

FLORIDA PROJECT LEARNING TREE 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

PLT provides educators with high-quality professional development, hands-on activities, and multi-disciplinary supplemental curriculum that can be easily integrated into lesson plans for all grades and subject areas to help teach youth about trees, forests, and the environment.



PLT is an initiative of SFI





An Exciting Year for Florida PLT

I was honored to join Florida Project Learning Tree (PLT) as the Coordinator in November 2018. I say I'm honored because, wow, what an incredible group of people to work with.

The passion for and steadfast commitment of our facilitators, School and Environmental Education Center Coordinators, educators, Steering Committee Members, and partners and sponsors is extraordinary. Thanks to all of these individuals and organizations, 2019 was an extremely productive and exciting year for Florida PLT. We were thrilled to partner with the Florida Forest Service to provide PLT professional development training to 41 educators who attended the Florida Forestry Teachers' Tour. In partnership with environmental education consultants Vicki Crisp and Barb Gugliotti, and through funding from the Florida Forest Service and the National PLT 2019 Model Program Initiative Grant, we correlated five of the PLT guides to the Florida standards, making it easier for teachers to incorporate activities into standards-based curriculum (see <https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/plt/curriculum/standards-correlations/> for more information). Our 2019 Advanced Professional Development Conference, *Florida PLT Presents Growing Green Careers*, was held in Lakeland November 1-3, and 73 participants (the largest number ever) were provided with training in green and forest careers-focused activities, opportunities for networking, and materials and resources (see page 8 for more information on our 2019 conference).

Our dedicated and wonderful facilitators are the heart of our program. In 2019, 45 facilitators led professional development trainings, training 800 formal and non-formal educators throughout Florida. We are beginning to expand into counties where PLT previously has had little to no exposure,

and we are so thankful to our facilitators for always stepping up to help. We were pleased to welcome 31 new facilitators in 2019, some of who joined us through the facilitator mentoring program and some who attended the facilitator training at the 2019 conference.

The 2019 Florida PLT Steering Committee is made up of members representing government agencies, forest industry, and formal and non-formal education. Steering Committee members (see <https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/plt/who-we-are/>) contribute

considerable time and provide essential input to guide the direction of the program. In June, the Steering Committee gathered for a

2-day strategic planning retreat. The result was a 3-year strategic plan, outlining priority program areas, goals, objectives, and action items to spearhead our efforts over the next 3 years.

We thank our outstanding network for your hard work and support in 2019 and for helping PLT to reach its vision of creating a future where the next generation values the natural world and has the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions and take responsible actions to sustain forests and the broader environment. We look forward to a dynamic and successful year in 2020!

Jessica Ireland
Coordinator, Florida PLT

In 2019, Florida PLT provided professional development training to 800 formal and non-formal educators.

What Educators Say ...

"I learned a lot from this training! I'm not a big nature nor science person, but this helped me learn ways I can make it fun for myself and the children."

— Early Childhood Teacher

"[PLT is] highly engaging and employs skills from all content areas. Fabulous workshop—worth giving up a Saturday."

— Elementary School Teacher

"[The PLT training] was a remarkable experience for me personally. I've already implemented some of the activities at my school. We've started with a three-week session. I have a small group of nine fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade students. Yesterday was our second session and they've already requested that we add three more sessions. What you all do is phenomenal and I truly appreciate it."

— Elementary School Teacher



Forwarding PLT's Mission

Florida PLT had an amazing 2019! With continued support and hard work from the Steering Committee and dedicated volunteers, Jessica's first year as Florida's PLT State

Coordinator was almost seamless. Jessica's focus and drive to continue to move Florida PLT forward was apparent from day one.

Additional 2019 highlights include:

- Shannon Brewer, 2019 Florida PLT Educator of the Year, is helping a school become an Arbor Day Foundation Tree Campus K-12 through meeting the educational component by regularly using PLT activities with students.

- Florida PLT presented at the Florida Forestry Association Trade Show, highlighting the value of PLT as an outreach tool for landowners and forest industry professionals.

- Florida PLT was invited to partner with the Florida Department of Education for the 2019 Summer Science STEMposium.

It's a pleasure working with Jessica, a privilege working with amazing volunteers and educators, and an honor to interact and connect with our sponsors and donors as we work collectively to forward PLT's mission.

Elise Cassie
Assistant Coordinator, Florida PLT

By the Numbers: 2019 Professional Development Trainings

In 2019, **45 professional development trainings** were conducted with **800 participants**. The following table provides a breakdown of the types of trainings.

