

# FORGOTTEN ECOLOGY: DR. ADAMS AND RESTORATION ECOLOGY

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Dr. Carrie Adams



## About

Dr. Carrie Adams, a UF/IFAS Associate Professor and researcher in the Department of Environmental Horticulture, is an influential force in the restoration of degraded ecosystems and plant ecology.

## Education

Adams received her undergraduate degree from Penn State University in Environmental Resources Management, her master's degree in Interdisciplinary Ecology also at Penn State University, and her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. She has also worked directly with the extension offices to help bring research-based information to the public.

## Extension

Lake Apopka was once a prize bass fishery and thriving ecosystem and over the years has experienced a massive increase in phosphorus which has led to the degradation of the ecosystem and loss of aquatic plants.

Another project that Adams and her research crew have conducted in Lake Apopka involved using mesocosms, or small ecosystems. They used 16 small

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## Research

Adams conducts research in many parts of Florida. One of her notable projects involves a partnership with Dr. Laura Reynold's lab in Soil Water and Ecosystem Sciences on Lake Apopka, where they are researching solutions for degraded Florida lakes by planting native plants in

pools that are three feet deep to test the planting approaches in small scale models of large ecosystems. Because of Adams's research, Lake Apopka has become more diverse with native plants that are beneficial to the ecosystem.

As a seasoned researcher in restoration ecology, Adams has witnessed firsthand the evolution of plant science and restoration



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practices. She emphasizes the importance of adaptive management strategies, particularly in the face of invasive plant species and changing environmental conditions. Recently, she has been working on controlling the exotic species and promoting the native species at the same time. “Just this week, I joined a new group that is looking at trait based ecological restoration, which means restoring a plant community based on the functions provided by the plants, and paying less attention to just

eliminating all the exotic plants,” Adams said, highlighting the shift towards a more holistic approach to restoration.

Given Adams’s experience in plant restoration and ecology, she is extremely interested in the restoration of wetlands. “Even if I’m not producing food or plants that look pretty in a landscape, I’m looking at plants for very specific functions,” Adams said. She is studying the direct application of plants and the functions they serve for their ecosystem.

“You can still be a scientist and be applied, and that’s how I figured out a College of Ag is good for me,” Adams said.

Adams encourages students to get involved and gather tangible experience like being involved in restoration projects through internships and volunteer opportunities.

Florida has many diverse ecosystems, it goes beyond the wetlands, there are forests, coastal areas, and grasslands; all with a rich variety of plant species we can conserve and restore. Adams has highlighted how studying plant science in Florida can open doors to exciting and rewarding careers both within the state and beyond.

Adams’s work in plant science and restoration ecology takes her to many different places. Pursuing a degree in this field can lead to an exciting career where one can work in an office, wetlands, marsh-es, etc. A wide variety of options exist in the field. “So, I think that it’s got a lot of job opportunities, you know, you could keep going on for more training, or you could work for an agency, or you could work for a nonprofit”, Adams said.

Her experiences illustrate a career field with numerous opportunities for diverse work experiences. If you are interested in plant science, restoration ecology is a wide and engaging field to work in. The UF/ IFAS Plant Science department is a great way to gain entry into this specialization. If you would like to work directly with restoration ecology, please visit the Alachua Conservation Trust website to look for any upcoming events and programs

