 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!



Beat the Heat!

Meet your fellow members and fulfill your monthly volunteer hours at VISTA's *Community Workday on Saturday, August 16, 8-10a*. Bring your own gloves and water and we'll provide a list of garden-wide tasks for you to work on.



Mosquito Bucket Challenge

A project by Homegrown National Park®

Safer than fogging, mosquito buckets are a simple alternative to manage mosquitoes. Mosquito fogging harms pets, bees and many other pollinators. These buckets are a safe, affordable way to save butterflies, ladybugs and valued pollinators.

Decorated buckets are in the Wildflower Garden and Herb Garden at VISTA. We thank Vivian Rao and Holden King for each decorating one, as well as to Vivian Fernandez who inspired her two granddaughters to paint buckets. Thanks also to Rick Jackson who fitted the buckets with wire netting and filled them with a slurry of compost leaves and water, along with the recommended mosquito dunks.

Upcycle a bucket to manage mosquitos in your home landscape - decorated or not!

This challenge made the [news](#).

HS Student Volunteers



If your High School student wishes to volunteer at VISTA in the summer or during the school year but isn't a member of a specific school group, like Sickles NHS and CDS compost group, this as your guide to VISTA's requirements-

1. waiver liability form signed by parent/caregiver
2. onsite supervision by an adult VISTA member (can be parent or non parent VISTA member)
3. Community or seasonal membership by parent/caregiver at VISTA

We welcome all HS and above student volunteers and value their interest and energy. Questions- please contact [Jennifer](#).

VISTA thanks student volunteers Boden and Richard (shown above) who plan to graduate from Hillsborough High School's International Baccalaureate program next Spring. We are grateful for their service at VISTA. This is Richard's third summer volunteering at the gardens and many remember his brother Andres who also volunteered many summers before his high school graduation. We thank them for their many contributions!

Also, thanks to VISTA members Ellen, Elizabeth, Evans, Janet, Marcy, Marty, Rick, Roberta, Ruchi, Stephen, and Vicki for guiding and working alongside student volunteers.

One by One

If you're visiting your cover crops this summer, you might be seeing Evans Bostick and Marty Kleiner and their committee volunteers replacing all or parts of the wood that holds our raised beds. That's what the lumber is for that was sunning in the parking lot! Several of the oldest beds that need significant repair will have complete



replacement while other beds that need only spot repairs, such as the ends shown in the picture here, are on the repair list. Every bed is assessed every summer for wood repair and replacement.

Meet The Gardeners



Matthew “Matt” Visokay gardens in AE3 and volunteers with VISTA’s Infrastructure Committee

[READ MORE](#)

VISTA Happenings



Harith’s Eagle Scout Project

Harith Talapaneni, a junior in High School and a Boy Scout,

recently finished his Eagle project, where he designed, planned, and constructed a pergola next to VISTA's pond. [Click here](#) for more about this special project.



VISTA's Cut-Flower Gardens

If you want to see an astounding array of electrifying colors, skip the Northern Lights and visit VISTA's Cut-flower Garden. Varieties like Polka Dot Cornflower, Dwarf Cosmos, Mammoth Grey Stripe Sunflower, Strawflower, Crackerjack Marigolds, California Giant Zinnias and many others dapple the six-plot landscape. We are growing the perfect long-stem flowers to create bouquets for every occasion.

