



## Commemorating a Special Place - Alpine Groves Freedom Native Plant Butterfly Garden



By Dianne Battle, St. Johns County Master Gardener Volunteer  
June 12, 2025

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The Alpine Groves Freedom Native Plant Butterfly Garden is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> year of existence. Interest in native plants has grown over the years and the Garden Club of Switzerland has been happy to encourage the public to learn about the importance of these plants. Last year St. Johns County Master Gardener Volunteers began volunteering in the garden. The partnership has been beneficial for both groups. For 20 years the public has supported this garden by purchasing memorial pavers to honor friends, family, and even pets. These pavers bring deeper meaning to the space as a place to enjoy nature, and to remember the names engraved on them. We appreciate these generous donors.

We also appreciate the volunteers who have taken the time and effort to install those pavers, including one special individual, Jesse Meyer, of Boy Scout Troop 63 in St. Augustine. By installing our most recent pavers, Jesse attained his Eagle Scout badge, a great honor a boy scout can only earn by completing significant accomplishments prior to becoming eligible.

The paver installation was Jesse's Eagle Scout community service project. The project required him to demonstrate a variety of skills, including understanding the nature and significance of the undertaking, documenting the work, coordinating the process with others involved, and completing the project in an efficient and timely manner. During each phase, the scout is expected to show maturity and professionalism.

Before starting the effort, Jesse worked with his scout leaders and advisors to ensure the project would allow him to demonstrate these skills. After his project was approved Jesse worked with Nathan Otter, Parks and Recreation Natural Resources Superintendent. Nathan showed him how to safely install pavers and gave him the tools for the job. Nathan was thrilled to be able to work with a boy scout in pursuit of his Eagle Scout badge. I served the role of the project client, explaining to Jesse the significance of the garden to the community, and the special importance the commemorative pavers had in their setting.

On May 24, the project completion date, Jesse and his installation team of boy scouts showed up at 10 am sharp and got right to work. Jesse ensured the pavers were installed properly in their designated locations. Less than two hours later, the job was done. I inspected the work and gave Jesse the OK. It was a pleasure to work with him and his team. Their pride in doing a good job was evident.

After they left, I finished placing the Memorial Day decorations around the fence. I took a quiet walk in the garden, greeting the names I remembered, noting unfamiliar ones, and thanking the kind donors who honored them with a place in the walkway. All, whether known to me or not, had played a role in making our community a better place to live. My walk through the garden ended at a paver whose name was well-known to me, my husband. I invite you to spend a quiet time walking through the Freedom Native Butterfly Garden to enjoy the butterflies, birds, and bees that visit it, and to contemplate the persons who are remembered in its walkway.



Scouts Ayden Maguire, Corey Allan, Richard Waler, and Jesse Meyer Installing Memorial Pavers

Scout leaders:

Al Crutchfield

[acrutch15@gmail.com](mailto:acrutch15@gmail.com)

Richard Waler III

[RWALERIII@gmail.com](mailto:RWALERIII@gmail.com)