

# ECOQUEST

August 2020

## Living on the Edge



*Pickerelweed (Pontederia cordata) is an aquatic plant native to the Americas. Pickerelweed blooms from March to November in Florida.*

Florida is a very wet state with a diversity of habitats such as swamps, marshes, lakes, and rivers - each with their own unique plant communities. Freshwater shoreline plants provide habitat and food for wildlife, reduce erosion, and improve water quality by absorbing nutrients and pollutants. They not only make our ponds and lakes more beautiful, but also contribute to a healthy Florida ecosystem. To learn more, check out the University of Florida's information on [Florida's aquatic and wetland plants](#), and a guide to our [native species](#).

August is the height of our rainy season when many of our aquatic plants are flowering, fruiting, and growing - so join us in exploring Florida's freshwater plants that are Living on the Edge!

### 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](#) on your computer.
2. Set up a user account or sign in to join projects and submit observations.
3. Visit the [Sarasota-Manatee EcoFlora Living on the Edge 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. Check out [your ranking](#) on this month's challenge online!

### WHAT IS THE GOAL?

Help us document as many freshwater shoreline species as possible by August 31. 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 along the shorelines of Florida's freshwater lakes, ponds, swamps, wetlands, and marshes. Myakka River State Park and the Celery Fields are prime examples of healthy freshwater habitats. Be careful and keep an eye out for alligators, especially at dusk or night when they naturally feed!