

For Immediate Release



Dozens of trees to be planted at the Immokalee Pioneer Museum, thanks to Community Foundation of Collier County grant

NAPLES, FL – November 18, 2021 – Armed with a grant from the Community Foundation of Collier County, Naples Botanical Garden will plant 79 trees at the Immokalee Pioneer Museum at Roberts Ranch on Friday, Nov. 19. The event is the first in a series of planned enhancements to recreate the historic landscape, offer guests a more authentic experience, and provide the community with increased programming and access to fresh foods grown on site.

The project is a collaboration between the Foundation, the Garden, and Collier County, which operates the museum. The plantings at the Pioneer Museum represent \$71,000 of the Foundation's \$450,000 Collier Trees initiative.

The museum portrays life between 1914 – 1940. The grounds hold what is believed

to be among the oldest commercial citrus groves in Collier County, planted at the turn of the 20th century and expanded by the namesake Roberts family. The property once included a household garden to feed the family of nine and the cowboys they employed, as well as a sizeable pine forest where their cattle once roamed.

Many of the historic citrus trees died over time, Hurricane Donna in 1960 felled more than 270 trees, and the vegetable plot no longer exists — for now. The Garden will plant 34 shade trees — including 16 slash pine — to resurrect the old forest, along with other hardwoods once abundant in Immokalee, such as red cedar.

“We’re doing what nature would have done to provide another generation of pines,” explains Vice President of Horticulture Brian Galligan. For aesthetics, the Garden selected 17 flowering trees that bloom in an array of colors.

The Garden also will plant 15 tropical fruit trees, selected with contemporary residents’ native countries in mind. They include mango, avocado, mulberry, tamarind, and caimito, or star apple, a fruit that grows in Central America and the Caribbean. The full citrus grove will be restored at a later time. Museum Manager Brent Trout, who plans to recreate the family’s vegetable garden next year, wants the property not only to demonstrate agrarian life, but also to serve as a source of fresh produce for its neighbors. Many Immokalee residents lack sufficient supplies of fresh foods, in part because as many as 20% do not have access to a vehicle. As the new fruit trees and eventual garden take root, Trout intends to invite families to gather what they need. In addition to the Collier Foundation grant, which encompasses new trees on the campus, other funding sources will be used for overarching museum enhancements.

Other improvements include the restoration of the main house, which began over the summer, renovations to 13 other structures, the re-establishment of the grove and garden, and increased educational programming, including teaching residents how to grow their own produce at home. The improvements honor the Roberts family, which donated the property to the county and whose descendants remain in the

area, Trout says.

“We do this for our visitors and for the county, but we also do it for them, for the family. They donated this legacy to us.”

Garden and Museum representatives will be available to the media between 10 a.m. and noon on Friday at the Immokalee Pioneer Museum at Roberts Ranch, 1215 Roberts Ave. W., Immokalee, FL., 34142.

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About the Community Foundation of Collier County

The Community Foundation of Collier County, now in its 36th year, is a tax-exempt, public, charitable organization established in 1985 to increase and focus on local private philanthropy. Today, the Community Foundation of Collier County manages more than 850 funds, collaborates with hundreds of nonprofits, holds over \$276.6 million in assets and has distributed over \$229.5 million in grants to nonprofit organizations and community programs. The Community Foundation of Collier County is one of Florida’s fastest-growing community foundations. For good. Forever. Learn more at cfcollier.org, or call 239.649.5000.

About Naples Botanical Garden

Naples Botanical Garden is a place where people and plants thrive together. In addition to our 170-acre showcase for tropical plants, the Garden offers a uniquely beautiful, natural and ever-changing experience to bring our diverse community together to enjoy companionship, refuge, learning, and celebration.

Regular hours of operation from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Members-only entry 8 – 9 a.m. daily. Visit [naplesgarden.org](https://www.naplesgarden.org) for details.

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