

Master Gardeners Celebrate Bartram Trail Library  
By Dianne Battle, Master Gardener St. Johns County

Florida Arbor Day occurs in the third week of January. Master Gardeners from the UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County celebrate it annually by giving away free native tree seedlings. The Bartram Trail library has been the site of one of these giveaways for years, and this year our Master Gardeners celebrated their library by planting a redbud seedling (*Cercis canadensis*) and two Hearts-a-Bustin' Strawberry Bushes (*Euonymus americanus*) on the library grounds.

Redbuds are known for their showy lavender flowers in spring, and while the "strawberry" bushes do not yield strawberries, the colorful berries are relished by birds each fall. Although the seedlings are currently too immature to produce these blooms and berries, we hope that in a few years the plants will provide patrons with an interesting visual display and birds with food. Since both species are native to this area, they should need minimal care. The librarians were very pleased with the new plantings and are looking forward to seeing them mature. Since the plants are visible from the library's children's area, youngsters will be able to watch them grow.

It's an undisputed fact that attractive landscaping, including trees and shrubs, increases curb appeal for potential home buyers and provides a spot of tranquility for owners. It also can provide shade, reduce utility bills, and diminish pollution by absorbing carbon dioxide. Native plants do all these things and they provide support for wildlife; for every native plant there is a native bird or pollinator that relies on it. Furthermore, native plants do not need extra fertilizing and are tolerant of changes in weather if they are planted in an appropriate spot.

According to a recent Gallup poll, going to the library is the most popular away-from-home activity across all age groups and geographic areas, beating out going to a movie or a sporting event. Cicero's observation, "If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need," is still accurate today. See what's going on at the Bartram Trail library, [www.sjcpls.org/branches/bartram-trail-branch](http://www.sjcpls.org/branches/bartram-trail-branch), to check out a book and the newest horticultural additions.



Master Gardeners Lisa Hethington, Doris Dowling, Cathy Rodgers, Dianne Battle, Doris Durham, and Library Branch Manager, Dan Markus, hold native tree seedlings planted at the library. Photo by John Battle