

# #1: Right Plant, Right Place

## ENJOY HEALTHIER PLANTS AND REDUCE WORK BY USING PLANTS SUITED TO YOUR LANDSCAPE CONDITIONS

Achieving a natural, healthy balance in your landscape starts with putting the right plant in the right place. This encompasses far more than simply putting sun-loving plants in your yard's sunny spots—you also need to consider things like maintenance and water needs. Matching plants to conditions in your landscape can help them thrive, once established, with little or no irrigation and few or no fertilizers and pesticides.

The secret to successful landscape design is thorough planning. Remember that once you have a plan, you don't have to do all the work at once—you can implement it one area at a time. Read this chapter to get an idea of the factors you should take into account when planning your new landscape or renovating an existing one, and use the worksheet at the end of the chapter to design a customized landscape plan that is sure to work for you.

### LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Florida-Friendly Landscape design combines art and science to create functional, attractive, and ecologically sound surroundings that complement a home or other structure. The main idea when placing plants in your landscape is not to waste time, energy, and money caring for a plant that is not adapted to the spot where it's planted. But Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ guidelines need not restrict your choices of color, texture, and style.

### FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

In a landscape, plants fulfill multiple roles. For example, landscape designers often recommend grouping plants into masses to unify the design of plant beds. Groups of plants are visually pleasing, but this design technique provides environmental benefits as well. Trees planted in groups provide more atmospheric cooling than the same number of evenly spaced, isolated trees and are much better protected in high winds. In addition, trees planted in combination with appropriate shrubs and groundcovers form effective windbreaks and wildlife habitat.

### PLANT MATCHMAKING

Turf and landscape plants have different water, fertilizer, and maintenance needs. All it takes is one misplaced shrub to disrupt mowing and irrigation patterns. To conserve water and make maintenance easier, group plants in beds according to water requirements.

### COLOR IN THE LANDSCAPE

One way to design your landscape is by choosing two or three colors that complement each other, and repeating the color combination throughout the landscaped area. You'll create a scene that's visually attractive, and the repetition of color will draw the eye through the planting.



Two or three complementary colors create an inviting landscape.

However you design your landscape, don't forget to take into consideration what times of year different plants bloom.

### WET VS. DRY

Many drought-tolerant plants thrive on elevated dry spots or in windy areas, but can quickly succumb to root diseases and pest problems if planted in areas that tend to stay wet. Drought-tolerant plants do well in exposed areas and along the unshaded southern or western walls of buildings, but you should place plants adapted to wet soils in low spots, along waterways, and in areas with poor drainage.

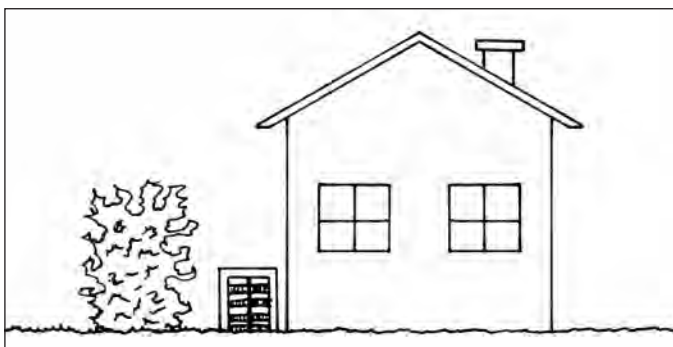
### WIND-WISE PLANTINGS

Florida winter winds tend to blow from the north or northwest. A solid fence or a row of evergreens situated on the north side of a house forms a barrier against cold winter winds, which can dry and damage plants. In the summer, winds typically originate in the south, so to allow breezes to cool outdoor living spaces in the warm months, keep tall barriers away from the southern edge of your landscape. Since Florida is frequently in the path of hurricanes, choose trees that are known for their sturdiness in high winds.

### MADE IN THE SHADE

Position trees and shrubs strategically to naturally cool or heat your home. Plant deciduous shade trees on the south, east, and west sides of a house to cast shade in summer and allow warming in winter.

