# A Million Seeds and Counting: A Milestone in Southwest Florida Conservation

**For Immediate Release**

**NAPLES, FL – July 8, 2026 –** This summer, Naples Botanical Garden's seed bank saw its 1 millionth deposit, a significant milestone for the organization and its mission to protect Southwest Florida plants and ecosystems.

The symbolic seed was gathered from a patch of woolly lupine (*Lupinus pilosior*), an elusive native wildflower. It was found on a sand ridge, one of Southwest Florida's rarest habitats.

All told, the Garden's bank includes 166 species—about 15% of Collier County's flora. The Garden began its seed collecting efforts five years ago, preserving its first species in 2021.

"Seed banks act as insurance for the future, ensuring that species facing the challenges of climate change and habitat loss are conserved for generations to come," said Vice President of Conservation Chad Washburn.

**The Garden's bank has the equivalent of two accounts:**

1. The **conservation collection** protects native plants in perpetuity. It acts like a safe deposit box, ensuring the region does not lose its native plants, even if they disappear from the wild. The Garden focuses on both the preservation of individual species as well as that of entire ecosystems, particularly those vulnerable to climate impacts, such as sea-level rise and erosion.
2. The **restoration collection** is composed of seeds meant for immediate withdrawal following disasters such as hurricanes, floods, or wildfires. Its seed collection was instrumental in Collier County's dune replanting project, completed in 2025.

"Seed banking is one of the most efficient conservation tools we have," Washburn added. "In a space the size of a typical household freezer, we can hold millions of seeds."

**Notable holdings include:**

- **Beach-elder (*Iva imbricata*)**: This plant captures and accumulates the sand that forms protective dunes along the coast. It was not commonly used in local restoration projects until the Garden began collecting and propagating it. Only two other seed banks in the United States hold its genetics.
- **Florida scrub frostweed (*Crocanthemum nashii*)**: The Garden believes it holds the state's only seed collection of this vulnerable wildflower. They were gathered from its 90-acre Preserve, home to more than 400 native species.
- **Twospike crabgrass (*Digitaria pauciflora*)**: This plant is considered "critically imperiled" and known to exist only in one 31-square-mile plot within Everglades National Park. In an example of botanical collaboration, the seeds protected in Naples were initially held at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Miami, which sought a secondary place to safeguard the plant, due to its vulnerability.

**Learn About Our Conservation Work**

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For media questions, please contact media@naplesgarden.org.

**Visit Our Media Page**

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## About Naples Botanical Garden

With a family-friendly, natural and ever-changing experience, Naples Botanical Garden is where plants and people thrive together. Every Garden admission ticket or membership purchase helps support our conservation efforts.

Summer hours of operation are 8 a.m. – 2 p.m., June 1 – Sept. 30. Please note: The Garden will be closed on Tuesdays, August – September. Kids enjoy free admission through September.

Visit naplesgarden.org for details.

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