

Ocean Ridge Garden Club... Going Native at the Ocean Ridge Town Hall

article submitted by Zoanne Hennigan

The Ocean Ridge Garden Club has just installed a native garden at the entrance to Town Hall. Why native? Native plant landscaping contributes to the preservation and restoration of our natural heritage. It creates an awareness of the beauty of the plants native to south Florida and it is especially fitting for a public building to be adorned with plants native to the area.

A native garden has benefits beyond the beauty of the plantings. At a time when we are drought conscious, a native garden will help conserve water, minimize or eliminate the need for fertilizers and pesticides and conserve energy resources. Once established, the plants will require minimal maintenance. A native garden also has the added benefit of attracting butterflies and birds. Seven Thatch palms were planted between them to complete the centerpiece design for the garden. The challenge in planning this garden was to select plants that could thrive in sometimes harsh coastal conditions. All of the plants are wind, salt and drought tolerant and suitable for coastal soil. A struggling red cedar was replaced with two 14 ft. curved Sabal palms. The Sabal palms are appropriate for the setting of the town hall; they are the state tree of Florida and appear on the state flag. A quarter of the grass was removed and non-native plants such as oleanders and struggling plants were replaced with 200 new dune daisies, koonties, and dwarf schilling hollies to provide a border and architectural design to enclose the garden.

Two benches will be installed at the entrance to the garden in front of a gazebo like structure. The shape of their pedestals mirrors the design elements of the cape architecture of the town hall. The benches will sit atop crushed shells to further add to the native coastal theme. This is phase one of the garden which will continue to be refined. Future plans include plant labels and descriptions of their history and botanical characteristics.

This project owes its thanks to the Ocean Ridge Garden Club that provided the funding and particularly to Dr. John Wootton and Rita Ginsky, Project Leaders, Julia Walker, Chairperson of the Beautification Committee, and Zoanne Hennigan, President. Two generous residents from Ocean Ridge donated the benches. Finally, Bob Glynn of the Delray Garden Center provided the necessary labor, machinery and much of the plant material at cost allowing this project to become a reality.



(Photo courtesy of Ocean Ridge Chief of Police, Christopher Yannuzzi)