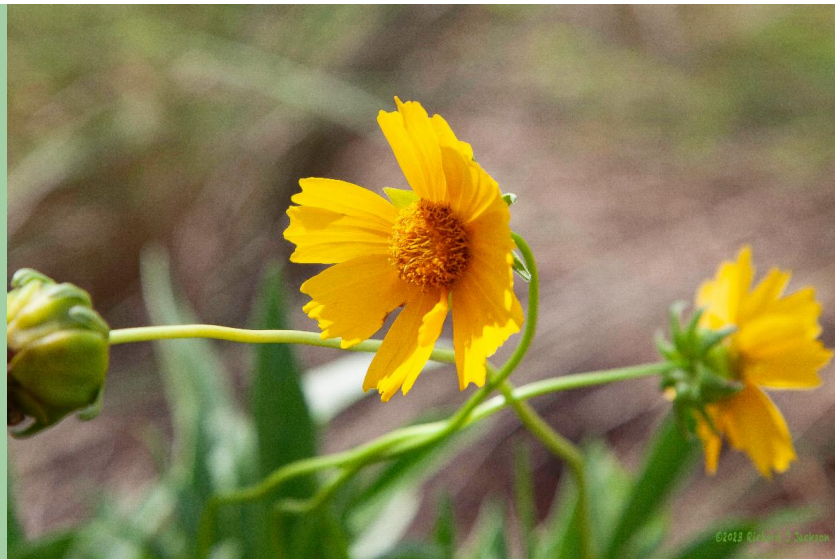
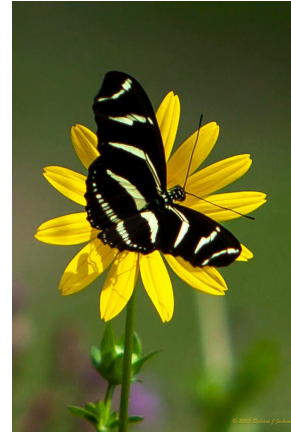
Colors also abound in the native wildflower space surrounding the pergola. Designed by our own Vicki Kuse, it sports drought-tolerant, low maintenance plants that also attract pollinators. These wildflowers are the perfect complement to any arrangement.

Many thanks to the Cut-flower Committee members, Susan Weiskopf, Elaine Gross, Susan Baxter Gibson, Terrisa Bernard, and Donna Birnholz who plant, weed, water, and tend our flowers, as well as direct volunteers and lead tours. We are planning for

plant identification signage in the future. Stay tuned.
*Richard Birnholz, Chair,
VISTA's Cut-flower Committee*

Narrowleaf sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*)

Rick Jackson photographed Florida's state butterfly, [Zebra Longwing](#), gracing one of Florida's most common sunflowers, Narrowleaf sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*), that grows in VISTA's native habitats attracting bees and butterflies and providing seeds for birds.



Mark your Calendar! August Events

Fri, Aug 1, 9-10a

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

Sat, Aug 2, 9-10a

"Setting Your Garden Up For Success"



Wed, Aug 6, 4-5p

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

Wed, Aug 13, 6-7p

"Setting Your Garden Up For Success"

Sat, Aug 16, 8-10a

Community Work Day for all VISTA members. Bring your gloves and water.

Sat, Aug 16, 10-11a

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

August 22 & 23

Participate in the [Great Florida Pollinator Census](#), a citizen science project! Download your count sheet, choose a flowering plant, watch for 15 minutes, count the number of insect landings and upload your count to <https://gsepc.org/>.

Sat, Aug 30, 7-9a



Welcome back Sickles HS National Honor Society students and work with them as they complete planned projects at VISTA.

Save These Dates!

Sun, Sept 7, 9-11a

VISTA members are invited to join USF Rotaract volunteers when we collaborate with [Oyster River Ecology](#) for our 3rd [Oyster Rag Pot making](#) event, contributing to the health of the Manatee River.



Sat and Sun, Sept 20 and 21

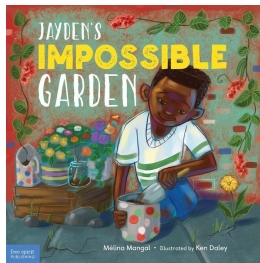
Seedling transplants that members ordered in advance will be available for pickup at VISTA.

