



# GATOR NATION CONSERVATION

## Promoting Agricultural and Natural Resources on Campus



### Abstract

The Agronomy and Soils Club at the University of Florida takes pride in conducting service and outreach projects in the agricultural, environmental and soil sciences on campus and throughout the Gainesville community. For over a quarter century, The Agronomy and Soils Club has been the steward organization of the University Agricultural Gardens, providing plots of land to students and faculty to grow food or conduct research while learning about agriculture and the environment. In addition to club members undertaking maintenance and landscaping activities, promotion of the agricultural gardens is a key goal for the club to raise awareness about land use, environmental health and the process our food takes from seed to shelf. In a campus community where construction is ongoing, renovations are essential and new buildings and research centers equal progress and growth, sustainable land use and conservation are sometimes overlooked.

In helping attain goals within the new UF Conservation Area Land Management Plan, which serves to preserve and promote restoration areas at UF, the Agronomy and Soils Club has adopted a second area on campus to maintain and protect. The McCarty Woods is a 2.9 acre disturbed upland hardwood dominated forest located within the center of many UF classrooms and offices. It is an area in desperate need of restoration and promotion as a valuable natural campus area and teaching resource. The Agronomy and Soils Club has received a conservation area grant to restore trails, remove invasive species, preserve ecosystem health, and increase awareness of the McCarty Woods natural area. Promotion of both agriculture and natural resources are important to campus environments and the UF Agronomy and Soils Club is proud to sponsor areas where preservation, restoration, research and teaching can come together and benefit the community as a whole.



Over 25 years of maintaining the student agricultural gardens has spawned the expertise needed to propose and be awarded a \$5000 conservation grant for an additional area on campus.

The need to manage and take ownership of highly visible high-traffic areas is important in an ever developing campus environment where the value of agricultural and natural lands is overlooked.

Opportunities for environmental preservation and academic teaching are becoming rare in urban campus settings, and the Agronomy-Soils Club is committed to managing these resources for generations to come.



### Student Agricultural Gardens

- Management of research and recreation plots
- Promotion of gardening as on-campus recreation
- Furthering ties with campus communities and residents
- Facilitation of small scale agricultural information
- Handling of plot rental money for the College of Agriculture
- Organization of garden clean ups each semester
- Keeping agriculture as a cornerstone for the University of Florida

### McCarty Woods Conservation Area

- Removal of invasive exotic species
- Re-vegetation of native Florida species
- Maintenance and delineation of trails and pathways
- Promoting McCarty Woods as a campus conservation area
- Enhancing educational opportunities with interpretative signage
- Connecting Academic Departments with teaching opportunities
- Preserving natural areas for the University of Florida

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