

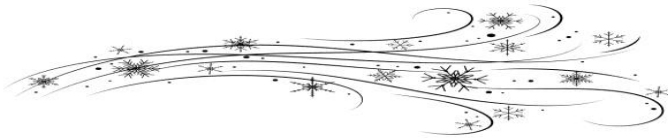


# LEAF NEWSLETTER

Apollo Beach Garden Club, Inc. 2017

February 2026 - Edition #73

"Just Keep on Planting"



## President's Message

Here we are in February 2026 and I'm still trying to figure out why January went through its 31 days so fast!!!! Less than two weeks is the Spring Plant Sale- **February 14<sup>th</sup>**. So many of you have helped to start, up pot, and care for the 100s of new plants. Lots of kudos to Teresa whose home is a NURSERY, with all the care that goes into keeping an inventory, not only alive in this crazy weather, but most of all 'plant sale worthy.' We are not known for selling 'puny' plants and we won't start now! They will be 'full and robust' as Teresa likes to say.

We had our first quarterly meeting last Tuesday to a great attendance of members and 3 guests. *Alyssa Vinson, Forestry Agent for Hillsborough County*, did another fantastic job in going through the biology of trees, as well as, some helpful



information on types of trees for our area. Her wealth of knowledge is always extensive and easily understood. Grow pines!

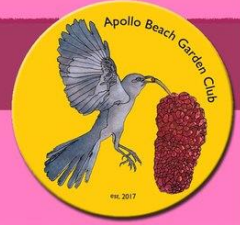
Our next speaker is a fun activity for adults and children on making whimsical plant stakes with Tanya. Weather permitting, it'll be in the garden on **February 28<sup>th</sup>**. **The first ten members are free.** Guests are \$10. We welcomed our new **Program Chair Lee Sutherland**, a newish member of both the Club and the Garden. Lee has some new ideas for programs and welcomes your suggestions!

I hope that Mother Nature's unwelcome chilly rampage has not damaged too many of your plants. I tried for 3 days of wind to keep covers over my most tender. A losing battle. I've taken the attitude of Raleigh. If it succumbs it's not meant for Central Florida zone 10a. I'm hoping all are! Remember just let your plants, bushes and trees be for next few weeks. It'll be hard not to trim, but that's the worse for them. A little Epsom salts drink will help their 'stress'. (1-2 tablespoons per gallon of water per plant.)

I wish all a **Happy Valentine's Day** full of plants from our sale and **Chocolates** of course!!

Paula  
Paula Olesen, President 813 512-1389

Apollo Beach Garden Club & Community Forest Garden



**Feb 14**  
**2026**

8am -3pm  
rain or shine



# Spring Plant Sale

Come get a "Market Garden To-Go" with literally everything you need for a Spring Garden as we feature and celebrate our local youth entrepreneurs and gardeners for Valentine's Day.

Youth entrepreneurs will have booths and products available for sale. The Junior Gardeners Academy will have a booth and a growing garden plot to discuss with visitors.

Line forms early, so bring your wagons, more money than you think you'll need, and help support our new generation of gardeners, farmers and entrepreneurs while you take home an incredible new Garden To-Go.

Vendors Open at 7:30 am  
Gates Open Promptly at 8 am

CHILDREN'S  
ENTREPRENEUR  
market



(813) 310 - 3204 664 Golf and Sea Blvd Apollo Beach, FL 33572

## Plant Sale Committee Report

This has been one unprecedented winter, for sure. And MAN has it bungled my plans for at least the last 6 weeks. Somewhere around \$3k of our plant sale inventory has spent more time inside my house the last 2 weeks than outside getting sunshine and water to grow. At the time of this writing on Feb 3rd, it's all still inside my house behind me from where I sit to type. But weather doesn't hold us back. We do damage control and we adapt and we can't sit in my living room to do it right now.

We have a very healthy inventory of "Market Garden To-Go" plants that are perfect for any new Spring Garden! The best part is that ALL of these plants have been lovingly created and grown by the active members of our garden that should be newly classified as a volunteer "micro-farm". As a community garden who micro-farms, everyone has participated along the way from starting seeds to transplanting, to fostering seedlings from the weather. We have purposefully and actively created the plants available for sale on a time table to reach a desirable market size by date of sale.