Sat, Sept 20, 9-10a

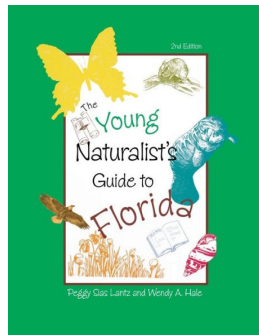
Come to the Pavilion for a presentation about “Plant Spacing, Companion Planting and Watering”

New in the Little Free Library

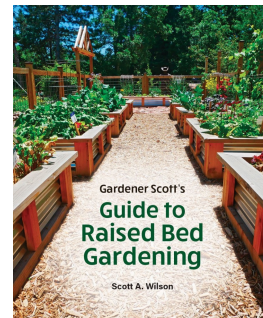
Both VISTA and our community appreciate
Forever Friends
 for the grant to purchase books for the Little Free Library



Jayden and a new friend bring nature to the city in this timeless story about a community garden, highlighting the value of intergenerational relationships and the power of imagination and perseverance in bringing the vision of a community garden to life.



A treasure trove of information and suggestions about visiting and protecting Florida's unique habitats and the species that inhabit them. For readers ages 10-14. [Read More](#)



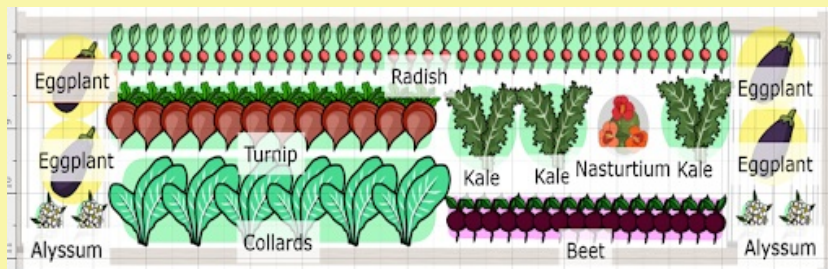
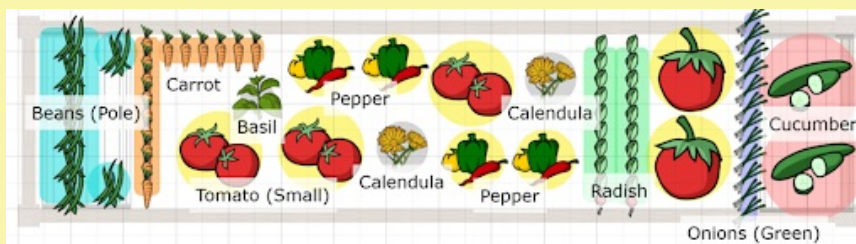
Advice about building good soil, successional and intensive planting, watering, weeding, trellising, harvesting, protection from pests, disease and extreme weather. [Read More](#)

Especially for
readers ages 4-9.
[Read More](#)

What will you grow in your garden?

Some VISTA gardeners use an app or online garden planner to ensure optimum spacing and compatibility of vegetable and flower plants. They also record notes and progress. The garden plans below were created using [Southern Exposure Seed Exchange Garden Planner](#).

Here are examples of 4x16 garden plans:



Recipe of the Month

Have a recipe
for your
favorite
harvest?

Submit [here](#).

Lazy Lux Butter

Contributed by Rolfe Evenson

I'm not a gourmet cook but I do enjoy good food and this is a staple in the refrigerator! Easy, accessible, and simply delicious on all kinds of meats and veggies!



Ingredients

- 1 bar (8oz) of unsalted Kerrygold butter - softened to room temperature by leaving on the counter (Do not microwave)
- Salt to taste
- 1/2 cup or so of fresh herbs - chopped finely
- Garlic (optional) - peeled & grated

Preparation

- In a bowl combine room temperature butter, salt, chopped herbs, and grated garlic till well mixed.
- Can be frozen for later or stored in the refrigerator as a rub for meats, fish, veggies, and breads alike!
- Note - Rosemary goes great with lamb, basil is delicious with pasta, tarragon is lovely with fish or eggs, oregano & thyme make a great garlic bread, or simply the works for a thanksgiving turkey!

Use this VISTA members only link to submit your favorite harvest recipe!

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 and seedlings “tried and true” because we continually learn what grows successfully in our region.

“Most people in the city rush around so, they have no time to look at a flower. I want them to see it whether they want to or not.” -Georgia O’Keeffe

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!