

Quick Overview of Extension Programs to Educate Homeowners about Environmentally Friendly Landscape Practices in Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee¹

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Introduction

Nationwide, landscape irrigation is estimated to account for a significant portion — almost one-third — of all residential water use, or more than 7 billion gallons of water per day (US EPA 2010). Some experts estimate that up to 50 percent of this water may be wasted due to overwatering, poor irrigation system design, evaporation, or other factors (US EPA 2010). Such waste depletes water supplies, especially in times of drought, and when combined with excessive or poorly timed fertilizer application, causes pollution runoff and deterioration of surface and ground water.

Federal, state, and local agencies, as well as cooperative extension services, have developed outreach programs to educate homeowners about environmentally friendly landscaping practices, the importance of water conservation, and opportunities to reduce the environmental impacts of landscaping practices while at the same time maintaining lawn aesthetics and saving time and money on landscape maintenance. This publication presents a quick overview of one such program (*Yards and Neighborhoods*) that educates homeowners about nine core principles for landscape management. The program was originally developed by

the University of Florida, and it is currently implemented in seven states: Alabama, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. In this publication, we use a table format to characterize Yards and Neighborhoods programs in three southeastern states: Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee. In these three states, the program is in different stages of implementation. In Florida, the program is well-established and supported by state and local agencies. It was re-named Florida-*Friendly Landscaping*™(FFL), and is used as a trademark of the University of Florida. In Tennessee, the program is relatively new, but it is actively developing and expanding in its geographic coverage. In South Carolina, the program is undergoing growth due to new partnerships between horticulture agents and Clemson's Carolina Clear program, which works with communities to deliver regional, strategic stormwater education and public involvement programming. Although all began as Yards and Neighborhoods programs modeled from the one at the University of Florida, they each have grown in unique ways based on resources, clientele needs and interestes, policy support, and other factors. By comparing these three programs, other states may gain insight as to how this program could best be delivered in their states and territories.

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Outreach Programs Targeting Residential Landscaping Practices

Several programs have been developed to encourage environmentally friendly landscaping practices and are being promoted by different agencies and organizations (Table 1). Although these programs are developed for different geographical regions (Southern, Northeastern, and Western United States), they promote a similar set of core landscaping principles:

- 1. Planning and designing landscapes to meet homeowners' recreational, functional, and aesthetic needs, which often translates into decreasing areas covered with turf, while increasing the use of trees and bushes
- 2. Using plants with low-water requirements, preferably native plants
- 3. Designing efficient irrigation
- 4. Using mulch for moisture retention and weed management

The programs can also include additional principles, such as proper landscape maintenance (e.g., proper fertilizing, mowing, weeding, and pruning); holistic pest management; wildlife habitat creation; stormwater runoff reduction; composting; lawn aeration; water recycling; and proper waterfront management. Homeowners who follow the landscaping principles promoted by the programs can benefit from reduced costs and time requirements for landscape maintenance; improved landscape aesthetics and functionality; reduced environmental impacts (such as water use and stormwater runoff); and reduced exposure to potentially harmful chemicals (such as pesticides). The Yards and Neighborhoods program is one of the most comprehensive educational programs promoting environmentally friendly residential landscaping practices (discussed in detail in the tables).

Yards and Neighborhoods Programs in Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee

A summary of *Yards and Neighborhoods* programs in Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee is presented in Table 2. The *primary target audiences* for the three programs are individual homeowners and homeowner associations. In addition, *Florida-Friendly Landscaping*™(FFL) has two special components targeting builders/ developers and green industry professionals. Instead of promoting a "prescribed" design for the homeowner yard, the programs

use a flexible approach and encourage implementation of *nine core landscaping principles*:

- 1. Right Plant, Right Place
- 2. Water Efficiently
- 3. Fertilize Appropriately
- 4. Mulch
- 5. Attract Wildlife
- 6. Manage Yard Pests Responsibly
- 7. Recycle Yard Waste (note that in Tennessee, this principle is substituted with "Manage Turfgrass Appropriately")
- 8. Reduce Stormwater Runoff
- 9. Protect the Waterfront

The programs in the three states rely on similar *educational methods* to reach their target audiences. All three programs offer a yard recognition program to homeowners implementing *Yard and Neighborhoods* practices; however, the requirements for receiving the recognition certificate are slightly different among the programs. Furthermore, the programs in all three states have demonstration sites that educate homeowners about the nine core landscaping principles. In addition, program faculty and staff conduct workshops and training programs. An extensive library of resources for each program is available online.