Tree shade can reduce air conditioning costs significantly. An air-conditioning system's outdoor compressor/condenser unit uses less energy when it is shaded from direct sun



Shade your A/C unit from direct sun, but do not block the airflow.

during the day—but be careful not to block the unit's airflow. If the warm discharge air cannot escape, the intake air temperature rises, causing the unit to operate less efficiently.

### THE LOWDOWN ON GRASS

Healthy lawns clean and cool the air by absorbing carbon dioxide, releasing oxygen, and collecting dust and dirt. They filter stormwater runoff and reduce erosion, glare, and noise. But the many benefits of grass are only realized when it's cared for and used properly. Turfgrass thrives in sunny areas, but most types do not grow well in dense shade. In shady spots, plant shade-tolerant groundcovers instead of turf.

For a more thorough overview of the artistic elements of landscape design, visit <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu> or consult a reputable landscape designer or professional landscape architect.

### SOIL KNOW-HOW

In much of Florida, “soil” and “sand” are synonymous. Where sandy soils predominate, water and nutrients move downward quickly. As a result, Florida soils usually dry out rapidly and are not compatible with plants having high water and nutritional needs. Sandy soils are also more likely to allow pollutants to leach into groundwater and waterways.

In certain parts of the state, the sandy soil has a hardpan (a dense layer of largely impervious soil) under it, causing water to stand for long periods instead of draining away. Other exceptions to the quick-draining sandy soils situation occur in three main locations:

- In parts of Miami-Dade County drainage is slow, because the soil has a high clay content.
- In the Keys there is really no soil at all—it is rock.
- In parts of the panhandle the soil is reddish clay.

### IMPROVING SOIL

For best results growing flowers or vegetables, you may need to amend the planting bed frequently by adding



Soil amendments keep garden soil robust and healthy.

organic matter, such as compost, composted animal manure, or sphagnum peat moss. Organic matter retains moisture, provides nutrients, and attracts beneficial organisms like earthworms. When selecting organic matter, choose materials that are decomposed to the point of containing few or no recognizable source materials – in yard waste, that would mean you wouldn't see any leaves or sticks.

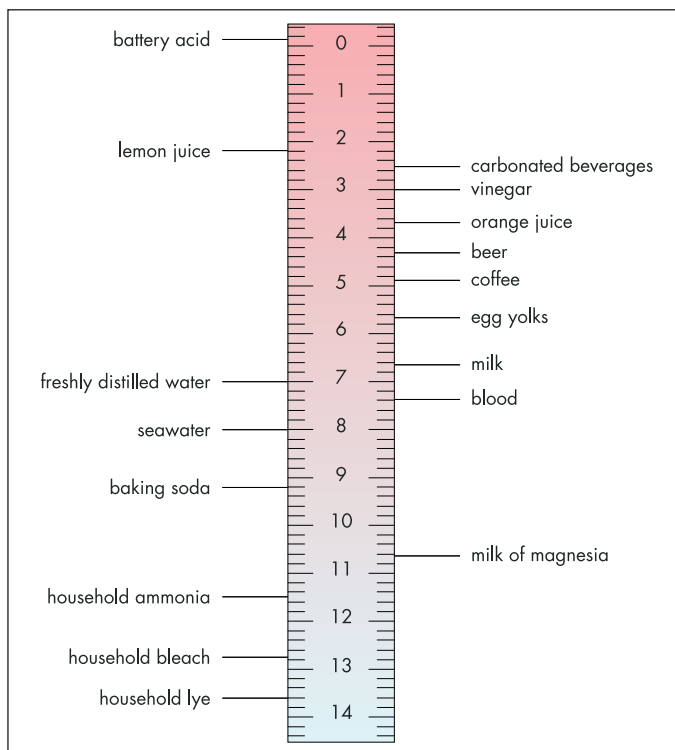
The easiest way to add organic matter to an empty planting bed is to put down a layer 2–3 inches thick, then mix it into the soil using a tiller, shovel, or digging fork. In established planting areas, such as a rose bed, add organic matter as mulch around plantings each spring, before the rainy season.

