



## President's Message



What a year for the Bartram Trail Society of Florida! We celebrated William Bartram's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of coming to Florida in a huge way. It's incredible to think that we exposed over 5,000 people to William Bartram in 8 events in 7 counties in NE Florida this year!

Major events included the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual St. Johns River Bartram Frolic in Palatka, the Bartram Days at Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park in Gainesville, the Bartram Living History Fest in St. Johns County, the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs Centennial Convention in Jacksonville, Nassau County's Bartram Trail Nature Tour, the Florida Folk Festival and the Gainesville Garden Club's EXPO 2024.



Bartram Trail Society Invades Micanopy  
Photo: Sam Carr

In July, we held our 2024 Annual Members' Meeting at Camp Chowenwa in Clay County, the site of Governor Tonym's plantation, which Bartram visited in 1774. We elected a new director, Mary Garcia, and reviewed the status of the Bartram Trail in Florida. We're busy getting Clay, Nassau, St. Johns County, and Volusia Counties to establish and develop their segments of the Bartram Trail. We're excited to announce that Clay County has partnered with the BTSF to build their trail early in 2025, and others are close behind.



Dean Campbell addresses the group attending the Bartram Trail Society Annual Membership Meeting  
Photo: Sam Carr

Bartram Trail Society of Florida will host the 2025 Bartram Trail Conference in St. Augustine! We will be inviting hundreds of Bartram scholars and enthusiasts to visit the oldest town in the U.S.! We tentatively plan for Flagler College to be the venue, and hope to announce an August 2025 date soon! Check back at our website in events for updates.

Please join us on our travels!

We're growing and having fun - be a part of it!

Become a member today!

Your membership fees help us maintain, expand, and develop the Bartram Trail in Florida. There are also plenty of things to do as a volunteer. If you would like to participate, please give me a call at 386-937-3901 or [submit an inquiry](#) on our website.

"...peace and love..."

Sam Carr, President

## Gainesville Spring Garden Festival

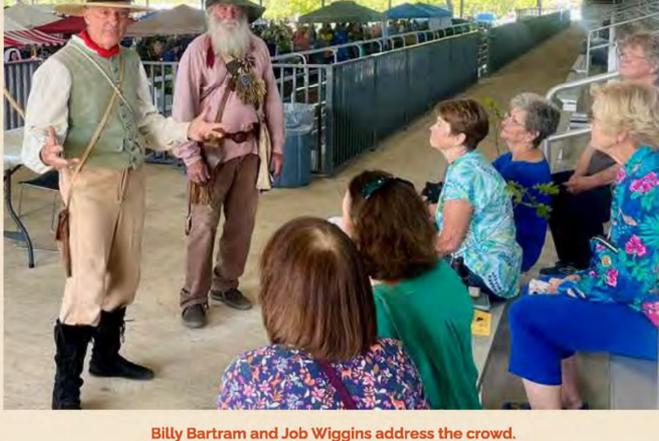
By Kalia C. Baillene, Bartram Society of Florida Chair

The Garden Club of Gainesville invited the Bartram Trail Society of Florida to its first Garden Festival. The event, held Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, was co-sponsored by the Alachua County Agricultural Extension Service and the Master Gardeners. The Agricultural Equestrian Center in Newberry provided ample space for many outdoor activities and an auditorium for keynote speaker Doug Tallamy. This was a family-friendly day with venues for children, parents, and plant and garden enthusiasts. The entry was free and open to the public.



Photo: Sam Carr

Our treasured reenactors, Mike Adams, aka Billy Bartram, and Robert Wilson, aka Job Wiggins, Indian guide and fur trader, made history come alive with their stories about their travels on the Paynes Prairie in the 1770s. The campfire scenario in the arena area was the perfect place for living history. Before and after stories, they could be found walking among the visitors and showing the artifacts used to live on the Florida savanna during their visits there.



Billy Bartram and Job Wiggins address the crowd.  
Photo: Sam Carr

At some point, Billy probably shared the story of meeting the famous Indian Chief, Ahaya, or Cow Keeper. When he explained his search for plant specimens, the chief honorably gave him the name "Puc Puggy," which means "Flower Hunter."

Doug Tallamy, horticulturist and author, spoke at 2 PM in the auditorium to a packed crowd of nature lovers to share information on botany and all things plants. He spent many hours signing his book *Bringing Nature Home, How You Can Sustain Wildlife With Native Plants*. Vendors for almost any plant and implement imaginable were set up to expand one's garden and help with care information.



Bartram Displays at the Festival  
Photo: Sam Carr

Board members Larry Mikelson and Janice Brown were present to sell T-shirts, books, and Billy Bartram commemorative pins and to sign people up to receive our newsletter and/or become members of the Bartram Trail Society. President Sam Carr was on hand to share our story of the Bartram Society of Florida. We have all seven counties in the Northeast Florida area as committed partners to expand the knowledge about Bartram's travels in all these areas of Florida. Each county is working to develop and mark the trails for our explorations, place markers, and interpretive panels for our information, as well as to further the events and activities related to Billy Bartram's travels throughout our communities. We encourage you to walk and explore these trails to enjoy the history, nature, and beauty of North Florida. Every season brings new views of plant growth, animal sightings and migrations, and amazing scenes along the beautiful St. Johns River.

## St. Johns River Center Update

By Rob Mattson

In September 2024, the Palatka City Commission agreed in exchange with the Blue Crab Development Group, giving them ownership of the St. Johns River Center in exchange for some parcels adjacent to City Hall (the old Port Consolidated property). Presentations by the Blue Crab group to the Commission showed various presentations for the River Center property that multiple groups have developed over the years.



The St. Johns River Center on the Palatka Riverfront

Conversations between Sam and the group have indicated that they still plan to keep the facility open to the public and maintain some elements of the existing River Center. Still, the facility's mission will be broadened to more of a Visitor Center/ clearinghouse for information on the area (restaurants, outdoor recreation opportunities, trails, places to stay, historic sites, etc.).

The facility will also host many more downtown events in association with adjacent businesses, such as Velchoff's Corner. Eventually, the building will house a coffee shop in the former classroom/meeting room and a studio for the Bass Capital Radio podcasts. Recent improvements include a thorough pressure washing of the outside of the building and trimming/removal of landscaping to make the building more visible (shown in the article photo.)



Support & Join!