Type	# of trainings	% of total trainings	# of participants	% of total participants
Early Childhood	6	11%	166	17%
PreK-8	32	60%	601	63%
Green Jobs: Exploring Forest Careers	1	2%	73	8%
Secondary Modules	10	19%	77	8%
Energy & Society	1	2%	4	1%
Carbon and Climate E-Unit	1	2%	9	1%
Urban Forests Supplement	2	4%	21	2%
TOTAL	53		951	

Note: Some trainings covered more than one PLT curriculum module/unit; in order to show how many trainings were conducted for each curricula, trainings that covered more than one module are shown as separate trainings.

Formal and non-formal educators trained by Florida PLT in 2019 reach an estimated **313,535 youth** annually.



2019 Florida PLT Awards

Each year, Florida Project Learning Tree (Florida PLT) recognizes a partner, facilitator, and educator who have made exceptional contributions to the program. This year, awardees include Shannon Brewer, City of Tarpon Springs, Partner of the Year; Dana Sussmann, Facilitator of the Year; Suzette Gagnon, Educator of the Year; and Robin Will, 2019 Bill Kleinhans Spirit of Florida PLT Award. Awards were presented at the Florida PLT Advanced Professional Development Conference, "Growing Green Careers," held in Lakeland, FL November 1-3, 2019.

Shannon Brewer, 2019 Florida PLT Partner of the Year

Shannon Brewer has been employed with the City of Tarpon Springs since 2007, originally working for the Parks Department. With continuing education, classes at the local college, and additional certification, she became a Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) Certified Horticulturist in 2011 and an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist in 2017. Shannon is currently the city's municipal arborist under the Building Department, and is also a FAA drone pilot. Shannon secured sponsorship funds from the City of Tarpon Springs for Florida

PLT professional development trainings for up to 100 new educators in the Tarpon Springs area. Through Shannon's guidance, two professional development trainings and one Teen 4 Trees event were sponsored in 2019. Shannon uses PLT activities to engage the public in conservation conversations during city events like Touch-A-Truck and Eco-Fest where over 600 trees have been given out this year.



Suzette Gagnon, 2019 Florida PLT Educator of the Year

Suzette Gagnon has nearly 20 years of science teaching experience and started her environmental and "tree" education several years ago after attending the Florida Forestry Teachers' Tour. Suzette's passion is to

find a connection between conservation and the extensive industrial and business needs of her community. These experiences led her to organize an annual "Forestry" unit for 4th graders that includes hands-on outdoor programs and PLT lessons. Suzette also created an outdoor classroom at her school (approximately seven acres of forest) that is used by all K-8 classes for lessons related to

the environment and wetlands. She coordinates an environmental science center at her school that houses six native and non-native animal species for educational purposes, as well as a full-room mural of Strawberry Creek. Suzette has sponsored two school Green Apple Day of Service projects that have won project of the year, and she regularly invites guest speakers and plans extensive field trips (Jacksonville Zoo, St. Johns Riverkeeper tour, etc.) to help students have a realistic understanding of our unique Florida environment and the ways they can be good stewards. Suzette's goal for her school is to have an integrated program that promotes environmental stewardship and a culture of STEM for all students and educators with the long-term goal of having all the educators for the Diocese of St. Augustine trained in PLT.



Dana Sussmann, 2019 Florida PLT Facilitator of the Year

Dana Sussmann began her career as a Cooperative Forestry Assistance Forester in 1989 in South Florida, relocating to Central Florida in 1994. Dana provides rural forestry assistance to landowners in Orange, Osceola, Seminole, and Brevard counties. Additionally, she provides environmental education and urban forestry assistance to local communities. Dana is an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist, a Certified Burner, and a Project Learning Tree Facilitator. Dana considers the opportunity to educate youth and adults about the positive impact forestland has on the quality of life and the economy a very rewarding part of her job. Her enthusiasm and professionalism is such an asset as a Florida PLT Facilitator.

Robin Will, 2019 Bill Kleinhans Spirit of Florida PLT Award

There is no one who has contributed more to Florida PLT than Robin Will. Robin is the Supervisory Refuge Ranger at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, and her leadership role for Florida PLT began in 1989 as a founding member of the Steering Committee. She has served on the Steering Committee for 30 years, 16 of those years as chair, providing continuity in leadership as the program went through many changes (home organization, coordinators, funding, etc.). Facilitating more than 130 trainings for preservice teachers and in-service educators, Robin has worked with groups from Florida State University, Florida A&M University, and Flagler College. Over the years, Robin has helped establish partnerships with agencies, industry, and

individuals who have committed support through donations and promotion of the program. Robin was instrumental in establishing and growing the Florida PLT School program. In Wakulla County, Florida, all public preschool and elementary schools are Florida PLT Schools because of Robin's efforts. Robin was the recipient of the first Florida PLT Facilitator of the Year Award in 1992 and she was also awarded the National PLT Leadership in Education Award in 2018.