### SOIL PH

Soil pH is the measure of acidity or alkalinity and can have a big effect on the health of your plants—essential plant nutrients like iron and manganese become more or less available depending on the pH of the soil. Soil testing will help you determine the pH of your site. In general, coastal areas are usually alkaline (high pH), while inland areas are usually acidic (low pH).

Although many plants tolerate a wide pH range, they do best when planted in the right soil. Plant reference guides often provide pH information along with other plant requirements. Raising soil pH is easy, but lowering it is harder to do and is only a temporary condition.





The pH scale measures acidity and alkalinity of substances.

Concrete, stucco, brick, mortar, plaster, and other building materials are strongly alkaline. These materials dissolve into surrounding soil, drastically changing the pH over time. For this reason, azaleas (*Rhododendron*), flowering dogwoods (*Cornus*), ixora (*Ixora coccinea*), and other acid-loving plants should not be planted near the concrete foundation of a home or along sidewalks.



Plant alkaline-loving plants by concrete, brick, or other building materials.

### COMPACTED SOIL

Many new homes are built on a raised platform of compacted “fill dirt” imported during the construction process. Such compacted soils don’t absorb water readily and restrict the healthy root growth of plants. If you have a landscape that has compacted soil, loosen and amend the soil with organic matter as you add planting beds.

### HARDPAN

Some soils have a sub-layer of hardpan, limestone, rock, or shell, which limits root penetration, essentially establishing a barrier to plant roots. Where possible, examine your soil to a depth of about 18 inches before making final plant selections.

### SOIL TESTING

Whether you’re deciding what to plant or just doing some troubleshooting, you should get your soil tested. A soil test can tell you some of the nutrients your soil contains or the pH of your soil. For a specific area, like a planting bed, you can take just one sample; for a large area (like a lawn), you should take samples from multiple locations to get an average reading. County Extension offices can test your soil for a small fee or provide you with a kit to send a soil sample to the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Soil Testing Laboratory. Detailed directions come with the kit. You’ll get the results within a few weeks, helping you make smart plant and fertilizer choices.

UF/IFAS County Extension Offices:  
<http://SolutionsForYourLife.com/map>

UF/IFAS Soil Testing Laboratory:  
<http://soilslab.ifas.ufl.edu>

### PLANT SELECTION

The plants you choose determine how much maintenance your landscape will require and also how long it will last. There are countless varieties of plants that can work in a Florida-Friendly Landscape. Select plants from the UF/IFAS Florida-Friendly Plant List (see <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>), or consult your county Extension office.

Use these steps as a guide to selecting the right plants for the right places in your Florida-Friendly yard:

- **Choose low-maintenance plants** suited to your site. Once these plants are established in the right location, most require little, if any, supplemental water, fertilizer, or pesticides.
- **Welcome wildlife.** Provide flowering and fruiting plants to bring birds and butterflies into your yard. Florida is a stopover or second home for many migrating and wintering butterflies and birds, so cater to these colorful, winged creatures.
- **Plant for impact.** If you do choose high-maintenance plants, group them together for greater visual impact and easier care.

- **Eliminate invasive plants.** Invasive exotics can aggressively out-compete native plants, contributing to habitat loss. Learn to identify problematic plants and dispose of them carefully. And never plant them!
- **Buy quality plants.** Choose the healthiest plants you can find. Slip plants out of pots to inspect roots. Diseased roots are brown to black and often have a sour or rotting odor. Roots growing in a circle inside the pot indicate a rootbound plant—a plant that has been left in the pot too long. Purchase a different plant, if possible.



Healthy roots are white and earthy-smelling.



Unhealthy roots may have a sour odor or dark color.

- **Consider size.** Most plants are not full-grown when purchased (smaller plants will often establish faster and grow as quickly as larger plants). Make sure you know how large a plant will grow before purchasing it, and consider buying dwarf species for smaller spaces to reduce pruning needs and overcrowding. Always give plants enough room to grow to full size. Think ahead—don't plant trees that grow large beneath power lines, close to your house, or in other potentially hazardous sites. If your home features solar panels, be sure any trees you plant will not block them.



