



with **Suzanne Kennedy** '87,
Protocol Coordinator & Genetic Counselor

GULLIVER ALUMNA SUZANNE KENNEDY IS PRESIDENT OF FLORAVISTA, A COMPANY DEVOTED TO NATURAL LANDSCAPES AND BOTANICAL ENVIRONMENTS. BY CONSERVING, ENHANCING, AND EDUCATING OTHERS ABOUT NATIVE PLANT SPECIES, KENNEDY AND FLORAVISTA HELP CREATE LANDSCAPES THAT ARE BOTH ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY AND BEAUTIFUL.



What inspires you to do the work that you do?

Earth's biodiversity is incredible and continues to amaze me. I go outdoors to get inspired... there are countless species to observe.

What kinds of projects are you currently working on?

The features on the outside of a building, tree inventory and viability, wetland function assessment for conservation, the devising of a land management plan, and designing around the natural resources. Ripping out what already adapted to their site and replacing it is wasting money.

A landowner doesn't have a biology education. I try to inspire the landowner to do earth-friendly design, and I educate them about what is important for us to design around to preserve our resources.



What's your typical day on the job?

Basically, it's either field work or office work. Field work means going out in Florida wetlands and collecting data, such as inventory of plants, wildlife species, and wetland quality. Office work involves analyzing that data.

What would you say is your favorite part of the job?

Being outdoors in remote natural forests to study the habitats, definitely.

Least favorite, or most challenging?

Dealing with certain people who avoid educating themselves about environmental conservation. But most people are willing to learn. Another least favorite is working in an environment where a developer tried to fit too many houses in a space.

I enjoy being out in the field, but in some conditions it's hard to collect the data. When it's 95 degrees and there's mosquitoes and it's thorny, it's much harder to get the job done.

So, what's the worst month weather-wise for you?

August is the worst. It's swampy and has the most mosquitoes.

How often does your work and personal life intersect?

Very often and I find that fulfilling. My work is also what I believe in. A lot of people hate their jobs, but I really enjoy what I do.

class and loved that more. So, I changed my major.

It's come full circle. I give architects my advice. I talk to them about green building. I get to dabble in architecture and design. I do landscaping design with plants instead of concrete.

selection of native Florida trees, shrubs, and wildflowers to attract birds, butterflies, amphibians, and other interesting fauna. A picnic bench gathering place can be made in the middle where students can sit outside for class on a nice day.

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I know that you are a certified arborist (a tree health and care professional). What is your favorite kind of tree or plant?

That's difficult. I'm fond of several thousand plants species. Native to Miami and Florida, it would be the Gumbo Limbo tree. This tree grows in front of a house in Ocean Reef, where Gulliver Schools holds its reunions. I'm glad the homeowners preserved it. It's clearly visible how it enhances the landscaping and adds aesthetic and sales value to their property. Being a native tree, it doesn't require irrigation or pesticide chemicals.

Think back to your high school days. Did you ever imagine you'd be where you are now?

Never. I thought for sure I was going to be an architect. I was president of the architecture club. During my senior year, I was given the opportunity to take AP Botany and I thought, "Who wants to study plants? How boring." (laughs)

What changed your mind?

I went to Rhode Island School of Design and studied architecture and it wasn't my calling. There was just so much concrete. I took liberal arts classes and, by chance, took a Florida Ecology class. I loved it. Then, I took a Botany

What kinds of things can Gulliver and its community do to become "greener?"

There are several things. First, incorporate earth friendly concepts into the curriculum. Gulliver can protect and conserve natural resources on the campus site and use native plants. Also, make sure all the utilities are Energy Star (energy efficient products) and conserve water use. Plant native greenery that doesn't require water. Create a small outdoor learning environment that has a

The number one plan should be education. Florida's natural history is fun. It's important for people to know and it's interesting to learn.

*Gulliver Schools is, in fact, taking many steps to become more eco-conscious. Read "From the Communications Desk" on page 4 to see all the school is doing in an effort to "Go Green." Our Academy Campus has a pond and habitat for our birds and our South Miami Campus boasts a beautiful Hardwood Hammock cared for by the SMC family.



For more information visit <http://www.floravista.net>.

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