2019 National PLT Leadership in Education Award



PLT's Leadership in Education Award honors those who make significant contributions to advance PLT programs and initiatives at the state or regional level. Congratulations to Kirsten Brazier for being one of two recipients of the award in 2019!

Kirsten Brazier is a 1st grade teacher at a Title 1 school, Crawfordville Elementary School, in Wakulla County, Florida. She is passionate about using the outdoors to engage students in learning.

As the Florida PLT School Coordinator, Kirsten supports teachers in every grade in using Project Learning Tree lessons to connect children to nature. Kirsten encourages new faculty to attend Florida PLT trainings. She

organizes an annual PLT Week in which each class participates in various activities to grow awareness of environmental issues in their area.

Kirsten also plans and creates service-learning opportunities for students at her school and helps find funding for these projects. Students grow vegetables, herbs, and flowers in raised garden beds; they observe monarch caterpillars and butterflies attracted to their butterfly garden; and they set up a school-wide recycling program and participate in Recycle-Bowl, a yearly competition organized by Keep America Beautiful in which students track the amount of trash they recycle in a month.



2019 Advanced Professional Development Conference: Florida PLT Presents Growing Green Careers



The 2019 Florida PLT Advanced Professional Development Conference was held November 1-3, 2019 in Lakeland, Florida. The conference theme, *Growing Green Careers*, highlighted the importance of green jobs and the growth of this sector. The International Labour Organization projects that there will be 60 million new green jobs worldwide by 2030 (2017), and at the same time, people are passionate about doing more to protect our planet, creating an opportunity to highlight the role of forests, forest management, and viable career pathways supporting both (Patel, 2017, "11 Environmental Causes Gen Z Is Passionate About." Forbes).

Seventy-three participants attended the training—making it our largest conference yet! Participants included elementary, middle, and high school teachers; early childhood educators; school district staff; college/university professors; non-formal educators; preservice teachers; forest industry representatives; foresters; and natural resource professionals.

Program highlights included exploration of activities from the *PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide* and the new *Green Jobs: Exploring Forest Careers Guide*; Field tours at Circle B Bar Reserve; a Pathways to Green Careers Panel Discussion; an awards dinner; and facilitator and educator professional development trainings.

Following the conference, an evaluation survey was sent to all conference participants. Fifty-six participants responded, yielding a 77% response rate. Evaluation responses were overwhelmingly positive; some of the key findings are summarized below.

There will be **60 million new green jobs** worldwide by 2030.

(International Labour Organization, 2017)

Our conference theme, **Growing Green Careers**, focused on the importance of green jobs and the critical need to educate today's youth about the variety of careers available in this field.



- 89% of respondents reported that the conference “exceeded” or “far exceeded” their expectations.
- 98% of respondents were “satisfied” or “extremely satisfied” with the organization of the conference agenda and the “Growing Green Careers” theme.
- 100% of respondents were “satisfied” or “extremely satisfied” with:
 - the quality of instruction;
 - the effort to involve/engage all participants; and
 - opportunities to network with other participants.
- When asked to provide general comments on the conference sessions, participants said:
 - “As a newbie to both [non]formal education and PLT, I thought this was a great conference.”
 - “It was outstanding. I always learn something new that I can add to my knowledge and ability as a facilitator.”
 - “The panel discussion was very informative. Teachers need more exposure to the depth of ‘green careers’.”
- When asked “please describe how you plan to apply knowledge and resources attained at the conference,” participants said:
 - “We all left feeling excited and empowered to continue to explore all the PLT activities and continue to be creative in developing our own variations.”
 - “To be a sounding board for the value PLT brings to the understanding of our environmental resources as a sustainable source of jobs and goods.”
 - “I plan to add an emphasis on green careers to our annual PLT week.”
 - “I would like to use the Green Jobs curriculum to start a high school program at our facility.”
 - “I would like to recruit others to become PLT teachers and use the resources to motivate our students to get outdoors and love nature.”

“[The sessions] far exceeded my expectations. Such a wonderful conference!”

“... the sessions I attended were spot on and very engaging.”

