

Title: Florida-Friendly Landscaping™: A Grass-Roots Horticulture Program that Promotes Urban Environmental Stewardship

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Situation: The State of Florida projects its current population of 20 million will grow to nearly 26 million over the next two decades, and will increasingly tax available water resources and increasingly pollute surface and ground waters. A recent strategic study on the state's water resources, "Water 2070: Mapping Florida's Future - Alternative Patterns of Water Use in 2070", found that the state's ongoing Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL) program is fundamental to reducing future water demand and protecting water quality. Methodology: The University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) administers FFL, with state and federal funding. FFL provides educational outreach to homeowners through its Florida Yards & Neighborhoods program and to commercial landscape professionals through the Green Industries Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) program. These programs promote quality landscapes through appropriate landscape design, while reducing nonpoint source pollution through reduced water, fertilizer and pesticide use. The programs educate citizens through a statewide network of Extension agents affiliated with UF/IFAS Extension. The agents coordinate a volunteer network of over 4,000 citizen Master Gardeners and work cooperatively with over 41,000 GI-BMP certified landscape professionals. Results: Florida state legislation (2009) found that FFL serves a public interest in water conservation, protection and restoration, participation by homeowner associations and local governments is essential, and deed restrictions or local ordinances may not prohibit FFL use by homeowners. During 2016, the program reached 155,750 homeowners through in-person workshops, conducted 6,051 home consultations, and certified 4,051 persons in GI-BMP. Other countries can easily replicate this program.

Biography

Susan is a University of Florida Institute of Agricultural Sciences County Extension Agent III. She has served the commercial horticulture industry of Hillsborough County and southwest Florida since March 2010 by providing educational resources, programs, diagnostics and site visits in the areas of sustainable urban horticulture practices, water quality and conservation, integrated pest management, and pesticide safety. Susan's educational background includes a B.S. in Environmental Horticulture from the University of Florida, a B.S. in Biology from Old Dominion University and a MBA from the University of California.

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Session name/ number: Soil Science
Category: Oral Presentation