We have extremely rare varieties of cucumber, zucchini, tomato, greens, eggplants and cabbages sure to delight our gardeners on all levels; taste, production output and visual appeal. A new special offer is Rainbow Tatsoi. I love plants that have a story, especially when they're purple. The plant came about as a happy accident between bok-choi and another plant that gives it the amazing range of colors depending on the

temperature within which it is grown. Talk about a mood ring of plants!

My favorite new addition this year is the Katrina Cucumber and we paid an unprecedented \$.50 per seed to trial and provide these plants. This is a rare plant that sets mostly female fruit flowers that don't require pollinating while thriving in our area heat and humidity.

Katrina is a Gynoecious and parthenocarpic cucumber variety. They are high-yielding plants ideal for greenhouse, high-tunnel, or home garden production, as they produce mostly female flowers that set fruit without needing pollination. Gynoecious means the plant produces almost exclusively female flowers, while parthenocarpic means the fruit develops without pollination, resulting in seedless, thin-skinned cucumbers.

We have an incredible new variety of REAL Spinach available that will actually grow well in our area! After a December visit to Meecham Urban Farm in Downtown Tampa, I was able to source some seeds for the rare variety that they have success with. These seeds were nearly impossible to source, and the seeds I did acquire were a poor germination rate. But we have real spinach on offer that will grow here!

Each year we go to great lengths to research, trial and share the best new plants that should thrive in our area. Each year, we get better and better at it.

Our plant sale is not just going to be rare plants available but rare vendors as, well! Our

newest addition is the Children's Entrepreneurs Market. We have added in their children run vendor tents with our own vendors for a fun day where our youth learn what it takes to be an entrepreneur right along side our other vendors. Kid Power Activate!

volunteers to man our raffle table, holding table, cashier table and assist our patrons who are shopping. We will need volunteers on event day from 6 am until 2 pm.

Please call or text me at (813) 210 - 3204 with any questions. **Teresa Hall**

We are asking for volunteers to help transport plants and set up on Tuesday February 10th and February 13th from 8:30 am until 11:30 am. On day of event, we are asking for



Fun activity for adults and children on making whimsical plant stakes with Tanya. Weather permitting, it'll be in the ABGC garden on **February 28<sup>th</sup>**. **The first ten members are free. Guests are \$10.**

Visit [www.FFGC.org](http://www.FFGC.org) to see the District's Winter Newsletter, other events such as the up-coming Convention April 14-17<sup>th</sup> in Kissimmee, Fl.

### Upcoming Educational Programs

February 5th, [Tree and Landscape Short Course](#)

February 10th, [Meet Your Forest Hike](#)

February 25th, [Meet Your Forest Hike](#)

February 26th, [Invasive Species Volunteer and Ed Event](#)

[Register for Classes](#)

*IFAS Extension Urban Forestry*  
<[alyvinson@ufl.edu](mailto:alyvinson@ufl.edu)>

# Plant Auction & Educational Presentation

Speaker Pamelain Callender of  
The Florida Native Plant Society Presents:  
"Growing Florida Native Plants in your Landscape"

MARCH 7<sup>TH</sup> 2026

10AM - 1PM

Apollo Beach Recreation Center  
664 Golf and Sea Blvd

CLUBS REQUESTED TO DONATE  
A SPECIALTY PLANT FOR THE AUCTION



CONTACT: APOLLO BEACH PRESIDENT  
DISTRICT VIII HORTICULTURE CHAIR  
PAULA OLESEN

PAHRN2017@GMAIL.COM | 813-512-1389  
& TELL HER WHAT YOU ARE DONATING



**Teresa Hall**  
ABGC Plant Sale & Marketing

Happy New Year Garden Lovers! Please be sure to attend our Quarterly Club meeting on January 20th at

6:30 pm in the activities room. It is important for all new members to attend this event to meet our board and learn how the business end of our club functions. Even our newest, youngest members under 18 are able to vote on club matters during the first portion of our evening and learn parliamentary procedure. Following our standard club business, Alyssa Vinson from UF/IFAS will be speaking about including trees in your landscape.

We made a lot of progress in the garden last month and our planting parties have been highly successful in creating the vast inventory that we will need in order to reach our income goals for the sales event. It is a joy to see everyone so eager and happy to help create all the



new plants for our Spring Plant Sale. It just so happens that our plant sale date also falls on **Valentine's Day** this year, and we are eager to incorporate more love into our world with this sale in a way that generates meaningful impact in our community.

