



## PLAN C INITIATIVE

### **PLAN C INITIATIVE: A Fresh Approach to Improving the Odds for a Sustainable Future**

**By Claudia Lewis, Executive Director**

Everywhere I have lived in Florida the natural areas around me have been developed; the notice has not come in the mail but via a live messenger: a gopher tortoise, a fox, a wading bird, a snake, a possum. The messengers don't carry signs, they just look different - nervous, tired, hungry, confused-, and they wander around in places and at times they typically wouldn't do so. After a few minutes, hours, or days, the messengers vanish. A quick reconnaissance trip around the area reveals that their habitat has just been destroyed and they have nowhere else to go but the surrounding neighborhoods. Sometimes, I would pick up one of these unfortunate creatures and drive it to a suitable natural area, hoping that there would be room for it. But the reality is that there are not enough natural areas left to accommodate all the wildlife that is being displaced in Florida, and relocating these animals sometimes causes problems for the local wildlife populations.

Many of Florida's remaining natural areas are too small to support viable wildlife populations, and habitat fragmentation and the lack of corridors are big issues for wildlife; even those large protected tracts are like islands in a sea of cement. Human population continues to grow -- Florida is expected to surpass New York as the third largest state by 2050, so the situation is not likely to improve. The best way to handle this, and perhaps the only future to preserving biodiversity, is for humans to develop a new mindset and plan their spaces to purposely share them with wildlife. This is not only very plausible; it is advantageous to humans from any angle you look at it.



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Imagine urban areas where instead of “green spaces” covered with a monoculture of turf and an assortment of ornamental plants, you would have landscapes designed to support biodiversity and provide humans with a variety of goods such as edible plants, herbs, medicinal plants, recreational features, resting places and vibrant colors, pleasant smells and fresh air. Furthermore, imagine that instead of hot, barren parking lots, medians and abandoned lots, you would have landscapes filled with life. And when you picture these landscapes, don’t limit yourself to the horizontal surfaces on the ground; picture also the roofs and walls of structures covered with a myriad of plants that provide food, cover and beauty for all. And if this wasn’t enough, imagine saving money otherwise spend on water, fertilizers and pesticides, reducing your electrical bill, your trips to the grocery store, and the CO2 that you would otherwise be adding to our atmosphere.

This is the concept at the heart of **Plan C Initiative**, a non-profit organization we recently formed to empower local communities to develop ecological landscapes. Combining the principles of reconciliation ecology, permaculture and community based social-marketing, *Plan C Initiative* intends to empower communities to mimic nature in urban areas, as much as possible. It hopes to Connect landscapes as well as people -with the land, with wildlife, and with each other, strengthening positive social interactions and facilitating Community building. It intends to inspire communities to take Care of urban spaces in a different way, Create landscapes that will not only Conserve wildlife and the spaces they need, but also support humans in a much more Clever and Conscientious way, for generations to come. **Plan C** is an **Initiative** meant to Change outlooks, philosophies, and ways of living and of interacting. This is why it is not called Plan B, because a B approach would aim at fixing what did not work with Plan A - if there ever was one. *Plan C Initiative* instead hopes to provide a platform for a complete change in the way we go about looking at, and transforming the urban landscapes, one that will help us do more than just cope with our past mistakes, striving instead to create innovative, long-lasting solutions, bridging the gaps between us the natural world.



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*Plan C Initiative* is currently partnering with Vista Gardens to landscape the grounds surrounding the new community gardens and to offer a variety of workshops, ecological landscape design charettes, and resources for the residents of Carrollwood to install and maintain ecological landscapes, enhance their sustainability proficiency, and develop stronger connections with the land and with each other.

## **Why Go Native**

The State of Florida has given the green light to make urban spaces more environmentally friendly. Join us in this workshop to learn more about what this can mean for your yard and your community. You will be amazed to learn of the benefits, possibilities, and connections to be realized with ecological landscaping.

Date: Saturday, December 5 (may also be offered Wednesday Dec. 9, depending on number of participants registered)

Location: Carrollwood Cultural Center

Time: 10:00 AM

Cost: \$35 - includes free membership to Vista Gardens AND Plan C Initiative

For registration and additional information contact Karen at: 813-299-4722

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