Village Institute for Sustainable Technologies & Agriculture

VISTA MATTERS

- April Edition -

CELEBRATING EARTH DAY!

The theme of Earth Day 2023 is 'Invest in Our Planet.' What are ways that we at VISTA Gardens can act from our awareness brought about by this important day for our planet?

Job #1 should be to preserve and conserve our natural areas. The renowned, late population biologist E.O. Wilson noted that the greatest threat to our planet is 'mass extinction.' He also observed, 'To stop the mass extinction of the bulk of earth's species, 50% of the world should be set aside and conserved for biodiversity.' Multiple connecting wildlife corridors in every community should be part of the effort. VISTA Gardens is beginning conversations with Carrollwood Park on West Village Drive and the Cultural Center on Lowell Road to establish a butterfly corridor. This is one of the most beneficial ways we can 'invest' in our planet with political willpower and the funding to do so. You can assist by supporting natural land acquisition and management initiatives.

Another easy way to invest in our planet is to also understand that the plant selections we make in our landscapes make a difference. Native plants have evolved and have adapted to native conditions over thousands of years and are best adapted to the local environment. The non-native plants so commonly used do not function in the same way. Our 'chain of life' depends on the plants native to their location. Investing in appropriate native plants to your location will benefit you with a life-filled dynamic landscape that will make your yard an enjoyable and sustainable place for all the species with which we share the planet!

Contributed by Bruce Turley, who as the then-owner of Wilcox Nursery, designed VISTA's Wildflower Garden. After growing up around the plant business, Bruce earned a degree in Visual Arts. He parlayed his artistic skills into gardening and now designs with a palette of blooms, berries, verdant trees and wispy grasses. A lifetime of working with Florida native plants gives Bruce an expertise perfectly suited to wildflower and native plantings garden design.

Gardening Angels coming to VISTA Gardens

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.

A couple of weeks 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!

Gardening Angels will be a new function under the garden committee headed up by Susan Baxter Gibson. We are currently looking for members who would like to participate as a Gardening Angel. This could be a great opportunity for social members who want to get their hands in soil! If you are interested in volunteering to be an angel, please call or text Susan Baxter Gibson **at 813.579.0552.**

If you find life getting in the way and need help with your garden, please contact Susan to arrange for a Gardening Angel.

Thank you to all who...

Used the AmazonSmile program for all your Amazon purchases. When you did, VISTA received a percentage of your eligible purchases, at no charge to you. For a garden like ours, every dime, every dollar that we receive in donations, grants, and matching programs helps us to further our mission to provide education and to serve as a sustainable model for organic gardening, native landscaping, and related technologies while providing opportunities to participate in healthy outdoor activities, responsible environmental leadership, growing organic food, and community building.

Unfortunately, Amazon has recently discontinued that program. But you can continue to help VISTA balance its budget. **One of our other fundraisers that many of our members and their friends have enjoyed is dining at our local restaurants when those places agree to donate a percentage of their checks to VISTA Gardens.** Some of the local restaurants supporting VISTA in this way have been Bonefish, Terra Sur, Noble Crust, and Jersey Mike's (near Bearss Ave). We know there are many other favorite places that VISTA members patronize. If you eat at or take out from a different place that you like, would you ask that manager to participate? Please contact **Jennifer Grebenschikoff** VISTA Board President, to discuss your fundraising ideas and possible restaurant connections. Let's eat!

And, we thank you who …

gathered and delivered leaves to support VISTA's robust composting operation. Becca Petrilak and Rolfe Evenson, Co-Chairs, Compost Committee, are pleased to report that they surpassed the goal of 200 bags filled with leaves. **No more leaves are needed at this time.**

Keeping Plants as Healthy as Possible at VISTA!

Zack Grace, co-owner of Urban Roots, joined VISTA gardeners Saturday, March 25, for an educational "walk-through" the gardens. Zack was very impressed with the number of healthy plants growing! He also pointed out issues that need to be addressed, such as powdery mildew on many pea and cucumber vines.

Powdery Mildew is airborne; it can spread through VISTA Garden on a breezy day. It presents as a white powdery coating over the surface of leaves.

Zack suggests applying organic fungicide to plants with a light amount of powdery mildew. **Plants that are heavily infected, such as the one pictured here, need to be removed from the garden. To limit the amount of mildew that can infect neighboring gardens, please wet the entire plant before removing it into a bag that you can close tightly. As always, take your sealed bag home for disposal.**

Under no circumstances should the diseased plants be placed in the compost bins.

