

Highlighting Florida Natives in a Commercial Landscape

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Introduction

The efforts of the Environmental Horticulture and Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) programs in Indian River County (IRC) are focused on Florida-Friendly Landscaping (FFL). FFL lecture series and other learning opportunities have been offered to program participants; however, the extension office does not have its own grounds to provide demonstrations of FFL techniques or landscaping options for water conservation.

A partnership between Indian River County Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) and IRC Extension emerged to improve a failing landscape at a newly constructed multi-generational activities facility, the interGenerational Center (iG), and to promote FFL and water conservation through utilization of low water requiring plant species.



Figure 1. Bed 1 after refurbishment including several colorful Florida natives.



Figure 2. Previous drab landscape.

Objectives

- Create a display of Florida native plants that are suitable for bedding and other uses in commercial/ 'traditional' residential landscapes.
- Highlight natives with significant color and interest.
- Demonstrate FFL plant selection and water management.



Figure 3. Bed 2 Deliberate placement of Stokes aster, Rudbeckia, Coreopsis, and Gaillardia showing off their colors to the front of the bed.

Methods

The horticulture agent performed several site visits. Then provided recommendations and design to remedy the unfortunate appearance of the landscape. Plants selected and installed for this project were a combination of drought tolerant colorful natives and popular non-invasives. The native plants were highlighted at the forefront of the beds and dispersed throughout. Signage in the beds indicate plant names and the rationale for their selection based upon FFL. MGVs manage and maintain the beds. All flowering plants are deadheaded. Succession plantings allow for a consistently fresh appearance all plants.



Figure 4. Signage in Bed 2 explaining FFL and design choices.

Results

Three beautifully landscaped garden beds welcome visitors to the iG Center. The newly landscaped beds, totaling 1,176 square feet, are worth approximately \$8,480 in labor and materials. The benefit to the county cannot currently be quantified, however an improved appearance to the front courtyard of the building will most certainly enhance a visitor's sense of wellbeing on the property. Visitors have commented on the curb appeal. We have been requested to rehabilitate the six remaining beds to complete the entryway.