Always consider a plant's mature size when you purchase it.



Mature plants need more room than immature plantings.

- **Aim for diversity.** Create a mosaic of trees, shrubs, groundcovers, native grasses, and wildflowers. Monocultures—large expanses of the same plant species—are prone to disease and insect infestation and aren't as sustainable as a diverse plant community.
- **Keep grass useful.** Plan turf areas to be functional and design them for easy maintenance. Define planting bed edges and shapes to make mowing easy.
- **Cope with a slope.** Use groundcovers on slopes where grass is difficult to maintain.
- **Don't use quick fixes.** Don't be fooled by the quick-fix appeal of fast-growing plants. Such plants require frequent pruning and more water. Also, fast growth yields lots of lush, green shoots, which can attract certain pests. Slow-growing plants may take longer to fill in your landscape, but they'll ultimately last longer and create less work.
- **Consider wind tolerance.** Certain tree species are less wind-tolerant than others, meaning they are more likely to be damaged or blow over in a hurricane or other severe weather. Look for sturdy trees to place in your landscape. Check <http://treesandhurricanes.ifas.ufl.edu> for information about specific species.
- **Think of upkeep.** Do not overlook maintenance needs when designing your landscape. Maintenance includes



proper watering, fertilizing, composting, pruning, mowing, mulching, and pest management. The more carefully you plan your landscape, the less you will have to worry about maintenance. Newly installed plants need frequent water, but it's possible to maintain an established landscape with minimal amounts of pesticide, fertilizers, and supplemental water.

For more information about choosing plants, use the plant list that is available on the FYN Web site <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>, contact your county Extension office, or visit <http://floridayards.org> and <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>.

## INVASIVE PLANTS

Below is a list of some of the most problematic invasive exotic plants. The State of Florida prohibits their planting. If you have any of these plants in your landscape, remove them to prevent their further spread.



Air potato  
(*Dioscorea bulbifera*)



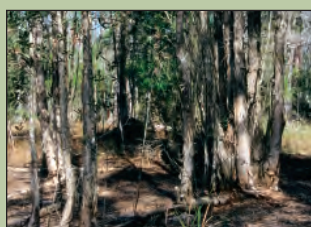
Australian pine  
(*Casuarina equisetifolia*)



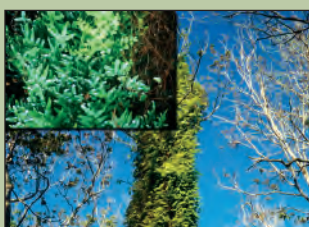
Brazilian pepper  
(*Schinus terebinthifolius*)



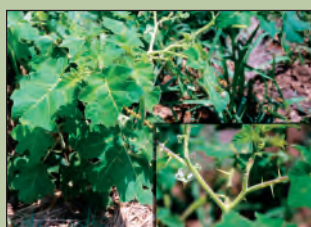
Chinese tallow  
(*Sapium sebiferum*)



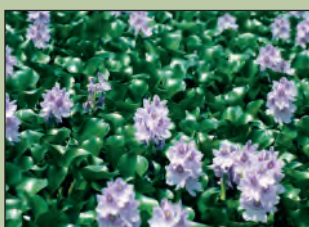
Melaleuca  
(*Melaleuca quinquenervia*)



Old World climbing fern  
(*Lygodium microphyllum*)



Tropical soda apple  
(*Solanum viarum*)



Water hyacinth  
(*Eichhornia crassipes*)

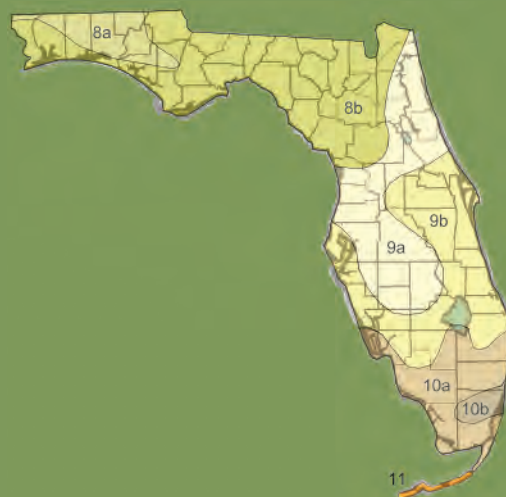
For information about invasive plants, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office or visit the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Web site: <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>.

