

Wildflowers

Are Her Passion

Joanna Booth Is Keeping Madison County

Naturally Beautiful With Wildflowers

By Janet Schrader
Greene Publishing, Inc.

Joanna Booth owns and runs Salter Tree and Herb Farm off Cattail Drive in Madison. She raises flowers, herbs and trees, but her passion is for the wildflowers.

"I've worked in yard and vegetable gardens, had a bedding plant business, and watched Dad's native nursery for most of my life," said Booth. "Now, I feel young again working with the wildflowers. I go to work in the fields with a big smile on my face and don't really mind the Florida heat much anymore. Producing seed from Florida's

wildflowers makes me feel like I'm doing something that matters."

Booth took her ideas about planting wildflowers around the county and producing and selling seeds from them to the Madison County Commissioners. "I have no problem at all getting up in front of a group of people and talking about the value, beauty and importance of wildflowers," Booth said about her visit to the County Commissioners. Booth was also there to solicit help, obtaining a grant for making the Florida state wildflower, *Coreopsis lanceolata*, available commer-



Joanna Booth and Wally Davis, of Farmers Supply Company, stand behind a vase filled with *Coreopsis* and packets of wildflower seeds that you can buy at Farmer's Supply. (Greene Publishing, Inc. Photo by Janet Schrader, August 23, 2006)

cially. The flower is sometimes called tickseed and is considered a weed by farmers. It is not rare in Florida, but it is rarely found available commercially. That means you can't buy the seeds to plant in your garden. Booth raises lanceolata on her farm and was asking the city fathers for their support in gaining grant money to make it more available commercially. She spoke to Allen Cherry and several other Madison County Commissioners and they were all very supportive, according to Booth.

"We were all behind her idea to plant wildflowers around the county in various locations," County Commissioner Allen Cherry said.

Cherry said Booth told the commissioners she wanted to plant wildflowers in front of the annex and on Rocky Ford Rd. as well.

According to Booth, Clerk of the Court Tim Sanders supports projects to beautify the public buildings in the city. Booth also said Supervisor of Roads and Bridges, Jerry McClune, has been beautifying roadsides in the county for years.

Booth had a grant last year for research and development of the lanceolata. She found the flowers growing wild out on the Blue Springs Road and got permission to collect the plants. With those plants she was able to begin generating seeds and is now

ready to market seeds from them. If you'd like to buy some of Booth's wildflowers, she has phlox, black-eyed Susans, basilis and the lanceolata for sale in two places locally. You can get them at O'Toole's Herb Farm in packets and at Farmers Supply Company on Range Street. Booth plans to start a mail-order business selling her flower seeds in the future, but currently to get the seeds she would love you to support the local businesses that sell them.

Besides the four wildflowers she markets, Booth also raises drummundii, hirta, blue-eyed grass, mollis, leavenworthii and contradina canasens. You may not recognize their names, but many of these wildflowers are sights we are all familiar with on the roadsides and in the fields of Madison County. Not only does Booth raise wildflowers on her farm, but she raises trees as well. The trees she has chosen to propagate are a little

different. No pine trees for this lady. She raises trees that provide food for butterflies and birds and also raises trees that show off fall colors.

The late Charles Salter first opened the Salter Tree Farm nursery in the early 70's and was a pioneer in the beginnings of the native plant industry in Florida. While her father was a tree and shrub man, Joanna reopened the nursery and added medicinal and culinary herbs and in 2004 became interested in wildflower seed production. "My dilemma developed when all my weeds became wildflowers!" said Booth laughing. "So, I adopted the Florida Friendly slogan allowing for native plants and wildlife to coexist with the nursery."

If you'd like to know more about the Salter Tree and Herb Farm, Booth has a website. Check out her flowers at www.saltertreeandherbfarm.com.

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Letters To The Editor

Letters to the Editor are typed word for word, comma for comma, as sent to this newspaper.

Thanks For Story On Wildflower Projects

I want to thank Janet Schrader for the very well done article on my wildflower projects in Madison that was printed in the August 25 issue of the Enterprise-Recorder. This letter is to clarify that the special wildflower, Phlox pilosa, that I did receive a grant to research and produce for sale, was funded by the Florida Wildflower Advisory Council and the Florida Wildflower Foundation. I found this wonderful plant several places in the county.

The information in the article about Coreopsis lanceolata, Florida's designated wildflower, was factually correct because most Florida native wildflowers are in scarce supply commercially. Recently, C. lanceolata was planted around the Madison County Fire Station at the request of Chief Martin.

I hope that Phlox pilosa will also beautify Madison's public buildings in the near future. Thanks to all the many people in Madison who appreciate wildflowers. After all, we are in Florida - land of flowers!

Sincerely,
Joanna S. Booth
Salter Tree and Herb Farm