In addition to other new vendors, we are delighted to welcome the **Kid's Entrepreneurs Market** to join in as vendors for our plant

sale this year. The Children's Entrepreneur Market is an award-winning non-profit program that teaches young people about the power of entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership through experiential learning. Parents and kids everywhere agree that learning and earning in a competitive environment is a unique and fun experience. Kids rise to the challenge of deciding what to sell, creating a booth, talking to customers, and handling money. The Kid's Market portion offers a wide array of fun and interesting items, all made by kids. Everything from soaps and chap stick to snacks, jewelry and fascinating 3D printed toys. They are expecting to have between 10 and 30 booths and they are a powerful addition to our

vendor offerings. You can learn more about them at <https://kidsmarkets.com>.

Please mark your calendars for key volunteer days the week of the plant sale. **February 7th, 10th, 13th and 14th will be key volunteer days** and we need as many hands-on deck as possible to make this next sale even bigger than the last. As always, members who have volunteered to help with the event will have members only access to pre-shop before the sale. We are now growing the majority of our stock and inventory, rather than accepting plant donations. If you have plants you wish to donate, please contact me at **(813) 310 - 3204** or [kcproductions4fl@hotmail.com](mailto:kcproductions4fl@hotmail.com) to coordinate before bringing to the garden. While we appreciate the generous offers, we are not able to accept aloe, agave, pothos, philodendron and other plants in that category as they simply do not sell at our events. We do need banana pups, pineapple,

other small fruit trees and pollinator attractors.

The starting of a new year always brings new hope and I am definitely feeling the hope and excitement already this year. With launching the new Junior Gardeners Academy this month and the promise of another record setting Plant Sale next month, the future's so bright we might need to wear shades.

Teresa Hall

Director of Marketing and Events

*Urban Agriculture Specialist*

*Community Garden Specialist*

*Director of Marketing and Events*

**Apollo Beach Garden Club**

664 Golf and Sea Boulevard

Apollo Beach, Florida

**(813) 310 - 3204**

**ApolloBeachGardenClub.com**



APOLLO BEACH GARDEN CLUB, INC.  
Tuesday – January 20, 2026 6:00 pm  
**ABCFG General Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was called to order by Paula Olesen, President at 5:55 pm. Board and Committee members attending were Paula Olesen, Ev Barnes, Kathleen Willis and Teresa Hall, Tracy Osborn, Lee Sutherland. 7 members in attendance with 3 guests.

**SECRETARY’S REPORT: Tracy Osborne**

The minutes from November 17, 2025 and December 16, 2025 were provided. Motion to accept the November minutes as written was made by Ev Barnes and seconded by Teresa Hall.

Motion to accept the December 16<sup>th</sup> minutes as written was made by Paula Olesen and seconded by

**EVENTS AND MARKETING: Teresa Hall**

Started the Home School Academy on January 14, 2026 went well; 12 students attended. Will run 2 x per month 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday. Classes are full with a wait list.

Plant sale on Saturday, February 14, 2026. Will run classified ads 2 weeks before. Currently have 6 - 7 confirmed vendors. Any plant donations for the plant sale can be brought to the garden early as we have dedicated nursery space available to us.

Planting parties to resume Tuesdays and Saturday mornings.

Campaign with promotional fundraising event for Vego bed donations planned

Summer Learning and planting parties planned

**WEBSITE: Josh Thomas**

Website traffic from 2024 - 2025 saw an increase of 28% in views (3,400 up from 2,654) and 39% in unique visitors (1,600 up from 1,100).

We upgraded our domain to a paid WordPress plan last month. This allowed us to remove the “.wordpress” extension from our URL. This upgrade also allows set up of professional email forwarding, such as *contact@apollobeachgardenclub.com*, which establishes better trust with our community and partners.

Ev Barnes. Minutes were unanimously approved as written.

**TREASURER’S REPORT: Kathleen Willis**

Beginning Balance	\$ 9,185.04
Income	\$ 538.87
Expenses	\$ - 1,150.43
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$8,588.42</b>

Motion to accept the treasurer’s report was made by Jeanette Doyle and seconded by Megan Mcoldrick. The report was accepted unanimously.

