

Checklist of Florida-Friendly Landscape Practices¹

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Introduction

A Florida-Friendly yard is attractive, functional and ecologically sound. Its creation and maintenance can be accomplished rather simply by using the landscape practices listed below. They are grouped according to how much money or labor they take to accomplish from easiest (Tier One) to most expensive and/or labor intensive (Tier Three). Even the simplest practice can have significant, positive impacts on the landscape and the environment. The page number(s) that follow a practice refer to information in *The Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Handbook*, which is available free from your local Extension office. To contact your county office, see: <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/map/>. Helpful Web sites from the University of Florida/IFAS are also included. These resources provide even more tips and practices to incorporate Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ into your yard, but the list below provides a good starting point.

Tier One Practices (require little to no money and/or labor)

- Mow grass at the right height to encourage a deeper, more drought- and pest-resistant root system. (pages 13, 18 and 33)

- Leave grass clippings to recycle nutrients back into the soil. (page 39)
- Use fallen tree leaves and pine needles on-site as mulch. (page 29)
- Avoid shearing shrubs, topping trees and over-pruning palms. (page 39)
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG087>
- Make sure obstructed or misdirected sprinklers are correctly positioned. (page 18)
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE451>
- Schedule a free irrigation inspection. Contact your local Extension office or utility for availability of this service.
- Manually operate your irrigation system on an "as needed" basis during cooler winter months and the summer rainy season. (page 21)
- Properly schedule irrigation run times. See the Urban Irrigation Scheduler:
http://fawn.ifas.ufl.edu/tools/urban_irrigation/. For information on how to set your irrigation controller, visit: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP235>
- Use a rain gauge to measure rainfall and irrigate only during prolonged dry periods.

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- Annually check rain or soil moisture sensors to make sure they are operating correctly. (page 20)
- Irrigate in the early morning hours when temperature and wind are low. (page 17)
- Direct downspouts onto turf, plant beds or containment areas where rainwater can be absorbed. (page 43)
- Establish a 10-foot-wide maintenance-free zone around any water bodies on the property. (page 46)
- Use pesticides only on affected plants or lawn areas; no indiscriminate or routine pesticide use.
- Fertilize "as needed," rather than routinely. (pages 23 and 28)
- Tolerate some insect damage on plants; insects are a food source for beneficial insects, birds and other organisms. (pages 33–34)
- Make sure landscape maintenance personnel hold required pesticide certifications. (see note below)
- Prevent grass clippings, fertilizer and other debris from going into storm drains.
- Avoid planting invasive plants in your landscape. (page 9)
<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment/conclusions.html>
- Repair broken or leaking sprinklers.
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE451>
- Maintain a 2- to 3-inch layer of organic mulch over tree roots, shrubs, plant beds. Pull mulch away from base of plants. (page 30)
- Use organic mulches such as recycled yard waste, melaleuca, pine bark/straw, eucalyptus, tree leaves, etc. (pages 29–30)
- Use slow- or controlled-release fertilizers. (page 25)
- In summer, apply iron to green-up the lawn if needed (instead of nitrogen fertilizer, which creates problems for the lawn and waterways). (page 24)
- Add a deflector shield to your fertilizer spreader to help keep fertilizer off the street, sidewalk, driveway and adjacent water bodies. (page 24)
- Reduce mowing and raking by removing grass beneath tree canopies and creating large, "self-mulching" areas. (page 40)
- Make a rain barrel to collect and store rainwater for use on plants. (page 44)
http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/water/articles/pdf/rain_barrels.pdf
- Bring your yard to life by creating habitat for Florida's wildlife. (pages 31–32)
- Improve your soil by adding organic matter. (page 6)
- Have your soil tested. (page 7)
- Compost yard and kitchen debris. (page 40)
- Choose "least harmful" products when a pesticide application is justified. (page 34)
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IN197>
- Help reduce insect pesticide resistance by rotating chemical classes of pesticides.
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IN773>
- Choose the right plant for the right place in your landscape. (pages 5–14)

Tier Two Practices (require some money and/or labor)

- Calibrate irrigation system to apply 1/2– 3/4 inch of water per application. (pages 18–19)
- Install a rain shut-off device or soil moisture sensor to automatic irrigation systems. It's required by law. Check annually for proper operation. (pages 14 and 19)
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE221> ;
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE437>
- Segregate irrigation zones to water lawn areas separately from plant beds. Lawns typically need more frequent irrigation than landscape plants.
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY1043>

Tier Three Practices (require considerable investments of money and/or labor)

- If free irrigation inspections are not available in your area, hire a Florida Irrigation Society (FIS) "Water Auditor" to inspect your system. (See below for FIS contact information).
- Install drip tubing or micro-sprayers in plant beds. (pages 19 and 20)
- Install a cistern for non-potable water use. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE029>
- Replace problem lawn areas and landscape plants with more appropriate choices. (pages 5, 7, 8 and 12) Also see the Florida-Friendly Plant Database: <http://floridayards.org/fyplants/index.php>
- Plant deciduous trees on southern exposures to allow winter sun to passively heat buildings. (pages 5, 10–11)
- Plant shade trees on the east and west sides of buildings and around air conditioner compressors to passively cool buildings. (pages 5, 10–11)
- Reduce stormwater runoff and pollutants by using mulch or other porous surfaces (pavers, bricks, gravel, etc) for patios, walkways, or driveways). (page 44)
- Create swales, berms, terracing and/or a rain garden to capture and filter stormwater runoff. (page 44)
- Plant native aquatic plants along the shoreline of water bodies. <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/guide/natplant.html>
- Remove invasive exotic plants. (page 9)

Additional Resources

For more information on pesticide licensing go to: http://prohort.ifas.ufl.edu/pesticide_licenses/index.shtml. A decision "key" for determining which

license is required can be found by clicking on "Which pesticide license do you need?"

Also helpful:

http://pested.ifas.ufl.edu/licenses_and_certification.html

Hire Reputable and Responsible Professionals (pages 13–14 and 39)

<http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/bmp/turfBMP.pdf>

The following is a list of Green Industry professional organizations:

Florida Irrigation Society: www.fisstate.org

Florida Landscape Maintenance Association: <http://www.floridalma.org/>

Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association: <http://www.fn gla.org/>

International Society of Arboriculture: <http://www.isa-arbor.com/findarborist/findarborist.aspx>

Florida Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects: <http://www.flasla.org/>