



# VISTA MATTERS

- April Edition -

## VISTA Gardens Celebrates!

Join us on **Saturday, April 30, at 11:30 a.m.** as VISTA celebrates its history, its members and its success.

We'll have a short program with **speakers Commissioner Ken Hagan and VISTA's founder Bill West**, followed by a **tribute to two members, Alicia Laddon and Daun Miller**, who passed away several years ago.

Refreshments will be served. And everyone will have a chance to participate in a fundraiser raffle for gift cards to Cepas, plus a silent auction for two 2021 Tampa Bay Lightning Stanley Cup commemorative bottles of bubbly.

### ***What can you do to help?***

Glad you asked! We would like all members to prepare for that day by weeding around their beds and refreshing their current plantings. If you have unusual plants whose names might not be obvious to our event guests, please consider placing small info signs near those plants. We ask that, if at all possible, you not park your car at the garden that day. We'll have nearby parking options for you. Also, bring a portable chair if you wish to be seated during our program.



Come one, come all! This event is open to the public and we encourage you to invite your families, friends and neighbors.

Children are welcome and encouraged to learn about our plants, gardening and where they might spot a colorful butterfly! So that we can better plan, please RSVP [here](#) (scroll to second item) if you plan to attend. And share the link with others.

See you on Saturday, April 30, at 11:30 a.m.

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## Events

### VISTA Compost Bin Turning

March 31, April 1 and 2. Choose 8-9 a.m. or 9-10 a.m.

Sign up on the VISTA [webpage](#) or on the sheet posted on the shed.

### USF Botanical Gardens Spring Plant Sale

Saturday, April 9 and Sunday, April 10, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

### VISTA Gardens Celebration

Saturday, April 30, 11:30 a.m. RSVP [here](#) (scroll to the second item).

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## Picturesque Pond Ahead

Our Pond Committee is creating a *Florida Native/Florida Friendly Habitat* to support birds, butterflies, bees and insects for our gardens. To achieve this, we will be planting trees, bushes and plants in the perimeter of the pond.

Our plans include placing pollinator plants in and around the pond, and we'll stock it with aquatic animals to help sustain the pond. Stop by and say "Hello" to our goldfish, but please don't feed them, as pond food is carefully managed for water quality. Watch our great little Mosquito fish as they dart around the pond looking for mosquito larvae to eat, helping protect us from mosquitos while we work. We hope to add aquatic snails, tadpoles and small Koi to the pond later.

Our design includes Youpon holly trees (both female and male), Red maples and Winged elms at the back of the area to build a protected area for birds. We will purchase these trees. As the trees and plants mature, we'll have areas for members to relax around the pond and enjoy being part of our natural habitat.

For the smaller plants, we are reaching out to our members to ask for plant donations to help us achieve our goals. We need Florida native and [Florida friendly](#) pond plants (Littoral shelf plants).

Please email [VistaPond2022@gmail.com](mailto:VistaPond2022@gmail.com) if you have plants to donate. We also could use more volunteers on our committee.

Please take a look at the beautiful plan below and let us know if you'd like to help!



## Sifters, Sifters, Sifters

We are producing ample amounts of compost, and the sifting bin is full. We need it empty by the end of the month.

Anyone can sift at any time, and sifting is easy (and oddly relaxing).

Just stand next to sifter and work the compost through the screen. Bring a friend, bring your music. Enjoy watching the birds. When you finish, fill a bucket and add some black gold to your garden.



## Worm Magic

Red Wigglers. Even the name makes us want to giggle. Combine these gentle, squirming creatures with curious, young children and you have a delightful learning experience. That's what happened in February when four children joined MJ, VISTA's worm aficionado, at the compost tent to learn about worm farming.

VISTA has been raising worms for years, and this hobby has gained interest nationwide. MJ helped several local schools set up [vermicomposting](#) containers and loves teaching children about this important component to food production. Worms are vital to soil health because they transport nutrients and minerals via their waste. Red Wiggler waste, called castings, is second only to bat guano for nutrient content.



During the VISTA lesson, the children learned the basics of worm farming, especially noting that worms want to be left alone—too much handling and they stop reproducing. They learned that it's important to provide good compost to start and to harvest castings approximately twice per year. And because Red Wigglers can't survive in the heat of a Florida garden, they live in shaded containers dubbed worm farms.

At the end of the MJ's lesson, each child had created a new worm farm to tend at home. Most importantly, the children learned that within the food cycle, worms work a simple magic all their own.

## VISTA Gardens in the News!

Based in Tampa Bay, 83 Degrees Media is a weekly digital magazine that covers Tampa's most visionary and active people, businesses, and organizations.

Check out their recent article about our garden!

[Read the article](#)

## VISTA Gardens New Members



**Social Member Kristine Sneddon**

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**Social Members Amy and Ryan Durham**

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**Social Member Barbara Kane**

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**Social Member Mindy Beck and young friend Mia**

## Hi, I'm...

VISTA's Board members and committee chairs will soon be wearing **VISTA Gardens name tags**.

Now, when you see one of us with these tags, you'll know that we are all on VISTA's leadership team and always happy to assist you with your questions or concerns.



So, please say hello to your board members and committee chairs.

We're here for you!

## April Wildflower of the Month

Beach verbena, also called Coastal mock vervain, blooms year around, works well as a mass planting or ground cover and can be grown in containers. A nectar source for a variety of butterflies and moths, including Gulf fritillaries, hawkmoths and long-tailed skippers, this perennial grows 12" tall and 12 to 18" wide in full sun and is drought tolerant once established. The Florida Wildflower Foundation suggests trying [Beach verbena](#) in dry, low-nutrient soils where other plants have trouble growing; do not over-irrigate.



*Gulf Fritillary on Beach Verbena Flower, Photo by Sue Mao*

According to the Institute for Regional Conservation, this is listed as an endangered plant by the state of Florida. Be careful to plant only native verbenas. Closely related verbenas hybridize and can damage the genetics of the natural species.

See the VISTA [information sheet](#) for more information.

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**Click here** to submit your photos and stories for future editions of VISTA Matters.

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Tampa, Florida 33618

