



# Successful Implementation of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ in a Community Setting

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**The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program was created to help preserve, protect, and conserve the state's natural water resources. The program teaches nine landscaping principles that educate Floridians on how to design, install, and maintain an attractive, healthy, and environmentally-friendly landscape while saving time, energy, and money. These principles include: right plant–right place, water efficiently, fertilize appropriately, maximize mulch, attract wildlife, control yard pests responsibly, recycle, reduce stormwater runoff, and protect the waterfront. Homeowners, builders, developers, community associations, and maintenance professionals are the primary target audiences.**

Recent Florida legislation makes the prohibition of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ illegal in municipalities and community associations. A number of communities statewide embrace Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ and enjoy significant cost savings. The program has a host of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ resources for homeowners, community associations, and municipalities.

The purpose of this work is to implement results from educating Floridians on the nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles that will help preserve, protect, and conserve the state's natural water resources.

## Materials and Methods

The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program was created in the mid-1990s to address the serious problem of soil and water quality degradation caused by stormwater runoff and nonpoint source pollution. Water quality is an important issue in Florida given that sources of high-quality groundwater underlie virtually all of Florida. Ninety percent of this state's population relies on these groundwater resources for their drinking water. Additionally, more than 50% of all other water needs, including agricultural, industry, mining, and electric power generation, are supplied by groundwater resources.

The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program is implemented statewide through the Cooperative Extension Service system in partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and other government agencies. The three main program areas are Homeowner, Builder and Developer, and Green Industries Best Management Practices. Through the information delivered to each of these audiences, The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program teaches Floridians to reduce stormwater runoff and nonpoint source pollution, conserve water resources, and provide habitat for wildlife.

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We would like to thank the homeowner and condominium association boards of directors, landscaping committee members, architectural review board members, property managers, landscaping professionals, and residents for implementing Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles.

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## Results and Discussion

Chapter 373.185, Florida Statute: On 1 July 2009, the legislature passed what was Senate Bill 2080 into law. The bill defined Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ as ... quality landscapes that conserve water, protect the environment, are adaptable to local conditions, and are drought tolerant. Additional components included the nine principles listed above. Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ can take any form whether unique or traditional. There is no one prescribed design. Management/maintenance is the key. Homeowner associations may not prohibit a homeowner from implementing Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ practices such as right plant–right place, reasonable use of mulch, plants to attract wildlife, rain gardens, rain barrels, and waterfront buffers. Homeowner associations may not require water-wasting practices, use of excessive fertilizers/pesticides, or violations of water management district water use restrictions.

## Success stories

A number of communities throughout the state have successfully implemented Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles on a large scale with excellent results. This has occurred as a direct result of on-site education with homeowner/condominium association boards of directors, landscaping committee members, architectural review board members, condo and property managers, landscaping professionals, and residents regarding the principles and maintenance practices, including right plant in the right place, integrated pest management and how to include Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ guidelines in association landscape documents. Educational media utilized includes newsletters, newspapers, social media sites, television, radio, and exhibits and displays.

Hancock Place is a 32-unit low-income housing development located in St. Johns County. Low-income housing is a great place for implementation of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ as landscapes are designed to exist with no supplemental inputs of water, fertilizer, and pesticides. Homeowners are required to attend an introductory Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ class prior to moving into the development, and Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ practices are written into the by-laws of the homeowners' association. Many of the landscapes make use of groundcovers

as a turfgrass alternative in areas where turf is not necessary.

Tamarind Village is a 177-unit development in Broward County that was developed in the typical South Florida pattern of canals and cul-de-sacs. The residents realized the importance of reducing their stormwater runoff and focused their efforts on accomplishing this goal. Over time the swales had become ineffective at slowing down runoff, so the first task was to bring in earth movers to rework these swales. The use of permeable pavers and rain gardens was also encouraged to hold stormwater on individual lots as long as possible. By fully implementing Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ practices, Tamarind Village was able to save 6.4 million gal of water, 24,000 lb of fertilizer, and 966 lb of pesticides in a 2-year timeframe.

Ocean Gallery is a 439-unit condominium development in St. Augustine Beach that was interested in saving money on maintenance costs. The first action was to send maintenance staff to Green Industry Best Management Practices workshops to ensure that correct maintenance practices were being followed. Next, the development replaced all of its median turf with groundcovers and shrubs and capped irrigation heads in established plant beds. By capping these irrigation heads, water use was reduced by as much as 50% at one well pump. The maintenance contract was rewritten to contain Integrated Pest Management and Green Industry Best Management Practices principles, which saved \$6,500 per year on pesticide and fertilizer.

Anclote Pointe Townhomes is a 5-acre condominium development in Pinellas County located between a salt marsh and the Anclote River. The community was interested in reducing its water use, which was approximately 24,000 gal per month. The first step was to take manual control of their irrigation system, which had been running three times per week. Next, the community replaced narrow strips of turfgrass with drought-tolerant groundcover in front of all of the homes. Then, they installed a 4-inch layer of mulch, micro-irrigation in plant beds, and an electronic rain gauge to monitor water use. These changes resulted in a reduction in water use to 10,000 gal per month, which saved almost \$10,000 per year on irrigation alone.

### **Literature Cited**

#### **Extension Circulars**

University of Florida IFAS Extension and Florida Department of Environmental Protection. 2009. The Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Handbook. University of Florida. A Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Publication.

The Florida-Friendly Landscaping Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design. 2010. University of Florida. A Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Publication.