**COMMUNITY FOREST GARDEN: Ev Barnes/Paula Olesen**

Raleigh is in Costa Rica, will return Friday, January 23rd. The gardens look lush. Blueberry plots have been reworked and new blueberry plants added with refreshed soil.

The new digital Membership form and the availability to pay online was launched over the weekend. Next Step: More Website redesign.

**MEMBERSHIP:** 31 paid members as of before Raleigh Barnes out of country. 3 available table beds.

**PROGRAMS:** Welcome new Programs Chair Lee Sutherland

**NEW BUSINESS: Tracy Osborne:**

Researching sites to redo our shirts. Looking at a dri-fit in both ladies and men’s sizes, v-neck and crew neck styles.

Other suggestions for new merchandise: tote bags, pins, magnets, car window clings, coffee mugs,

Teresa Hall made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ev Barnes. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM.

Speaker Alyssa Vinson, Forestry Agent for Hillsborough County introduced. Trees for Central Florida’s Landscape.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Tracy Osborne



# Junior Gardeners Academy 2026

January Launch

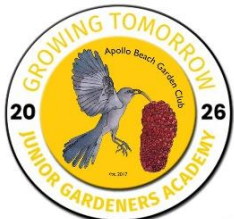
After many requests to offer garden related education, experiences and programming for our youths, we have, with the help of our local homeschool community and UF/IFAS, created the Junior Gardeners Academy 2026, which launched on Jan 14th.

We are now a certified direct pay provider with Step Up for Students EMA, which is a state funded program for homeschool students. As an extracurricular class, students can participate in paid outdoor activities related to horticulture and agriculture. It ensures that all student have access to learn how to grow their own food and learn hands on about earth sciences, as part of their state funded education curriculum. Step Up also ensures a revenue stream for community gardens who wish to teach and make a difference.



Hillsborough county has more homeschool students than any other county, anywhere in all 50 states, with over 10k students currently enrolled. Yes, you read that right! More than NYC, more than LA; we lead the entire nation in homeschool education. As such, the demand for classes is difficult to meet and hard to cap. Every community garden in Tampa Bay needs to be starting up this type of program. Our communities don't just want this, they need it! And, providing what they need comes with a built-in, iron-clad revenue stream.

Our vision was to have 10 students this semester, and give them a garden bed to experiment in so they can learn how to grow food together under expert guidance. We have 10 amazing students, fully committed for the entire semester and truly excited to garden in that bed with us after the first 2 classes! They grew their own seedling plants



at home and planted them in their new garden bed. They continue to make new plants for the plot and are learning like the rest of us how to take cold losses in stride because we've already learned that we can always make new plants easily. This program is a glorious success.

In January alone, the program generated \$400 additional revenue from student tuition and a \$500 matching grant from the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs to support the program. The best part is the fun with the students. It is magical seeing them shine and teaching them how to grow food and enjoy every aspect of the process from seed to plate; it's utterly priceless and a privilege to facilitate. Paula Olesen has been so fun to teach with, and we make a fabulous team as instructors. I am personally elated to be on such a wonderful teaching and learning journey with everyone in our humble little garden that can.

Together, we can grow tomorrow. Together, we can all lean a bit more into food sovereignty and rely a lot less on the grocery store. When we can teach our "littles" how it's done, but they more often than not, teach us right back and come up with even more

innovative ideas! That's how we grow tomorrow together.



It takes only one spark to ignite a bonfire. It takes only one seed to inspire a whole new generation to explore the wonders of gardening and growing their own food; with the same level of explosive combustion as that bonfire. All we need to do is show them how and give them a place to explore and do it. Our garden is humbly grateful to be that place.



Teresa Hall  
Instructor, Junior Gardeners  
Academy



## Club Member's Photo



## Cooper's Hawk



**Cover up or bring inside!!!**



WE'RE DONE PLAYING GAMES - THIS IS YOUR LAST SHOT TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT, GROUNDHOG, OR WE'RE GIVING YOUR JOB TO THE SQUIRREL.