— Conference participants



Florida PLT Standards Correlations

In 2019, we completed correlations of five of the PLT curriculum guides to Florida Standards. Standards are listed by activity for each curriculum guide and include coding for level of activity (reinforces a primary concept/idea; teaches the concept/idea; or teaches the concept/idea and requires demonstration of practice) and level of complexity (i.e., level of cognitive complexity as determined by C-Palms), as well as links to the standard on the C-Palms web site.

Activities in the *PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide* as well as the *Focus on Forests* and *Places We Live* Secondary Modules are correlated to the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for Science and Social Studies and Florida Standards for Language Arts and Mathematics.

Activities in the *Southeastern Forests and Climate Change* Secondary Module are correlated to the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for Science.

Activities in the *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood Guide* are correlated to the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for ages 3-4 years and 4 years-Kindergarten.

Visit <https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/plt/curriculum/standards-correlations/> to access all correlations.

This project was completed by Vicki Crisp and Barb Gugliotti and was funded by the Florida Forest Service and the 2019 National PLT Model Program Initiative Grant.



What research says about environmental education:

A systematic analysis of more than 100 peer-reviewed studies conducted by Stanford University found that the benefits of environmental education for K-12 students include improvements in areas such as critical thinking, STEM, standardized test scores, social and emotional growth, leadership, citizenship, and confidence. (eeworks-NAAEE, 2019).





Florida Project Learning Tree Partners with Forest Landowners

This fall, two forest landowners generously hosted Florida Project Learning Tree (PLT) professional development trainings. Ben and Louann Williams, Wetland Preserve, LLLP (Putnam County) and Ken and Lynetta Griner, Usher Land and Timber (Levy County) provided unique opportunities for educators to explore and learn about working forests while experiencing PLT's hands-on activities. If you are interested in hosting a PLT training on your property, please [contact Florida PLT](#).

Above: PLT training at Wetland Preserve.
Below: Photos from PLT training at Usher Land and Timber. By Suzette Cook, Chiefland Citizen.

"Wetland Preserve was happy to host a workshop for Project Learning Tree last week. If you are an educator who has not taken advantage of this amazing program in one way or another we encourage you to! We hope to continue working with these amazing people who are striving to make a difference."

— Ben & Louann Williams, Wetland Preserve



"Thanks to each of you for a great PLT Workshop! Ken, Eric and I were very impressed with your program/activities and the energy you bring to each unit. I only wish that we could reach every single teacher."




— Lynetta Griner, Usher Land & Timber



2019 Florida PLT Sponsors

We gratefully recognize and thank our 2019 sponsors. Their generous donations enable us to provide high quality professional development to educators and supports getting youth outdoors and into nature in ways that inspire them to become environmental stewards and future forest leaders.

EMERALD LEAF (\$10,000+)

-  Florida Forest Service
-  Sustainable Forestry Initiative–National PLT
-  Sustainable Forestry Initiative Florida–State Implementation Committee

PLATINUM LEAF (\$5,000–\$9,999)

-  Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund




GOLD LEAF (\$2,500–\$4,999)

-  Rayonier Inc.

SILVER LEAF (\$1,000–\$2,499)

-  Phillip Edward Allen
-  The Langdale Company
-  Mizell Development, Inc.
-  Packaging Corporation of America
-  The Rayonier Advanced Materials Foundation Inc.

BRONZE LEAF (\$500–\$999)

-  Florida Tree Farm Program
-  North Florida Woodlands, Inc.
-  West Fraser, Inc.

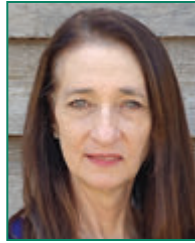
FRIENDS OF PLT (\$50–\$499)

-  Florida Chapter Association of Consulting Foresters
-  Hyatt Survey Services, Inc.
-  Kestrel Ecological Services
-  Mark & Cindy Miller
-  David Norton
-  Outdoor Insights Environmental LLC
-  Shield Properties, Inc.
-  Society of American Foresters–Florida Division
-  Southeastern Wood Producers Association Inc.
-  Southern Forestry Consultants, Inc.
-  Wetland Preserve LLLP
-  Whitehurst Cattle Company

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and Consumer
Services



PJ Duncan
Florida
Department
of Education



Robin Will
**Emeritus
Member**
U.S. Fish
and Wildlife
Service



Twenty-two new facilitators joined the Florida PLT network by participating in a facilitator training at the 2019 Advanced Professional Development Conference.

In 2019:

- 🌳 45 facilitators and other volunteers provided PLT professional development training to educators in Florida.
- 🌳 31 new facilitators joined our network. Nine completed the facilitator mentoring program, and 22 were trained at the Advanced Professional Development Conference.