## DO YOU NEED SALT-TOLERANT PLANTS?

Many Floridians live near the coast, where the air, ground-water, and soil can be salty and capable of severely damaging, deforming, or killing plants. But there are many plants with varying degrees of salt tolerance. Choose salt-tolerant plants if you live on or near an estuary or a salt marsh, or within one-eighth of a mile of the ocean. Use the UF/IFAS Florida-Friendly Plant List, available on the FYN Web site, to help you choose salt-tolerant plants for your landscape.

## KNOW YOUR ZONE!

How well your plants perform depends in large part on choosing the right plants for your climate. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has designated eleven hardiness zones to guide gardeners; each zone indicates the average lowest temperatures of an area. Figure out your USDA plant hardiness zone for guidance in what will survive your winters.



## IS IT SAFE TO DIG?

Before you dig in your yard, it's important that you get your underground utilities marked. Hitting utilities while digging can cause tremendous damage, interrupting your electric, telephone, cable television, water, sewer, and gas service—it can even cause injury or loss of life.

All you have to do is dial 811 at least two business days before you want to dig. Your utility companies will locate any underground utilities in your landscape for free. If you don't follow this procedure and underground lines are damaged, you could be fined.

For more information, visit <http://callsunshine.com>.

## Plant Sorting: To Keep or Not to Keep

If you're renovating your landscape, it's wise to keep some of the plants you already have. In an established landscape, retaining trees, shrubs, perennials, and other plants will save you money—and it also preserves established wildlife habitat. If you are dealing with new home construction, leaving plants in place will help reduce erosion. The trick is knowing which plants to keep.

Follow these simple guidelines to sift through your botanical choices:

- **Keep healthy plants** that show good form and are growing in appropriate locations. Consider just pruning healthy, overgrown shrubs.
- **Discard tightly spaced plants.** Over time, tight spacing fosters insect and disease problems and stresses plants. Overcrowding can also cause leggy growth from plants competing for sunlight and nutrients. It's best to get rid of plants that are grouped too closely together.
- **Retain trees with long lifespans.** Some examples are live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), mahogany (*Sweetenia mahogany*), and sabal palm (*Sabal palmetto*). Remove trees that are short-lived, like cherry laurel (*Prunus caroliniana*); prone to decay, such as mature laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*); or weak-wooded, such as pine (*Pinus*).
- **Save clusters of trees and the plants growing beneath them.** Trees growing in groups or shady forests often grow very tall and narrow. If the site is cleared, an isolated tree becomes vulnerable to wind damage and could snap or fall over during a windstorm or hurricane. For this reason, it is best to leave trees in clusters. The cluster should include the trees along with any groundcovers or native shrubs growing beneath them. This trio of trees, shrubs, and groundcovers buffers wind and maintains habitat for wildlife.



Plant trees in clusters to protect from wind damage.

- **Remove unsuitable plants.** These include unhealthy plants, invasive plants, and plants that require constant

care to survive. Plants with these characteristics are usually more trouble than they're worth.

- **Move plants located too close to walls.** They block air currents and prevent access for home maintenance.



Move plants that block air currents or interfere with home maintenance.

- **Relocate plantings out from under eaves.** They often prove problematic, as they may not receive adequate rainfall or may be damaged by the force of rainwater dropping from the roof.

Once you know which plants you intend to keep, ensure that roots are not damaged through construction activities or soil compaction, which can damage or kill a plant. Avoid driving over the roots of plants, especially trees, with heavy vehicles; digging into the root zone area; and mounding soil against the base of plants. To protect trees during construction, construct barricades at the edge of the canopy drip line. Even though this does not protect the entire root system, it will improve your trees' odds of survival.

