

Dead Jasmine on the Overpass: removal, soil testing, and replanting

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From: **Christian Kinsley** <ckinsley@ncf.edu>
Date: Mon, Apr 18, 2022 at 11:22 AM
Subject: Pedestrian Overpass Sprayed with Chemicals
To:

On April 11, a work crew sprayed the flower beds leading up to the Pedestrian Overpass with some sort of powerful chemical and left before their presence was detected by College personnel. Today, April 18, it is now clear that this unauthorized action has quickly caused thousands of dollars of damage to the established plantings leading up to and on the overpass.

This work was not authorized by the College, and the Administration is working to determine what vendor trespassed onto College property and what recourse the College may have against this firm.

The College will immediately begin the process of determining how we can restore this important part of the College landscape.

If anyone has information about the vendor, such as photos of workers or a company name posted on a work truck, please contact me directly.

Sincerely,

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Mr. Chris Kinsley, VP for Finance & Administration
941-487-4444
108 Cook Hall
New College of Florida

The situation that has occurred with Overpass Jasmine is truly unfortunate, especially as there are actors to blame who are not within the institution. Nonetheless, there is clear student concern for the state of the overpass beds and a desire for rehabilitation of the flower beds and replacement of the deceased plants.

This proposal is calling for three steps towards not only replacing what was lost but improving upon what has been.

1. Assessing the current state of the soil health

Before any tangible actions are made, we must understand the cause of death of the plants and determine what steps are necessary prior to planting replacement species. This item calls for either an extensive testing of soil health and conditions either conducted internally or contracted out to a third-party. Based on the email attached by Christian Kinsley, and student reports that were replied to the same thread as well as additional email threads, it appears the cause of death of the plants is due to the ‘unauthorized use of an unknown chemical.’ Some students have reported a ‘milky, iridescent’ fluid on the overpass after the incident, as well as a ‘strong chemical odor’ of which there are consistent but varying reports comparing the ‘awful, toxic’ odor to scents of ‘bleach or chlorine’. If indeed a strong chemical was sprayed and caused the death of these plants, the soil will need to be examined beyond a standardized Ph test, though that would be a good starting point.

2. Reconditioning the flower beds so they are suitable for replanting.

This step revolves around a need-basis once the soil health is determined. If the soil is unsuitable for new plants to survive, then there will need to be additional steps made. The dead jasmine plants must be removed to make room for new vegetation, and it is likely that at least some of the top soil which was directly sprayed will need to be removed as well. Supplemental substrates added to the beds will be determined by the needs for the soil to return to equilibrium and ideal soil type of the replacement plants.

3. Planting a diverse collection of Jasmine species & potential cohabitants

In order to not only replace but improve the overpass’ vegetation, this may be a perfect opportunity to diversify the species of jasmine and possibly include other native, charismatic species such as Maypop Passionvine. Below are two selections from two native plant nurseries in the Sarasota/Manatee area that have a good reputation within the student body and have been vendors for previous projects.

[Sweetbay Nursery, Retail Plant List, April 2022](#)


Gelsemium sempervirens Vine, Jessamine, Carolina Yellow | 1gal = \$7.25 / 3gal = \$18.50
Lonicera sempervirens Vine, Coral Honeysuckle | 1gal = \$7.25 / 3gal = \$18.50
Passiflora incarnata Vine, Maypop Passionvine | 1gal = \$7.25 / 3gal = \$18.50
Passiflora edulis Passionvine, Edible | 1gal + \$10.00 / 3gal = \$37.50

[Florida Native Plants Nursery, Sarasota Plant List](#)

	Common Name	Botanical	Max Size	Cold	Light Salt p Mois	Features
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		Name			H ture	Leaves	
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Passion Flower	Passiflora incarnata	Var.	SH S/P S	F W AV/D	E Purple flowers in spring and summer. Butterfly attractor. Edible fruit.
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Yellow Jessamine	Gelsemium sempervirens	Var.	H S/P S	P W	AV/M E  Yellow flowers late winter. Good groundcover. All parts of plant are poisonous. Not pet-friendly.
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Coral Honeysuckle	Lonicera sempervirens	Var.	H S/P F W AV/M E	Use as ground cover or vine. S Coral flowers most of year. Hummingbird attractor.
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I believe this three step plan is actionable and achievable to completion before students return to campus in the fall. This situation, if handled properly can demonstrate that the landscape committee hears student voices and takes action to address their concerns. If you would like to view the email threads in which students thoroughly express their descriptions of the chemicals and state of the Jasmine on the overpass please reach out to me at nicholas.beck19@ncf.edu and I am more than happy to forward the entirety of the threads to your email, instead I have chosed to include particularly helpful excerpts.

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From: **Sean Patton** <sean.patton@ncf.edu>

Date: Wed, Apr 27, 2022 at 1:45 PM

Subject: Re: [forum] Re: Pedestrian Overpass Sprayed with Chemicals

To: Kendall Southworth <kendall.southworth17@ncf.edu>

Cc: forum <forum@ncfforum.com>

The college should also replace the jasmine with Coral Honeysuckle. No watering needed, nice shade, small vine, year round red flowers, attracts only hummingbirds and large butterflies, no allergies, is native, and edible flowers. It's also useful in areas with poor or degraded soil especially from pesticide usage. Low cost too!

> On Wed, Apr 27, 2022 at 1:38 PM Kendall Southworth <kendall.southworth17@ncf.edu> wrote:

hi everyone,

i was scrolling through emails and was wondering if there's been any update on this. it's fairly easy to tell (if you work in landscaping) what herbicide is being sprayed based on how the plants respond and which species are affected. it's really important that whoever is in charge of managing the situation gets an expert or someone who is licensed as an herbicide applicator to determine what kind of herbicide was being sprayed and if the crew was following dose and application safety guidelines. in most cases someone who actually knows their herbicides will be able to pinpoint exactly what was sprayed without having to go through testing.

there are tons of different herbicides with hugely variable impacts on the plants, soil health, and human health. an herbicide like imazapyr will stay in the soil for 6 months and /no/ plantings placed prior to the 6 month period will survive, also has one of the lowest toxicity ratings you'll find within the current guidelines.

i've been working as an ecologist since i graduated and unfortunately see things like this happen all the time. really, really hope some clarity emerges from the situation. if there's anything a local alum in the environmental field can do hmu :) would love to lend a hand in getting y'all some overpass restoration <3333