



Regional Partnerships Seek to Expand Water Conservation Efforts

With 30 years of experience behind it, the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL) program continues to move forward by providing resources to help residents create and enjoy healthy, water-conserving landscapes while also protecting the state's water resources. Thanks to a concerted effort working directly with utilities, policy makers, developers and builders, the program is poised to help even more people learn how to see less water demand from their landscapes.

A regional approach harnessing the FFL programs — in partnership with water management districts and utilities — can provide quantifiable water conservation to offset or delay the development of alternative sources of water for local water providers. Much-needed demand reduction in central Florida can be achieved using the tools developed and proven by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) Extension and through partnering with water providers to implement tailored conservation programming.

Currently, FFL consists of three major program areas:

- Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN)
- Florida-Friendly Communities (FFC)
- Green Industries Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) program

These programs are differentiated through their primary target audiences. FYN serves individual residential homeowners and provides guidance on landscape design, efficient home irrigation, and proper fertilization and pesticide application practices. The primary mechanisms for FYN public outreach are workshops conducted through county Extension offices and resources accessible through the FFL website. FFC, in contrast, seeks large-scale engagement with planned communities to promote FFL design and maintenance practices. The FFC target audiences include home builders, community developers, and community/property managers, including Homeowners' Association (HOA) boards.

In February, staff from the St. Johns River Water Management District, Orange County Utilities, Orlando Utilities Commission, Florida-Friendly Landscaping and Florida Department of Environmental Protection met in the District's Apopka Service Center to discuss how all parties could collaborate to increase outdoor water conservation. Areas of focus and proposed collaboration include:

- Promote the new Florida-Friendly Water StarSM Gold certification with builders and home builders floridawaterstar.com/static/pdfs/FWS-Silver-Gold-points-list.pdf
- Create “FFL in a Minute” QR Code for use on utility websites ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/ffl-minute-radio
- Add links to the FFL apps to utility webpages as resources (see below) ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/apps
- Explore opportunities to leverage Florida Department of Environmental Protection promotional items, such as door hangers on various conservation topics to speak with “one voice.”
- Schedule an OCU and OUC joint landscape facilities workshop for FFL Landscape-Certified Professional training ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/ffl-and-you/ffl-professional-certification

The attendees plan to meet in six months to evaluate progress on partnering with FFL.