Trees particularly sensitive to soil compaction include sweetgum (*Liquidambar*), dogwood (*Cornus* spp.), sassafras (*Sassafras* spp.), tupelo (*Nyssa* spp.), pine (*Pinus* spp.), white oak (*Quercus alba*), laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*) and most nut trees, such as black walnut (*Juglans nigra*), hickory (*Carya* spp.), and pecan (*Carya illinoensis*).

## Planting Trees

Begin your landscape renovation by putting walkways, irrigation systems, or patios into place first; then plant trees. Because trees are a more permanent addition to the landscape, careful site selection and proper planting techniques are essential.



## TREES CAN HELP

Not sure where to start with a new landscape? Plant trees. Establishing a tree canopy is a great way to begin your Florida-Friendly yard. Trees not only provide shade and wildlife habitat, they also help to reduce stormwater runoff. Trees significantly increase the value of a home and lot. According to the American Forestry Association, trees have other significant monetary benefits. Each year, a single tree provides \$73 worth of air conditioning savings, \$75 worth of erosion control, \$75 worth of wildlife shelter, and \$50 worth of air pollution reduction. Compounding this annual total of \$273 for 50 years at 5 percent interest results in a tree value of \$57,151. The overall benefits far outweigh the initial cost and maintenance of each tree.

1. **Look up.** Find a new planting site if there is a wire, security light, or building nearby that could interfere with the tree as it grows.
2. **Dig a wide, shallow hole.** Dig a hole that is one and one-half to three times the width of the root ball (the roots and soil attached to the plant when you remove it from its pot).



Loosen the root ball.

3. **Find the point where the topmost root emerges from the trunk.** This point is called the trunk flare, root flare, or root crown and should be 2 inches above the soil surface.

## WHERE ARE TREE ROOTS?

A tree resembles a wine glass placed on a dinner plate. Consider the base of the wine glass as the lowest part of the trunk where major roots flare outward. The dinner plate represents the rest of the root system, which extends far beyond the drip line—up to three times the canopy's diameter, depending on the species. Vertically speaking, most tree roots are located in the top two feet of soil, where oxygen is most available.

4. **Slide the tree into the planting hole and position it carefully.** Place the trunk flare slightly above the surface of the landscape soil and begin to fill the hole with the excavated soil, making sure the tree is straight as you go. As you add the soil, slice a shovel down into it twenty to thirty times, all around the tree. Compress the soil to stabilize the tree.



The trunk flare should be two inches above the soil surface.

5. **Add plenty of water to the root ball and planting hole.** Make sure the root ball and surrounding soil are thoroughly moistened. Add more soil around the root ball if needed.
6. **Cover the backfill soil with mulch.** Apply mulch to a minimum 8-foot diameter circle around the tree, with a gap of 12 inches between the trunk and the mulch.



Cover the backfill soil with mulch.

7. **Stake the tree, if necessary.** Staking holds the root ball firmly in the soil. Top-heavy trees might require staking, especially if they're located in a windy location.
8. **Water trees frequently so roots fully establish.** Light, frequent irrigation fosters the quickest establishment for trees (see "Establishing Trees" on page XX for more information). Following the initial few months of frequent irrigation, water weekly until plants are fully established.

For more information about planting trees, visit <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>.



## CHOOSING A TURFGRASS

Grass is a good choice for areas with high recreational use, for erosion control, or for use in a swale (an open channel with gently sloping sides that collects and slows the flow of rainwater). When planning a grass area, carefully consider which type of turfgrass is best for your site conditions and your desired maintenance level. (For example, bermudagrass and seashore paspalum are not usually recommended for home lawns because of their high maintenance requirements. For more information about them, visit <http://yourfloridalawn.ifas.ufl.edu>.) Groundcovers may be more successful and practical in low-traffic areas, heavily shaded spots (such as under trees), or on steep slopes where grass is difficult to maintain. Keep these factors in mind when choosing a turfgrass:

