

# Florida-Friendly Landscaping™



Northwest Florida Water Management District  
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Plant beds can reduce water-demanding turf and maximize drought tolerant native species. More information on Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ is at [floridayard.org](http://floridayard.org). Other water saving brochures are at [www.nwfwmd.state.fl.us/](http://www.nwfwmd.state.fl.us/), including *3 Rs of Water*, *50 Ways to Save Water*, *Watering Widely*, *Retro Fit It* and *An Indoor Water Audit*.

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Flowing greenway design Leslie Kimel, Quincy

# Florida-Friendly Landscaping™

Each yard is part of larger Florida  
Beautify, Conserve Water, Reduce Pollution,  
Protect Natural Resources, Preserve Natural Florida

BEFORE

Ten years ago, Linda and Gary Fitzhugh bought a home in Panama City with a mostly turf yard.

AFTER

The Fitzhughs created two tree islands, receiving plants from a neighbor and members of their Sweetbay Chapter of the Florida Natural Plant Society.

The Fitzhughs replaced raised porch planters with a porous, ground grade patio, designed by Linda Macbeth. The yard now attracts birds, butterflies and even turtles.



# 9 principles of Florida-Fri

1. **Right plant, right place** Choose plants that love sun for sunny places and plants that love shade for shady places. Plant or maintain moisture-loving plants in low, wet areas and plants that require well-drained soil in high, dry places. Avoid plants that need extra water or care. Low maintenance plants, when established, require little extra water, fertilizer or pesticides. Plant ornamental grasses that tolerate dry conditions near roadsides. Preserve plants that are growing in appropriate locations, such as clusters of trees and the plants growing beneath them. Use groundcovers on slopes where grass is hard to maintain. Remove invasive plants to prevent their spread. Keep only as much grass as you need for recreation and leisure activities and choose turf according to drought, shade, salt, pests, wear, leaf, fertility and climate conditions. Remember, grass requires more water than mulched, bedded plants.

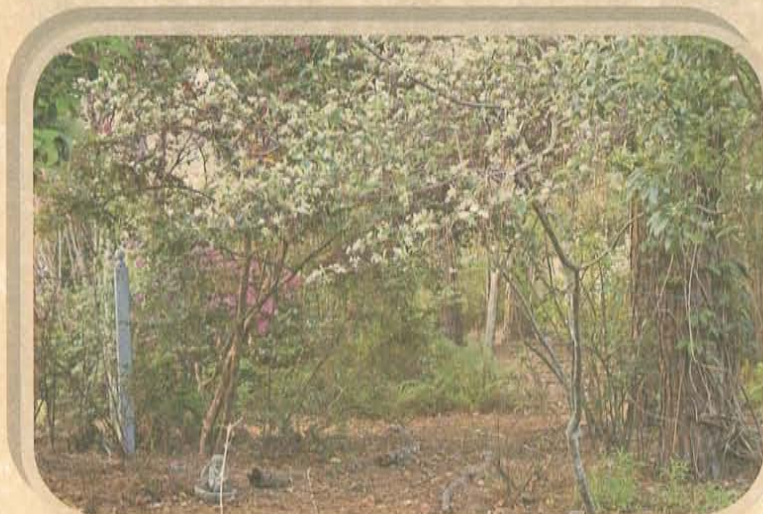
2. **Water efficiently** Over-watering can leech fertilizer and cause water pollution. Water only when plants start to wilt and follow local restrictions. Hand water or use drip or micro spray systems, irrigating only when rain is not predicted and during low wind and evaporation hours of morning or evening to avoid losing moisture to drift or evaporation. Florida law requires a working automatic rain shutoff on irrigation systems installed after May 1, 1991 to turn off sprinklers when rainfall is adequate. Install a rain barrel to harvest roof runoff and save costs of irrigation.

3. **Fertilize appropriately** Apply nutrients at the correct time, place and rates. A soil test can reveal what nutrients a yard needs. Call your county extension service. Choose slow release nitrogen and low or no phosphorous fertilizer. Leave a 10-foot maintenance-free zone along shorelines or ditches and streams, and don't fertilize before rain is forecast. Reclaimed water may contain nutrients and may not require extra fertilizing. Apply only when grass is growing.



Florida flame azalea  
Ron and Diane Houser, Panama City

4. **Mulch** Maintain a 3-inch deep layer of mulch around trees, shrubs and plants to retain moisture, protect plants and give landscape a uniform appearance. Pine needles are recommended over cypress chips; avoid piling mulch into cones around trees, which can rot roots. Apply mulch as far as the drip line of tree branches and rake old, matted mulch to refresh the soil.



Pine and leaf mulch pathways under chokeberry bushes  
Ron and Diane Houser, Panama City

# endly Landscaping™

- 5. Attract wildlife** Help build green corridors to attract wildlife displaced by rapid development. Offer sanctuary by providing food, water and shelter—such as fleshy berries, nuts, acorns, bird baths and dead trees. Plant a variety of native species in different sizes and heights for varied habitat.
- 6. Manage yard pests responsibly** Use as few chemicals as possible since they can harm people, pets, helpful organisms and the environment. Select plants that are pest free and learn to identify beneficial insects such as ladybugs and wheel bugs. Use appropriate water and fertilizer to keep plants resilient to pests. Target specific pests; pick off insects; remove damaged leaves; apply pesticides during cool of the day.
- 7. Recycle** Reuse organic yard waste, which returns valuable nutrients to mend the soil. Compost kitchen scraps such as vegetable peelings, egg shells and coffee grounds. Maintain a compost bin and add leaf litter. When you mow or trim hedges, leave grass clippings and shrub trimmings to mulch the yard.
- 8. Reduce stormwater runoff** Runoff from your yard can carry fertilizer, pesticide, loose dirt, debris, gas and oil into surface water and degrade water quality. Retain water on your site by planting a below grade rain garden that absorbs water with moisture-loving grasses or wetland plants. Aim downspouts at a planted area. Use porous materials for walkways and patios. Earth swales can help slow runoff headed for surface water.
- 9. Protect the waterfront** Surface water that leaves your yard eventually drains into waterbodies and seeps into the aquifer. Preserve shoreline vegetation to attract native wildlife and reduce erosion. Remove invasive aquatic plants; don't let grass clippings reach surface water where it can add nutrients and cause harmful algae blooms.



Purple Coneflowers  
Leslie Kimel, Quincy



**Natural borders absorb runoff.** Planted here are blazing star, aster, mint, goldenrod, cactus, coontie and abelia, which draws hummingbirds. The rocks and driftwood collected from family travels and grandfather's rose cuttings also create a memory garden.  
George Apthorp and Sandy Cook, Crawfordville