In the three states, the programs *partner* with state and local government agencies. Particularly, FFL is referenced in Florida Senate Bill 2080 (2009), which mandates that homeowner association (HOA) covenants, deed restrictions, and local government ordinances may not prohibit or be enforced so as to prohibit any property owner from implementing FFL practices. Support from local government agencies is linked to the ability of the local government to use some features of the program to meet educational program requirements in their water pollution permits as part of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems, or MS4, program.

The programs' effectiveness in educating individual homeowners are measured through a set of indicators: (a) funding received by the programs and the partnerships established; (b) number of workshops conducted and participant attendance; (c) educational materials developed and distributed; (d) case studies with documented behavioral changes of target audience; and (e) a collection of "success stories" or the results of program implementation for individual yards or homeowner association properties for which water and/or landscape chemical use reductions are documented. An example of such success stories is the one provided by FFL. After delivering a series of FFL classes,

the *Village Las Palmas* community, one of the three villages in Ocean Gallery (St. Johns County, Florida), decided to decrease irrigation costs and save water for common areas. They applied low-volume irrigation principles, installed soil moisture sensors, and replaced difficult-to-maintain turf grass areas with low-water and low-maintenance groundcovers. Savings attributed to the program include 10 million gallons of water in 2.5 years, and \$6,500 that would otherwise be spent on landscape maintenance. Other success stories from the three states can be found by following the links provided in Table 2.

In the three states, the program's *challenges* include:

- 1. Development of strategies to increase participation in workshops, as well as the level of adoption of landscaping practices by the homeowners
- 2. Limited extension personnel and limited funding for the programs
- 3. Difficulties associated with coordinating *Yards and Neighborhoods* programs across different counties, and coordinating *Yards and Neighborhoods* with other programs implemented by cooperative extension services (i.e., making sure that a consistent message is delivered to the homeowners)
- 4. Tracking system for the implementation of *Yards and Neighborhoods* practices and consistent evaluations of the outcomes associated with implementation of the program's core landscaping principles. This specifically includes quantifying the economic costs and benefits resulting from the use of *Yards and Neighborhoods* practices, understanding the reasons for the variation in these costs and benefits among homeowners' properties and communities, and developing strategies to measure the impact of the program on local, regional, and state levels.

Conclusions

This paper presents a summary of *Yards and Neighborhoods* programs in Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee in a convenient table format, to be used as a quick reference guide to the similarities and differences among the *Yards and Neighborhoods* programs implemented in these three southeastern states.

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Table 1. Examples of environmentally-friendly residential landscape management programs

Program Characteristics	Yards and Neighborhoods	GreenScapes	BayScaping	Xeriscaping / water-wise landscaping	Natural Landscaping
Organization	Developed by the University of Florida, used in Kansas (3), Louisiana (4), North Carolina (5), South Carolina (6), Tennessee (7)	US EPA (8)	Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office (9)	Initiated in Colorado, currently available in many states, including Alabama (10), Arizona (11), Georgia (12), New Mexico (13,14), North Carolina (15), South Carolina (16), Texas (17), and Virginia (18)	US EPA – Great Lakes office ("GreenAcres" website) (19,20)
Geographical region	See above	Nationwide	Chesapeake Bay	See above	Great Lakes
Benefits – as described by the programs	Low-cost, low-maintenance, attractive landscapes that add value to communities, conserve water and natural resources, and reduce the chance of polluting the water supply (21)	Cost savings Waste reduction Reduction of environmental impacts Water conservation Energy savings Climate impact Reduced exposure to potentially harmful chemicals Improved aesthetics Improved public perception of business Knowledge that you are making a difference and protecting environment (22)	Wildlife Water quality and quantity Air quality Reduced time and cost for the gardener (23)	 Attractive, comfortable landscapes Reduce water and maintenance costs by up to 60% Increase property value (by as much as 15%) Help extend water supplies Drought-proof landscapes that do not suffer from water use restrictions (24) 	Economic: Reduced cost of installation and maintenance; Reduced expense for stormwater management facilities Distinctive community image, strengthened real estate market Support green industry Environmental: Reduced soil erosion Improved water quality Reduced air / noise pollution Climatologic benefits Reduced greenhouse effect Habitat restoration Beautification Educational and recreational benefits (19)
Main principles	 Right plant, right place Water efficiently Fertilize appropriately Mulch Attract wildlife Manage yard pests responsibly Recycle yard waste Reduce stormwater runoff Protect the waterfront 	Right plant for your site Practice smart watering Build and maintain healthy soil with compost and mulch Adopt a holistic approach to pest management Practice natural lawn care (26)	 Plant selection (native and drought tolerant plants; emulate a natural area) Water efficiently Mulch Provide water for wildlife Control water runoff Reduce areas in lawn grass Practice lawn aeration Recycle water (27,28) 	 Plan and design Create practical turf areas Select low water plants Use soil amendments Use mulches Irrigate efficiently Maintain the landscape properly (29) 	 Use native plants Use more vegetation and less concrete and asphalt Retrofit areas for more natural stormwater detention (19)