- **Drought tolerance.** St. Augustinegrass will not thrive in some sites without supplemental irrigation in dry times. Bahiagrass will survive without supplemental irrigation by going into drought-induced dormancy, but may not form a lawn as dense as other grasses. Centipedegrass and zoysiagrass need slightly less water than St. Augustinegrass but do require supplemental irrigation to remain green and healthy during dry periods.
- **Shade tolerance.** Most turfgrasses grown in Florida are sun-loving, but some will grow in areas with partial shade. Dwarf St. Augustinegrass cultivars such as 'Captiva', 'Delmar', and 'Seville' are best for shaded areas and can tolerate as few as five to six hours of sunlight daily. 'Floritam' has the lowest shade tolerance and does best where it will receive seven to eight hours of sunlight per day.



Sun-loving turf cultivars will not thrive in shady conditions.



Shade-loving shrubs are a better choice for underneath trees.

- **Wear tolerance.** This term describes how well a turf species will stand up to repeated traffic, either human or vehicular. Most zoysiagrasses have relatively high wear tolerance.
- **Salt tolerance.** This is mainly a concern for lawns in coastal areas, where salt spray from the ocean or use of reclaimed/recycled water may expose the grass to higher concentrations of salt. St. Augustinegrass and zoysiagrasses are the better choices for these areas, although they may sustain injury with high levels of salinity. Bahiagrass and centipedegrass have relatively poor salt tolerance.
- **Fertility requirements.** A lawn that needs more fertilizer costs a homeowner more time, money, and effort. Centipedegrass and bahiagrass have relatively low fertility requirements, while zoysiagrass and some cultivars of St. Augustinegrass need more fertilizer and consequently more water and pest control. When choosing a grass type, consider the time and money you are willing to spend on maintenance.
- **Climatic conditions.** Florida's climate varies greatly from north to south. It's important to research which species and cultivars are best suited to your region of the state and your soil type. Consulting your county Extension office is always a good idea.
- **Leaf texture.** Leaf texture describes the width and coarseness of the grass blades. Although often preferred, the fine-textured leaf blades have higher maintenance requirements.
- **Pest & disease problems.** Each species and cultivar of turfgrass is prone to certain insect pests and fungal or bacterial pathogens. St. Augustinegrass often suffers from chinch bugs, while zoysiagrass is prone to hunting billbugs and brown patch disease. Know which pests and diseases your chosen grass is most prone to, and be aware of what your control options are.

For more information about selecting a turfgrass for your landscape, visit <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>.



## TURFGRASS SELECTOR

CHARACTERISTICS	SPECIES			
	Bahiagrass	Centipedegrass	St. Augustinegrass	Zoysiagrass
				
Area Adapted To	Statewide	N. Fla. and Panhandle (except for 'Hammock')	Statewide	Statewide
Mowing Height (inches)	3–4	1.5–2.5	3.5–4 (2–2.5 for dwarf cultivars)	1.5–2.5
Soil	Acid, sandy	Acid, sandy, or clay	Wide range	Wide range
Leaf Texture	Coarse–Medium	Medium	Coarse–Medium	Fine–Medium
Drought Tolerance	Excellent	Medium	Fair	Medium
Salt Tolerance	Poor	Poor	Good	Good
Shade Tolerance	Poor	Fair	Good (cultivar-dependent)	Good (cultivar-dependent)
Wear Tolerance	Poor	Poor	Poor	Good–Excellent
Nematode Tolerance	Very good	Poor	Good	Depends on cultivar
Maintenance Levels	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

### CHOOSING A LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE SERVICE

If you lack the time, desire, or ability to tackle your own landscape work, you may decide to hire a professional landscape maintenance company. Look for companies whose employees have obtained a certificate of completion in the Florida-Friendly Best Management Practices for Protection of Water Resources by the Green Industries (GI-BMPs), a joint program of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and UF/IFAS. In many areas, this training is already mandatory, and by January 1, 2014, all commercial fertilizer applicators must have a license from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) (482.1562, F.S.)

