



Supporting Florida-Friendly Landscaping

by Lisa Strange, FYN Community Association Coordinator

After reflecting upon the new Senate Bill 2080, I can appreciate the support for its existence. The guidelines in this bill provide us the opportunity to begin to preserve our environment and protect our water supply. Florida has more people, and there are more uses for water today than ever before. We need to start taking a proactive approach because environmental stewardship is everyone's responsibility. So what better place to start than with homeowner associations and property managers for our communities?

Opportunities for training such as Best Management Practices (BMPs) are available for a better understanding of Florida-friendly practices. Just

knowing how to choose plants appropriately for a site and maintaining them with correct cultural practices (irrigation, fertilization, mowing, and pruning), can significantly reduce not only the amount of water a landscape needs to survive but also the chance of plant diseases and pests associated with over-watering. Learning and implementing the BMPs of Florida-friendly landscaping principles can result in Florida yards that look good and are better able to withstand environmental challenges.

Recently, I found the following timely article in the Fish Hawk Ranch HOA newsletter, authored by Lynn Barber, Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Agent for Hillsborough County Extension.

FLORIDA-FRIENDLY PLANTS

by Lynn Barber

Right plant, Right place is the first of nine Florida-friendly landscaping principles. A Florida-friendly landscape's beauty and functionality depends on a mix of trees, plants, and turf grass chosen for their specific location and maintained according to the University of Florida (UF)/IFAS recommendations. Florida-friendly landscaping principles encourage the use of both native and non-native species of plants. Invasive exotics should be removed where possible and never planted.

What is a Florida-friendly plant? The answer is easy, and it's free! One of my favorite freebies is *A Guide to Florida-Friendly Landscaping: the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Handbook*. A good thing about this handbook is that it contains an easy to read description of the nine principles of the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Program and an explanation regarding why the principles

are important. A great thing about this handbook is that it also contains a Florida-friendly plant list. The plant list alone is 79 pages... as of today. I anticipate it will be much larger because it's currently being revised and will include color photographs of all of the plants listed. You can order your own personal copy of the existing handbook for free at www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/publications/cart.php?add=179.



All you need to do after accessing this site is fill in your name and home address. The Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) will send one copy per household in the 16-county area for which they are responsible. There are a lot of other great free publications at this site.

There are many other educational features in this plant list; all explained under the symbols and abbreviations pages. Florida natives, non-natives, and invasives are so noted. The growth rate, height, and spread of each plant listed are shown. The soil pH indicates the range tolerated by the plant, whether acid or alkaline. Soil texture and moisture and drought and salt tolerance are provided, along with light range and optimum light conditions. Plants that attract butterflies, hummingbirds, and other wildlife are so noted.

I'm particularly fond of the following Florida-friendly plants which are also drought resistant, have high color, and require low maintenance. My favorite shrubs are beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), golden dewdrop (*Duranta repens*) and firecracker plant (*Russelia equisetiformis*). My favorite perennials are tickseed (*Coreopsis*), Florida's state wildflower, flax lily (*Dianella tasmanica*), and whirling butterfly (*Gaura lindheimeri*). My favorite ground covers are beach sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*) and lantana (*Lantana spp.*) I have all of these plants somewhere in my landscape.

Contact your local county UF/IFAS Extension office for more information on Florida-Friendly Landscaping or visit <http://floridayards.org>. For more information on the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods program, go to <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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