

## WORKSHOP

### Florida Yards and Neighborhood Program or Environmentally Friendly Landscaping

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I am asking Billie Lofland to give the Introduction and Overview of this valuable Extension Program.

#### INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

BY  
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In 1992 the Tampa Bay National Estuary Program (TB-NEP) and the University of Florida Cooperative Extension Services of Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties initiated the *Florida Neighborhoods* pilot program. At approximately the same time, Sarasota Bay NEP and Sarasota and Manatee Extension Services were implementing the *Florida Yards* program. Initial research had shown that excess nitrogen was a major pollutant of Tampa and Sarasota Bays and that a significant amount of the nitrogen was coming from stormwater runoff from residential areas.

The University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service was the logical leader for a program development dealing with residential landscapes because its Environmental Landscape Management (ELM) program incorporated most of the information and practices needed to educate those involved in properly maintaining yards and community properties. A coalition of state, city and county agencies, homeowners and landscape professionals played a critical role in developing the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods program. It was essen-

tial not to duplicate existing programs and to find ways to support or enhance activities of other agencies.

In 1994, Florida Yards and Neighborhoods was created by combining the Florida Neighborhoods programs. In 1996, the Florida Cooperative Extension Service began integrating Florida Yards and Neighborhoods into its Environmental Landscape Management state-wide program.

Funding for Florida Yards and Neighborhoods programs in different counties comes from various sources. In Pinellas, Pasco and Hillsborough Counties, FYN is funded by the West Coast Regional Water Supply Authority. In other counties, funding comes from National Estuary Programs, from Water Management Districts and from the Department of Environmental Protection.

Program evolution has involved broadening the scope from "bays and estuaries" to include inland water resources, such as lakes, rivers and ponds. Also, there is more discussion of aquifers and their relationship to above ground water systems, as well as a pollution caused by recreational boats.

As the Cooperative Extension Service in other counties has adopted the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, it has been important to maintain the integrity of the program. University of Florida specialists review new materials, provide guidance on program development, and assist with standardizing educational tools. Educational efforts include presentations, workshops, exhibits and distribution of materials.

Educational program materials include:

*A Guide to Environmentally Friendly Landscaping: The Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Handbook.*

This is a University of Florida publication. The development and printing of this handbook was funded by the Sarasota Bay NEP.

*The Florida YardStick Poster*

Funded by the Tampa Bay NEP, this poster provides a checklist to appropriate landscape design and care practices. It is currently being modified into the *Florida YardStick Workbook*.

"*Creating Your Florida Yard*" and "*Maintaining Your Florida Yard*" are slide presentations.

Funded by the Tampa Bay NEP

*"Reclaiming Paradise: Florida Yards and Neighborhoods"*

This half-hour video was produced by the Sarasota Bay NEP with funds from the Southwest Florida Water Management Districts.

**CAROLYN H. BEST**  
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While the landscape design is the beginning phase of a Florida Yard, the ongoing maintenance procedures followed are critical to reduce water-usage and run-off pollutants. Cultural practices and pest management are two major components of the program.

- Cultural practices promoting healthy plant growth and reducing pest management costs include: composting, fertilizing, watering, mowing, pruning, and mulching.

- Pest management incorporates Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices and emphasizes the use of pest resistant plants, proper landscape management, natural enemies of pests, and the least toxic alternative if pesticides are required. Plants are monitored for pest problems and pesticide applications are used only on affected plants, not as blanket applications.



**Carolyn H. Best**  
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## **Creating a Florida Yard**

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A properly landscaped Florida yard is a yard that fits the needs of the homeowner, enhances the community with its beauty, and is friendly to the Florida environment. Several factors must be considered when designing and creating that yard. Be aware that your yard will provide many positive factors such as:

- Help produce oxygen.
- Reduce temperatures with shading and coverage.
- Absorb pollutants.
- Prevent stormwater run-offs.
- Provide food and shelter for the birds, butterflies and other life forms.
- Increases property values.
- Screens sights and sounds.

When creating a Florida yard, there are several components and factors to consider. The first step in creating the yard is to assess what you have, need and want out of the yard. Take a good look at your yard. Notice the following:

- Look at your property line and shape.

- See what plants, trees, and shrubs are already present and note whether they are in good locations, good condition and placement.
- Record the sun and shade patterns of your property.
- What kinds of pictures or views do you want for that yard, and what kind of upkeep do you wish to do to maintain it?
- What kind of soil are you working with?
- Will the stormwater runoff affect where you place the plants?

The three key elements to consider for your yard are, the site conditions (as listed above), the function of the plants and the maintenance they will require. Once you have really looked at your yard, decide and draw out a basic outline of how you want it to look. What general types of plants do you want and where do you want them. Some basic ideas to help you with are:

- Avoid using grass on steep slopes or in narrow strips where it is hard to mow.
- Use ground cover such as mulch, liriope or both in areas where grass does not grow well.
- Place trees and shrubs together according to their water and maintenance needs.
- Use trees as a shading to help cool your home. East, west and southwest sides of your home should help to provide shade.
- For shoreline yards, a buffer of low maintenance plants will decrease water pollution and increase nutrient absorption.

- Whenever possible allow rain water to be absorbed into the soil with the use of mulches, brick, gravel and other porous materials.
- When buying the plants at the nursery, be aware that the two most common causes for poor plant establishment are over or under watering, and planting them too deeply. When looking for plants, some important factors are:
- Vigor and good plant color.
  - A well-developed root system with no encircling roots.

- No weeds present in the soil.
- No signs of disease and insects.
- Trees should have single trunks.
- When planting, establishment time varies according to size of plant, the site, and the type of plant. The rule of thumb to follow is, trees need 6-12 months per inch of trunk diameter, while shrubs and ground cover need one year. Sod requires one month and sprigs and plugs need about three months.

## The Statewide Expansion Program

**MIKE HOLSINGER**

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In regard to Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Statewide Expansion Program, our Joint Task Force in August 1997, developed the following objectives outline.

- I. Program Materials for the future:
  1. Statwide TV Program and Web Page
  2. Retailer Marketing Programs
  3. Autotutorials
  4. School curriculums
  5. Fertilizer certification program
- II. Evaluation Needs and Research Needs:
  1. Social Marketing
  2. Pollution Modeling
  3. Cost - Benefit Analysis
  4. Changes in consumer purchasing habits
  5. Economic analysis of contractors
- III. Expansion Schedule:
  1. Ft. Lauderdale to Key West
  2. Ft. Myers to Naples
  3. Panama City to Pensacola
  4. Inland Counties
- IV. Partnerships and Funding:
  1. 1998 Legislative Initiative
  2. Water Management Districts, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Transportation, Water Supply Authorities, County Governments.