If you are not familiar with plant diseases, Zack suggested that you photograph your plant and either email the photograph to Urban Roots or stop by the store to show it to someone there. Urban Roots is located at 11780 N Dale Mabry Hwy. Please do not bring any part of your plant to the store.

Fortunately, not all plants are susceptible to powdery mildew. The most susceptible are beans, cucumbers, muskmelon, okra, peas, and squash (including pumpkin plants).

SPECIAL EVENTS

Yoga in the Garden – Saturdays, April 8 and 22 at 9:30 a.m. Bring a mat or towel and drink. Donations gratefully accepted.

Summer Cover Crops – Saturday, April 15 at 9 a.m. Join VISTA President Jennifer Grebenschikoff to discuss the benefits of planting a summer cover crop and make plans for your garden • Seeds will be provided at no costs to VISTA members at the end of the discussion.

Earth Day – Saturday, April 22 at 10:30 a.m. **Tree Planting at VISTA Gardens.** University of Tampa PEACE Volunteer Center is bringing UT students to participate in gardening activities and our tree planting.

Urban Roots comes to VISTA – Saturday, May 6, 9 a.m. Zach Grace, Co-owner, Urban Roots, will "walk-through" the gardens to answer members' questions about soil health, planting, growing, and harvesting.

Happy Hour at VISTA Gardens – Sunday May 7, 5:30 p.m. Bring your favorite snack and beverage and enjoy time with fellow gardeners at the pavilion.

Native Plants and Beneficial Insect Connection

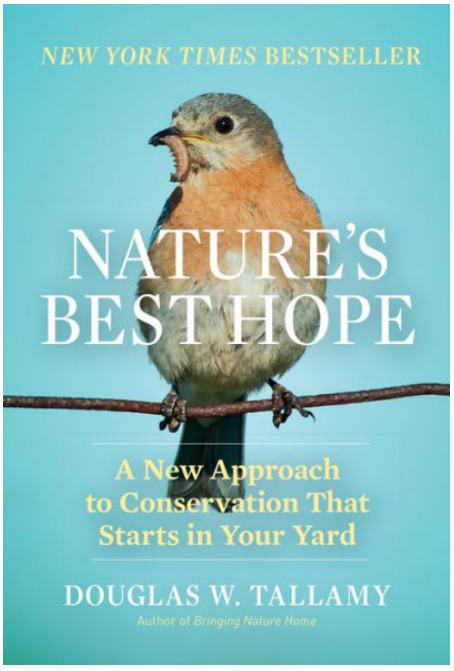
White Oldfield Aster (Symphyotrichum pilosum) and a Tachinid Fly – what connection

Photo of Tachinid Fly - Credit: **University of Florida/IFAS Entomology Department**

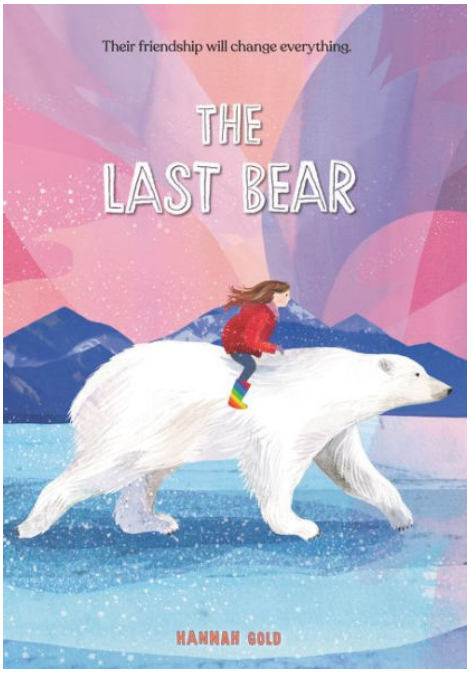
Find out here

might they have?

In the Little Free Library



If you're concerned about doing something good for the environment, Nature's Best Hope is the blueprint you need. By acting now, you can help preserve our precious wildlife—and the



An excellent choice for readers in grades 3 to 7, this fierce celebration of friendship includes full-page black-and-white illustrations throughout, as well as information about the real Bear

planet—for future generations.

Island.

“Every kid has a bug period... I never grew out of mine.”
— E.O. Wilson

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

VISTA Gardens
13572 South Village Drive
Tampa, Florida 33618

Connect with us