2019 Florida Project Learning Tree Facilitators

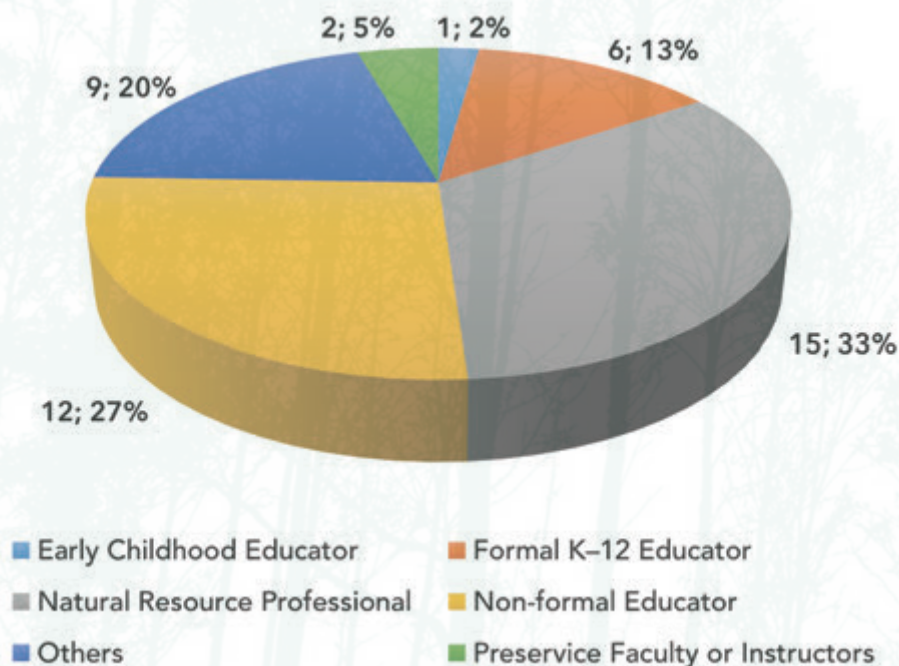
Carrie Allen
Greg Barton
Marcia Bisnett
Ludie Bond
Shannon Brewer
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Greta Combs
Rachel Cravens
Mary Crider
Donna Foley

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Catie Sprague
Al Stenstrup
Martha Stollberg
Allan Stollberg
Rebecca Strunks
Betsy Sullivan
Dana Sussmann
Alicia Torres
Chris Verlinde
Deb Wagner
Brad Weller
Robin Will
Jane Wilson
Annaleasa Winter

Florida PLT Facilitators by Profession: 2019



2019 Florida PLT Schools

Through the PLT Schools Program, PLT activities are regularly incorporated into curriculum and a "PLT Week" makes for a robust learning experience for students.

Thank you to the 2019 Florida PLT Schools and the School Coordinators for helping to develop student awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the environment; build skills and ability to make informed decisions; and encourage students to take personal responsibility for sustaining the environment and our quality of life that depends on it.

Christ the King Catholic School, Jacksonville
Crawfordville Elementary School, Crawfordville
Lakeland Christian, Lakeland
Medart Elementary, Crawfordville
Montessori School of Navarre, Navarre
Paul Lutheran School, Lakeland

Pelican Island Elementary, Sebastian
Riversink Elementary, Crawfordville
Shadeville Elementary, Crawfordville
The Vanguard School, Lakeland
Wakulla Educational Center, Crawfordville
Walden Community School, Winter Park

2019 Florida PLT Environmental Education Centers

Thank you to the 2019 Florida PLT EE Centers for providing high-quality professional development to educators in their area.

Bear Creek Educational Forest, Quincy
Brevard Zoo, Melbourne
Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center, Tarpon Springs
Camp Bayou Outdoor Learning Center, Ruskin
Green Cay Nature Center, Boynton Beach
Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens, Jacksonville
John D. MacArthur Beach State Park, Palm Beach
Oakland Nature Preserve, Oakland
Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, Palm Beach
Solid Waste Authority Education Center, Palm Beach
Trout Lake Nature Center, Inc., Eustis
St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, St. Marks
Tree Hill Nature Center, Jacksonville
UF/IFAS Brevard County Extension, Melbourne

UF/ IFAS Leon County Extension, Tallahassee
UF/IFAS Nassau County Extension Office, Callahan





Project Learning Tree® is the environmental education program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and sponsored in Florida by the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, School of Forest Resources and Conservation.



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