

## **FACT SHEET: A Guide to Florida-Friendly Landscaping**

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Right plant, Right Place is the first of nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles. A Florida-Friendly Landscape's beauty and functionality depend on a mix of trees, plants and turfgrass 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 and understand 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: <http://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. 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 also. I don't have a completion/distribution date for the revised Handbook at this time.

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 shows the range tolerated by the plant, whether acid or alkaline. Soil texture and moisture, drought and salt tolerance are provided. Light range and optimum light conditions are listed. Plants that attract butterflies, hummingbirds and other birds are so noted.

I'm particularly fond of the following Florida-Friendly plants which are also drought tolerant, high color and low maintenance as you may have noticed in my Gardening Corner article a few months ago. My favorite shrubs in the Handbook are beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), golden dewdrop (*Duranta repens*) and firecracker plant (*Russelia equisetiformis*). My favorite perennials are tickseed, Florida's state wildflower (*Coreopsis*), flax lily (*Dianella*) and whirling butterfly (*Gaura*). My favorite groundcovers are beach sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*) and lantana (*Lantana spp.*) I have all of these plants somewhere in my landscape.

For assistance with horticultural questions, call the Hillsborough County Extension Service, 5339 County Road 579, Seffner, FL 33584 or call: 813-744-5519. More gardening information is available at <http://hillsborough.extension.ufl.edu> and <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.