

History Of The Wildflower Program In Florida

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1513 Ponce de Leon first sighted land near present-day St. Augustine. the land he viewed was covered with beautiful flowers...he called the land "La Florida" after the festival of flowers being held at that time in Spain. * Our diverse and unique flora is in need of preservation if we want our future generations to enjoy the native Flowers we sometimes take for granted.

*1960 State Rd 19 / Highway 27 south of Tallahassee the DOT put out some sod purchased from a local farmer. the sod contained Crimson Clover (*Trifolium incarnatum*). No one was aware of it at the time, but when the clover started blooming with its bright red blossoms, the DOT received numerous calls to find out what it was. While Crimson Clover is not a true native it is has become a naturalized species and the DOT still uses it along our roadsides.

*1963 the Florida DOT initiated "Wildflower Program" partly to beautify the highways and partly to lower maintenance costs by reducing the amount of mowing. About this time the Phlox along the railways appeared. Garden Club? Or Railway workers. It adopted Florida and reblooms every year along the tracks.

*1973 Federal Highway Administration Program "Operation Wildflower" it was spearheaded by Lady Bird Johnson. Florida already had a program in place that used seeds and plants paid for by a member of the National Council of State Garden Clubs with the Florida Highway Administration reimbursing labor costs.

*1973 – 1980 Many pounds of seeds were planted with minimal success. mostly due to environmental challenges and the use of non-native seed. The FHWA's emphasis shifted from planting to trying to preserve and manage existing wildflowers

*1980 Preservation of wildflower stands mowing guidelines were developed (signs marked areas , but vandals removed the signs often)

*1984 Florida Garden Clubs encouraged the DOT to do research to recommend the best species to use, best planting techniques, seasonal schedules for different species and best maintenance practices

*1985 the Florida Federation Of Garden Clubs along with the Bureau of Maintenance developed the " Paths of Sunshine Award" founded by John Wood in memory of his wife Ella the 27th Florida Federation Of Garden Clubs president. It was to encourage the different districts in Florida to do more plantings. The awards are given annually in the amounts of \$500,\$300,\$100 to the most popular and showy plantings. It is still a funded endowment today.