

# Florida-Friendly Landscaping

by Lisa Strange

The following is the first in a series of nine articles on the principles of Florida-Friendly landscaping, a concept designed to produce attractive, low-maintenance, environmentally-friendly landscapes that also provide habitat for wildlife and reduce the spread of invasive plants.

## The First Principle: Right Plant, Right Place

Consider the existing site conditions of your area. Where is it sunny or shady? What type of soil do you have (e.g. sandy, clay)? What is the pH of your soil? Where do you want play areas, colors, views, or privacy? How much turf do you need or want to maintain? Keep in mind that many varieties of turf require more water and maintenance than shrubs and other plants. Make turf areas functional and use alternative ground covers whenever possible.

After answering these questions, you can then match the plants that will grow in your area with your specific site conditions. The selection of the plants is the most fun and rewarding step in landscaping. Remember, when selecting plants they are serving a purpose. For example, a hedge or vine may provide privacy; plants that are larval or have nectar provide food for butterflies; plants with red tubular flowers attract hummingbirds;

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and plants with berries, nuts, or blooms may attract wildlife. Also consider plants that are drought tolerant, pest resistant, and non-invasive. Using native and Florida-friendly plants, creating designs that optimize your local site conditions, and grouping plants with similar needs can help reduce water use and lower maintenance costs while preserving natural resources.

Contact your local county UF/IFAS Extension Office for more information on Florida-friendly landscaping or visit [FloridaYards.org](http://FloridaYards.org). You can also order the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Handbook and Florida-Friendly Plant List for free from the Southwest Florida Water Management District website, [watermatters.org](http://watermatters.org).

**Featured Florida-Friendly Plant**

The first featured plant accompanying the Right Plant Right Place principle can be used as an alternative for turf.

- *Bulbine frutescens*, Yellow African Bulbine.

Chosen as one of the 2006 selections plant of the year by the Florida Nursery Grower and Landscaper Association, *Bulbine frutescens*, is an everblooming perennial with star-shaped yellow or orange flowers with a light green grass-like succulent foliage. The foliage is full of sap used for medicinal purposes similar to aloe. *Bulbine* thrives in zones 9B-11, and grows to a height of 14-16 inches tall with a 24-30 inch spread. It prefers full sun for more blooms and is excellent for mass planting. *Bulbine* can tolerate a light frost, but it should still be protected. ■

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