

# RIGHT PLANT, RIGHT PLACE



**LANDSCAPING PRINCIPLES FOR  
FLORIDA-FRIENDLY YARDS**

## Right Plant, Right Place

Almost any plant will survive in your landscape if you plant it in the right place. You can drastically reduce the need for water, fertilizer, pesticides and pruning if you follow these tips:

- Make a note of the type of soil, sunlight exposure and water conditions of the planting site before you shop. Choose plants that thrive under the conditions you noted.
- Limit the number of plants that need a lot of water or care.
- Keep only as much grass as you directly use for recreation and other purposes. Plant beds and mulched areas use less water than grass.
- Remove invasive exotic plants so they don't steal water and nutrition from Florida-friendly plants.

The University of Florida established nine Florida-friendly landscaping principles to guide Florida Yards & Neighborhoods programs offered through county Extension offices. This card features one principle. For additional cards or for more information about Florida-friendly and water-efficient landscaping, look under your county's telephone book listing for your Extension office or visit [www.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/](http://www.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/).

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# WATER EFFICIENTLY



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## Water Efficiently

Typically, up to 50% of water used by households is used outdoors. Efficient watering will not only help you save money and conserve water, but can also create a healthier landscape. Follow these tips to save water and money:

- Water your lawn and plants only when you know they need it or show signs of stress.
- Use a rain gauge or moisture sensor so you will know if rainfall has done the job.
- Install a drip or micro-spray system in your plant beds. They use water more efficiently than traditional spray heads.
- Install an automatic rain shutoff device to avoid watering when it's raining.
- Stop overwatering! Overwatered grass has short roots that make it harder to survive pest attacks, disease and drought.
- Collect water in a rain barrel to use to water your plants.

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# FERTILIZE APPROPRIATELY



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## Fertilize Appropriately

When too much fertilizer is applied to landscapes, it seeps past the root zone of the grass, plants or trees and into the aquifer or runs off into water bodies. Plants, animals and people depend on clean water for survival. Follow these tips to help prevent water pollution:

- Fertilize lawns, trees and plants only to maintain health. Don't exceed recommended amounts. Fertilizer will not help poor growth caused by too much shade, disease or pests.
- Use slow-release fertilizers that make nutrients available to plants for a longer time. They are kinder to the environment and are usually more cost-effective.
- Use iron instead of nitrogen if you want to "green-up" your lawn.
- Hold off on fertilizing if a heavy rain is expected, and don't overirrigate after applying.
- Follow the directions on the fertilizer package and use a drop spreader instead of a rotary spreader to apply it.
- Avoid weed and feed products.

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# MULCH

# 4

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## Mulch

Who likes to weed? Keeping mulch on your plant beds helps control weeds, retain soil moisture and reduce erosion and stormwater runoff. Follow these tips when mulching:

- Cut down on mowing by replacing grass with mulch in areas that are shaded or difficult to mow.
- Keep the level of mulch up to 2–3 inches by applying it once or twice a year.
- Keep mulch 2 inches from the base of plants to avoid disease.
- Let fallen tree leaves stay under a tree to create self-mulching areas.
- Look for cypress mulch that is not harvested from Florida's wetlands.
- Choose recycled mulch or alternatives like melaleuca, leaves, pine needles or bark.

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## Attract Wildlife

Friendly visitors, like butterflies and beneficial insects, will enjoy your landscape if you provide food, water and cover. Attract wildlife by following these tips:

- Plant vines, shrubs and trees to create cover, nesting areas and food.
- Provide a water source such as a birdbath or a small pond.
- Provide wildlife shelters such as a bat house, birdhouse or brush pile.
- Protect the health of wildlife visitors. Limit pesticide use by spot-treating only the areas that need attention.

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# MANAGE YARD PESTS RESPONSIBLY



**LANDSCAPING PRINCIPLES FOR  
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## Manage Yard Pests Responsibly

When it comes to pest management, nature takes care of itself! Misused pesticides in your yard can harm beneficial insects and also run off into waterways. Follow these tips when managing yard pests:

- Learn to identify beneficial insects and let them do the work for you.
- Be tolerant! Low levels of pests will do minimal damage.
- Check plants regularly and prune off a plant's infected areas or pick off insects when possible.
- Use pesticides only to spot-treat affected plants and lawn areas. Avoid blanket applications.
- Choose the least-toxic pesticides such as horticultural oils, insecticidal soaps and *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT).
- Read and follow pesticide labels carefully for safe use and disposal.

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# RECYCLE

# 7

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## Recycle

Recycling your yard waste back onto your lawn and landscape can improve the fertility and water-holding ability of the soil and help aerate soil that has become compacted.

- There's no need to bag or rake lawn clippings. Leave grass clippings on the lawn to recycle nitrogen.
- Use fallen leaves and pine needles as mulch under trees and shrubs.
- Create and maintain a compost pile with yard waste and kitchen scraps (no animal products). Compost is a great natural fertilizer and mulch.

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# REDUCE STORMWATER RUNOFF



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## Reduce Stormwater Runoff

Stormwater runoff can carry pollutants, pesticides and excess fertilizers into bays, rivers, lakes and ground water. Remember that what goes in your storm drain can find its way into our water sources. Follow these tips to help reduce stormwater runoff from your yard:

- Direct downspouts and gutters into your lawn, plant beds, rain barrels, cisterns or containment areas.
- Use mulch, bricks, gravel or other porous surfaces for walkways, patios and driveways.
- Sweep grass clippings, fertilizer and soil onto the lawn so they don't get washed into storm drains.
- Clean up oil spills and leaks on the driveway. Use cat litter to absorb oil.
- Pick up pet waste to help reduce bacterial and nutrient pollution.
- Remove trash from street gutters before it gets washed into storm drains.
- Use swales (low areas) to hold and filter water.

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# PROTECT THE WATERFRONT



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## Protect the Waterfront

Bays and waterways contribute to the quality of life in Florida. Waterfront owners can help protect these fragile natural treasures by following these tips:

- Never prune mangroves or remove any vegetation without first seeking proper permits and guidelines.
- Establish a 10–30 foot “no fertilizer, no pesticide” zone along your shoreline.
- Remove invasive exotic aquatic plants by cutting, pulling or raking.
- Plant a buffer zone of low-maintenance plants between your lawn and shoreline to absorb nutrients and to provide wildlife habitat.

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