Ask potential hires if they follow these Florida-Friendly practices:

### PEST CONTROL

- Monitor for pests instead of routinely treating
- Use the least toxic methods of managing pests
- Apply pesticides only with your approval

### FERTILIZER

- Apply fertilizer only if plants show signs of nutrient deficiencies, and follow UF/IFAS recommendations and BMPs
- Use slow-release fertilizers
- Avoid fertilizers containing weed killer or insecticide
- Sweep fertilizer from sidewalks and driveways

## LAWN CARE

- Mow turf areas only as needed, according to seasonal growth
- Mow no more than one-third the height of the grass blades per mowing, using a reel, rotary, or mulching mower
- Mow turf to University of Florida-recommended height for your species and cultivar (see chart on page 13)
- Maintain sharp mower blades at all times
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn and use yard waste as mulch or compost

## IRRIGATION

By law, automatic irrigation systems must have a functioning rain sensor or other device to bypass irrigation if adequate moisture is present. Licensed contractors are required by law to install, repair, or replace these control devices if they are not installed and working properly before doing any other work on an irrigation system.

- Inspect and test rain shut-off devices and other components and zones in the irrigation system regularly
- Make regular minor adjustments and repairs to irrigation systems such as head cleaning and replacement, filter cleaning, small leak repair, and minor timer adjustments

## YARD WASTE

- Don't sweep or blow yard waste into storm drains
- Replenish all mulched areas regularly to maintain 2- to 3-inch layer using pine bark, pine needles, melaleuca, eucalyptus, or other Florida-Friendly materials

For more information on selecting a landscape maintenance service, please visit <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>.

## QUALIFICATIONS TO LOOK FOR

Landscape maintenance professionals can take many kinds of trainings and display many different certifications—but there are only a few that UF/IFAS recommends. Ask if any of a landscape maintenance company's employees have any of the following licenses or certifications:

- Florida-Friendly Best Management Practices (Florida Department of Environmental Protection and UF/IFAS)



Professionals can use different techniques and products than a homeowner.

- International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certification
- Florida Irrigation Society (FIS) or Irrigation Association (IA) certification
- Florida Certified Horticulture Professional (FCHP) certification from the Florida Nursery, Growers, and Landscape Association
- Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance Certification (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services)
- Pesticide Applicator License (FDACS)

## WE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR SUCCESS!

Photograph the evolution of your Florida-Friendly yard, and share pictures with the horticulture agent or FYN program coordinator at your county's UF/IFAS Extension office. Let us learn from your experience and share your knowledge with others. "Before" and "after" shots with captions are particularly useful to illustrate your success. In some counties, FYN offers official yard recognition for landscapes that meet the Florida-Friendly criteria. Contact your county Extension office for more information (<http://SolutionsForYourLife.com/map>).



LANDSCAPE PLANNING WORKSHEET

This worksheet can be used for both new and established landscapes. By following these steps, you're almost guaranteed a thriving, low-maintenance landscape suitable to your climate and needs.

1. Decide why you want to landscape.

Most homeowners think of landscaping as a way to add beauty to their home or to improve the resale value. Other reasons to landscape are more specific, such as enhancing or screening a view, creating a microclimate, or attracting wildlife to a yard. You may need a play area for your children, or perhaps you'd like to entertain family and friends outdoors. Your passion may be raising vegetables or simply savoring a lovely view.

How will you use your landscape? (A typical landscape has multiple uses.)

2. Obtain a soil analysis.

Soil plays a big part in any landscape project, influencing what plants will thrive in your yard. Determine the soil's texture (sandy to clay), and have it tested to determine the pH—the level of acidity or alkalinity. This information will help you decide which plants are best suited to the conditions of your yard. Read more about soil starting on page 6.

Type of soil in your landscape:

pH:

Any exceptions? (For example, maybe the place where you want to put a planting bed has more acidic soil than other areas in the landscape.)

3. Inventory your landscape.

Walk around your property, noting conditions that make your yard unique. Does your site call for plants that are tolerant of cold, wind, full sun, shade, drought, occasional flooding, or salt spray? Also take note of the locations of more permanent features, including utilities, hardscapes like the driveway, and water sources such as hoses.

What kinds of conditions does your landscape have?