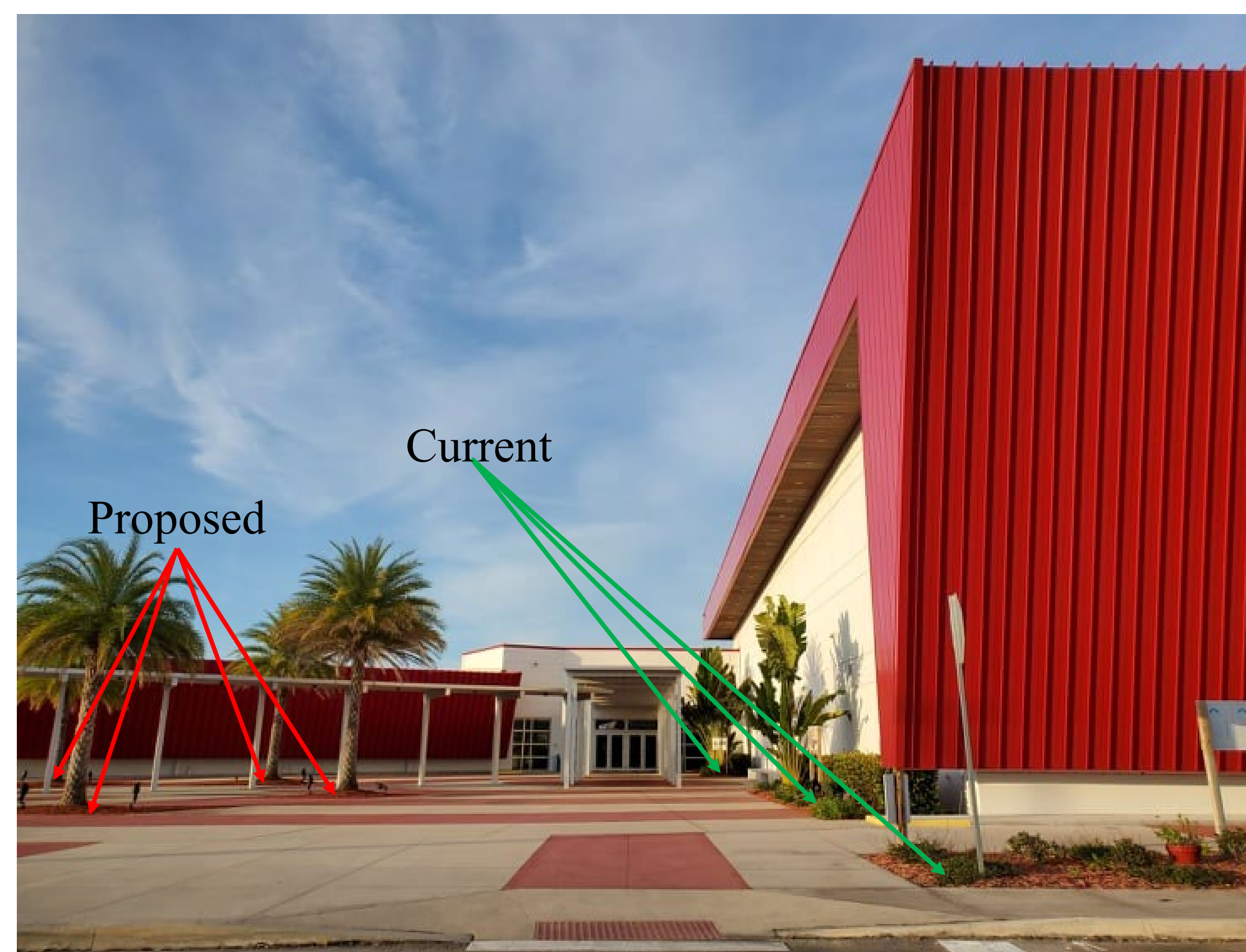


Figure 5. Entryway of the iG Center showing the difference between the beds currently maintained by the MGVs versus the ones managed by PRD. The additional beds will be enhanced by the MGVs by end of year.



Conclusions

These renovated landscaped beds have helped to provide a more favorable view of Florida natives. The Right Plant in the Right Place for this design includes colorful natives, provides for wildlife, and can utilize water more efficiently. The more prolific species are kept on their best behavior by routine maintenance.

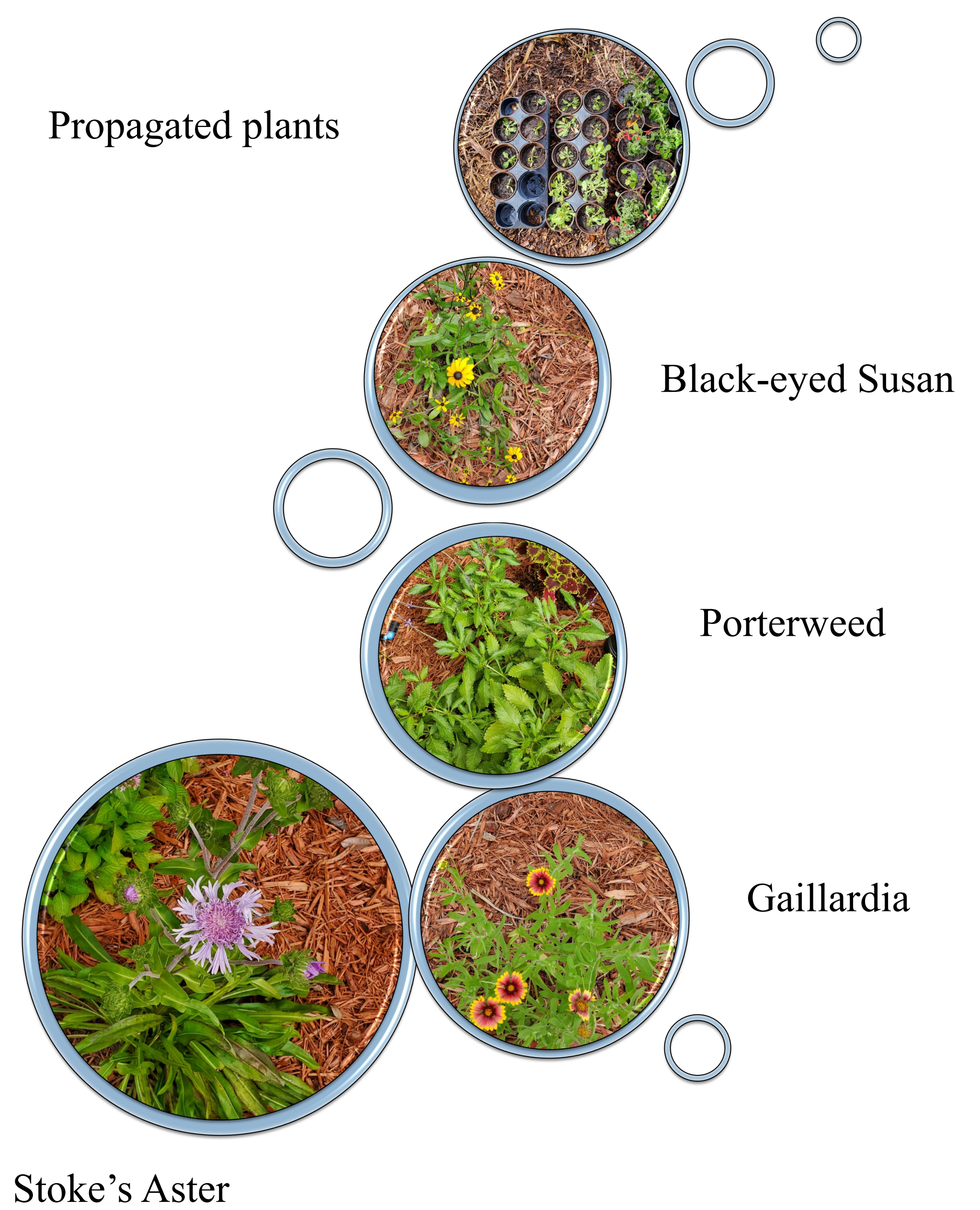


Figure 6. Some of the native plants used in the beds.

Acknowledgments

Great thanks to the Indian River County Parks and Recreational Department for trusting us to enhance the front of the building and to the Indian River County Master Gardeners who maintain the beds with great care and diligence.

For further information

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