**Old friends of the community garden – Tammy, Jill, Joanne, Mark**



# Apollo Beach Community Forest Garden

Raleigh Barnes: Garden Forest Coordinator, Membership & Scholarship Chair

# EDIBLES TO PLANT IN February



	North	Central	South
 <b>EASY TO TRANSPLANT</b>	Arugula, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Eggplant, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Peppers, Swiss Chard, Tomatillo, Tomatoes	Arugula, Beets, Boniato, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Eggplant, Endive, Gingers, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Pepper, Swiss Chard, Sugarcane, Tomatillo, Tomatoes	Arugula, Chinese Cabbage, Eggplant, Endive, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Pepper, Swiss Chard, Tomatoes
 <b>TRANSPLANT CAREFULLY</b>	Celery, Mustard, Potatoes, Spinach	Celery, Mustard, Pineapple, Potatoes, Spinach, Sweet Potatoes	Amaranth, Calabaza, Celery, Long Squash, Luffa, Papaya, Pineapple, Seminole Pumpkin, Spinach, Sweet Potatoes
 <b>USE SEEDS</b>	Cantaloupe, Carrots, Corn, Cucumbers, Onions (bunching), Peas (English), Radish, Squash, Turnips, Watermelon	Beans (bush, pole, lima), Cantaloupe, Carrots, Corn, Cucumbers, Okra, Onion (bunching), Peas (English, Southern), Radish, Squash, Turnip, Watermelon	Beans (bush, pole, lima), Cantaloupe, Carrots, Corn, Chayote, Cucumbers, Okra, Onion (bunching), Peas (English, Southern), Radish, Squash, Watermelon



For more information, please visit [GardeningSolutions.ifas.ufl.edu](http://GardeningSolutions.ifas.ufl.edu)



## Review of Raised Bed Lease process

Many approach members during Volunteer Work Days inquiring about the rental of a raised bed. Here is a refresher of the simple 3 step process!

### **Step 1.**

Volunteer at least 10 hours on Tuesday and/or Saturday mornings. This will help us get to know each other and coach you on the basics of how the garden operates, where tools are and how to use them. During this time, you will also learn a bit about the [Lease Agreement](#) which you can download on the

website. It is your responsibility to be familiar with its contents before you are assigned a raised bed. \*\*Don't forget to sign-in the White Binder every time you come to volunteer so we can track your hours together.



### **Step 2.**

Once the 10 hours have been completed, you are ready to fill out a [Membership Form](#) which can be downloaded from the website. You will bring this form together with corresponding payment to the following *Membership Meeting* on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 6:30pm.

### **Step 3.**

At the Membership Meeting, you will be assigned a raised bed after a brief quiz on the Lease Agreement. You are ready to garden away!

*"Every weed you pull might be medicine. Every bug you see could be a pollinator. Look closer – nature never makes mistakes."* (Author unknown)

**The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies." -Gertrude Jekyll**

## **Volunteer to help always needed!!**



### **Garden Visitor Hours -**

Open to the Public

Tuesday and Saturday from 9 to 11

Garden is closed on Holidays

To schedule a tour outside regular hours email

[apollobeachgardenclub@gmail.com](mailto:apollobeachgardenclub@gmail.com)



*Object and Mission of the **Apollo Beach Garden Club, Inc.:***

**The Object** of the corporation is to enrich outdoor garden experiences through education programs, public awareness, and oversight of the Apollo Beach Community Forest Garden.

**The Mission** is for residents of Apollo Beach and the South Shore Community to learn about various common edible and Florida-friendly plants; and to also understand the significance of local environmental issues, opportunities and regenerative efforts.



## 2025-2026 Elected Board



**President:** Paula Olesen

**Secretary:** Tracy Osborn

**Treasurer:** Kathleen Willis

**Community Forest Garden Coordinator:** Raleigh Barnes

**Director of Marketing & Events:** Teresa Hall

**Past President:** N/A



### Committee Chairs

**ABGC Leaf Newsletter Editor Chair:** Jeanette Doyle

**Facebook:** Teresa Hall

**Membership Chair:** Raleigh Barnes

**Webmaster:** Josh Thomas

**Program Chair:** Lee Sutherland

**Scholarship Chair:** Raleigh Barnes



Board meets ***the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday evening at 6 pm*** at the Recreation Center  
*Our meetings are open and may be attended by any member.*

*Membership Meetings quarterly*

All inquiries to be sent to: [apollobeachgardenclub@gmail.com](mailto:apollobeachgardenclub@gmail.com)

