

# ECOQUEST

July 2020

## Flora Under Foot



*Rustweed (Polydora procumbens)* is a native species to Florida and documented in every county in the state except for St. Lucie. It is well adapted to life underfoot.

Sarasota-Manatee EcoFlora's July EcoQuest challenge is Flora UnderFoot, looking into the small plants popping up between pavement cracks and in lawns. These plants are the survivors. They must adapt to harsh environmental conditions such as heat, drought, lack of nutrients, and especially trampling and mowing! Their ability to branch at or near ground level and flower in these conditions has resulted in a select group of plants. This flora beneath our feet brings wild nature into unexpected places, provides sustenance to pollinator species, and creates microhabitats of diversity in what could otherwise be deserts of concrete or monocultures of grass.

This month we challenge you to discover the plants growing in the sidewalks, lawns, and driveways of our communities and be surprised at the fascinating plant diversity often forgotten beneath our feet.

### WHAT IS AN ECOQUEST?

EcoQuests, part of the [Sarasota-Manatee EcoFlora Project](#), challenge Floridians to become engaged citizens in the observation, study, appreciation, and conservation of the native flora and fauna of Florida, and understand the impacts to it by exotic species.

### HOW DO I GET STARTED?

1. Download the easy-to-use iNaturalist app on your mobile device, or visit [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org) on your computer.
2. Set up a user account or sign in to join projects and submit observations.
3. Visit the Sarasota-Manatee EcoFlora Flora UnderFoot page and click "join" on the upper right.
4. Photograph plants anywhere in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Take multiple photos to show important features for identification (overall plant, leaves, flowers, fruit, stem).
5. Post your observations to iNaturalist.
6. Use the "Notes" section in the observation to indicate where you found it (e.g., sidewalk crack, lawn weed).
7. Check out your ranking on this month's challenge online!

### WHAT IS THE GOAL?

Help us document as many species found underfoot as possible by July 31. Please utilize the "Notes" section in your Observation to indicate where you found it (e.g., sidewalk crack or lawn weed). Remember that any observation still contributes to the Sarasota-Manatee EcoFlora Project, even if it's not featured in our monthly challenge.

### WHERE SHOULD I LOOK?

Look down! Most sidewalks and roads have cracks where a surprising number of plants actually flourish. You might also find some interesting treasures right in your own lawn.

*Remember not to remove the plants from the trees or disturb any wildlife while photographing, and please be careful on the streets at night. Wear light-colored or reflective clothing and carry lights.*