Table 2. Summary of Yards and Neighborhoods programs in Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee (several pages)

	Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL) (University of Florida)	Carolina Yards and Neighborhoods (CYN) (Clemson University, South Carolina)	Tennessee Yards & Neighborhoods (TYN) (University of Tennessee-led)		
Mission	Help communities meet their sustainable landscaping needs while also helping to conserve and protect water resources				
Goal	Low-cost, low-maintenance, attractive landscapes that add value to communities; conserve water and natural resources; and reduce the chance of polluting the water supply				
Program history	Initiated in 199452 participating counties	 Initiated in 2002 Based on <i>Yards and Neighborhoods</i> programs in Florida Originally, all 46 counties received information; estimated 11 counties currently active 	 Initiated in 2007 as a 3-year pilot Based on Yards & Neighborhoods programs in North Carolina and Florida Founding partners: TN Water Resources Research Center, University of Tennessee Extension, Tennessee Valley Authority 7 county Extension offices in partnership with 12 community stormwater programs (MS4s) 		
Targeted audience	 Individual homeowners and homeowner associations Builders / developers Green industry professionals 	 Individual homeowners, neighborhoods Property managers 	 Individual homeowners and homeowner associations (future) builders / developers (future) green industry professionals 		
9 principles for homeowners	 Right Plant, Right Place Water Efficiently Fertilize Appropriately Mulch Attract Wildlife Manage Yard Pests Responsibly Recycle Yard Waste Reduce Stormwater Runoff Protect the Waterfront 	 Right Plant, Right Place Water Efficiently Fertilizing Mulch Wildlife Managing Yard Pests Recycle Yard Waste Stormwater Runoff On the Waterfront 	 Right Plant, Right Place Water Efficiently Use Fertilizer Appropriately Manage Soils and Mulch Provide for Wildlife Manage Yard Pests Manage Turfgrass Appropriately Reduce Stormwater Runoff and Its Pollutants Protect Water's Edge 		
Outreach materials and methods	1) Yard recognition checklist and program a) for homeowners, homeowner associations, and developers b) recognition levels for homeowners are based on points collected in Yard recognition checklist: Standard (50–52 points) and Gold (75–77 points) 2) Ándividual consultations for homeowners by extension agents/master gardeners 3) Ámemonstration sites 4) Ánline materials: a) publications b) Ávideos, narrated presentations c) Ántor gallery d) success stories e) Ánteractive websites f) monthly e-newsletters 5) Publications and leaflets 6) Ávorkshops, training, and certification programs	1) Yardstick workbook / yard recognition program (for homeowners) 2) Ándividual consultations for homeowners (by extension agents with horticulture responsibilities; master gardeners) 3) Demonstration sites and photo gallery 4) Ánline Home and Garden Information Center: a) publications b) Ávideos c) narrated presentations 5) Publications and leaflets 6) Árraining and presentations	1) Yardstick Workbook 2) Ahe TYN "Giraffe" yardstick – a yard long document depicting TYN actions – designed for participants to track and reinforce their progress 3) Atomeowner Yard Recognition Program based on the implementation of TYN actions (36 inches = Tennessee Yard Done Right) 4) Andividual consultations for homeowners (by Extension agents / Master Gardeners) 5) Apemonstration sites 6) An-line materials a) success stories b) publications c) resources (TN and other states) 7) Aworkshops for homeowners		

	Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL) (University of Florida)	Carolina Yards and Neighborhoods (CYN) (Clemson University, South Carolina)	Tennessee Yards & Neighborhoods (TYN) (University of Tennessee-led)
Collaboration with local and state agencies	 Partially funded by US EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program (administered by Florida Department of Environmental Protection) Partial funding from local water utilities Supported by state legislature Promoted by Florida Department of Environmental Protection and five Florida Water Management Districts FFL™ program supports local watering restrictions Model ordinance for Florida-Friendly fertilizer use on urban landscapes 	 Currently, CYN is a partnership between horticulture agents and natural resource agents. Program growth is spearheaded by partners and Carolina Clear program, which works with MS4 communities to educate and involve general public in stormwater management. Carolina Clear includes education providers, universities, city and county governments who work together to identify stormwater education and outreach needs within their community, then develop and implement a strategy to successfully meet those needs as they relate to stormwater education and watershed awareness. Program goals are: Maximizing efficiency of stormwater education by using a regional / watershed approach. Helping local MS4s meet NPDES Phase II permit requirements for public stormwater education and outreach Creating a model for collaborative stormwater education that can be presented and applied throughout the state of South Carolina and beyond. South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and South Carolina Nursery and Landscape Association involved in adapting Florida Yards and Neighborhoods program and in CYN Workbook distribution. 	 Partially funded by US EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program (administered by Tennessee Department of Agriculture) On the state level, collaborating agencies – University of Tennessee Extension, University of Tennessee Institute for a Secure and Sustainable Environment / TN Water Resources Research Agency & the Tennessee Valley Authority Statewide Advisory Board comprised of federal, state, local agencies, NGOs, trade associations, utilities, and the private sector On the local level, implemented by County Extension offices and MS4s
Measuring success	Funding received and partnerships established Number of participating county extension offices Number of people trained Educational materials developed and distributed A few case studies with documented behavioral changes of target audience Several "success stories" with documented water / landscape chemical use reduction References to the program in other states	 Number of workshops conducted & participant attendance Presentations made and educational materials developed and distributed Survey of public knowledge and awareness (Carolina Clear program) Partnerships established (Carolina Clear program) Interest and attendance at Demonstration Site(s) 	 Funding received and partnerships established Number of workshops conducted & participant attendance Pilot evaluation of 1) quality of TYN training materials; 2) effectiveness of workshop delivery system; 3) TYN participants' behavioral changes; & 4) application of home / neighborhood low-impact development (LID) strategies Documented participant "success stories"
Challenges	Coordination and administration of the program; making sure educational materials distributed in participating counties are consistent and up-dated	 Cross program coordination Tracking Consistent evaluations Funding Time and personnel 	 Workshop participation Funding Expansion strategies, including providing trainers with sufficient training & resources Bring in new local TYN coordinators with "full plates"
Other programs	 Florida's five Water Management Districts (WMD) can develop materials and programs supplemental to FFL but linked to FFL (e.g., "Florida-Friendly Irrigating" by Southwest Florida WMD) Florida-Friendly Living (includes Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ + indoor water conservation component) Master Gardener program 	 As part of Carolina Clear, each regional consortium develops own stormwater educational program (not always linked to CYN) to meet local needs A variety of publications describing various environmentally-friendly landscaping techniques in on-line "Home and Garden Information Center" Master Gardener program 	 Master Gardener Program designed for participants to educate the public on landscaping practices University of Tennessee Gardens that provides year-round landscaping- related workshops for the public A variety of "Home, Garden, and Landscape" publications Ad hoc landscaping workshops for green industry professionals

	Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL) (University of Florida)	Carolina Yards and Neighborhoods (CYN) (Clemson University, South Carolina)	Tennessee Yards & Neighborhoods (TYN) (University of Tennessee-led)
Web-links	Main page http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/ For homeowners http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/homeowner s/publications.htm Yard Recognition Checklist http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/homeowner s/recognitions.htm Interactive Yard http://www.floridayards.org/ Florida-Friendly Living http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/FFL/index.ht ml Community associations and property managers http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/community association kit.htm Builders / developers http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professional s/home.htm and http://www.floridayards.org/profe ssional/index.php Green industry http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professional s/BMP overview.htm; Success stories: http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter/CF FC e-newsletter.htm; http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/ stories.htm and http://www.floridayards.org/profe ssional/professionallandscape.php	Main page http://www.clemson.edu/extension/natural_resou_rces/water/carolina_yards/index.html CYN workbook http://www.clemson.edu/extension/natural_resou_rces/water/carolina_yards/carolina_yardstick.pdf Home and Garden Information Center_http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/ Carolina Clear http://www.clemson.edu/public/carolinaclear/inde_x.html Clemson Master Gardener http://www.clemson.edu/extension/mg/	Main page http://tnyardsandneighborhoods.tenn essee.edu/Pages/default.aspx TYN workbook http://www.utextension.utk.edu/publ ications/wfiles/W219.pdf Educational materials http://tnyardsandneighborhoods.tenn essee.edu/Pages/Resouces.aspx Success stories http://tnyardsandneighborhoods.tenn essee.edu/Pages/SuccessStories.aspx