

Yard Certification Checklist For New Construction Does Your Yard Measure Up?

To be certified as a Florida-friendly Yard, the new home or commercial landscape must:

Accumulate at least 36 inches on this Yardstick Checklist. If the home or building is on the waterfront you must accumulate at least 38 inches:

- Receive inches for required practices marked in bold.
- Obtain the required minimum number of inches in each category. The “On the Waterfront” category applies only if the home or building is located on waterfront.
- Comply with all existing codes, laws, and ordinances.

Checklist criteria are explained in the accompanying “Florida Yardstick Workbook for New Residential Construction.” Extension staff and volunteers at your county’s UF/IFAS Cooperative Extension office can provide additional information and answer questions.



Water Efficiently (11 inches possible - 5 minimum)	
<i>For a yard that does not use an irrigation system</i>	
The landscape is designed to exist predominantly on rainfall once plants are established.	11”
<i>For a yard that does use an irrigation system (in-ground or automatic overhead sprinklers)</i>	
Installed irrigation system meets or exceeds all local regulations or Florida Irrigation Society standards (in areas without regulations).	2”
Rain shut-off device installed and operational for in-ground irrigation systems (state law).	1”
Innovative irrigation technology (soil moisture sensors, ET controllers, or other automated method) installed to manage irrigation.	1-3”
Turf and landscape areas zoned separately based on plant water requirements.	2”
Micro-irrigation installed in plant and flower beds.	2”
Irrigation system does not water hardscape surfaces.	1”
Mulch (7 inches possible - 4 minimum)	
By-product/alternative mulches used such as pine bark, melaleuca, pine needles, or shredded wood debris. Inorganic mulches (e.g. stone) used in wildfire and termite prone areas.	2”
Mulch is applied correctly to a depth of 2” to 4” to suppress weeds.	2”
Four-inch clear space left for air between plant bases and the mulch.	2”
Self-mulching areas created under trees where leaves can remain as they fall.	1”

Recycle (7 inches possible - 1 minimum)		
Some or all of removed topsoil was saved and reused on existing site.		1-2"
Some or all of cleared material reused for mulch/landscape.		1-2"
The homeowner has been provided with a compost bin and instruction on its use.		1"
Off-site salvage materials or remanufactured materials used to construct landscape features such as retaining walls, paved areas, decks, gazebos, trellises or furniture.		1-2"
Wildlife (4 inches possible -2 minimum)		
Non-invasive plants, vines, shrubs and trees planted to provide cover, nesting areas or food sources for birds, butterflies and wildlife.		1-3"
Water source provided for wildlife such as a small pond, fountain, or bird bath.		1"
Yard Pests (No inches or minimum)		
<i>See Yard Care section below</i>		
Right Plant Right Place (24 inches possible – 12 minimum)		
Landscape does not contain invasive plants identified by the IFAS assessment list.		2"
Trees and shrubs used to shade the eastern and western walls of a home/building and the area surrounding air conditioner compressor.		1"
Deciduous trees used on southern exposures to allow the sun to passively heat the home in winter.		1"
Wind resistant trees planted in areas where falling trees could impact the home/building.		1"
Native plants preserved during building construction and included in landscape. • Credit for heritage trees, trees with greater than 4" dbh (diameter at breast height), groups of trees, and native shrubs and groundcovers.		1-3"
Plants selected for the yard are suited for site conditions reducing the need for water, fertilizer, pesticides, and pruning.		1-3"
Select 50%, 80%, or 100% of plant/trees from drought tolerant lists –FYN Florida Friendly Plant List or WaterWise Landscape Guide (Water Management District)		1-3"
Amount of turf area is appropriate for known or anticipated buyer. Low maintenance groundcovers, shrubs and mulch installed in remainder of yard. Turf avoided in shady areas. Turf area complies with local regulations.		1-3"
Evenly shaped turf areas with no turf on steep berms or in long, narrow areas (less than 4' wide).		2"
In wildfire prone areas, low flammability plants installed. Minimum 30' of defensible space present around home or building.		1-3"
Plants and turf installed at least 2'-3' from the foundation and roof overhangs.		1"
Florida Green Industry BMPs followed for landscape installation.		1"
Fertilizing (7 inches possible - 2 minimum)		
Soil tested for pH, lime requirements, and soil fertility. Testing of soil water infiltration rates also recommended. Results provided & explained to the buyer.		1-2"
Soil amendments used to improve selected areas for landscaping (if needed).		2"
Measures were taken to avoid unnecessary soil compaction during construction.		2"

Till any previously compacted areas to increase porosity.	1”
Stormwater Runoff (12 inches possible - 5 minimum)	
Show that best management practices for erosion control were followed during construction.	1-2”
Downspouts and gutters have been directed to drain onto the lawn, plant beds, or containment areas. Outfall must be 2+ feet from foundation.	1”
Swales, terraces and/or rain gardens created to catch and filter stormwater.	1-2”
Storage provided for harvested water in a rain barrel, cistern or above ground tank.	1-2”
Underground distribution tanks installed to collect stormwater.	2”
Mulch, bricks, flagstones, gravel, or other porous surfaces used on walkways, patios or drives.	2”
All rain and storm water drains away from the building foundation using legal drainage conveyance systems on-site	2”
On the Waterfront – Seashore, Canals, Ponds, Lakes, Rivers (10 inches possible - 2 minimum if applicable)	
Invasive exotic aquatic plants removed or not present.	2”
A border of low maintenance plants established between the lawn and shoreline/seawall to absorb nutrients and provide wildlife habitat.	2”
Native vegetation planted along part or all of the littoral zone in front of the seawall or along the shoreline. (May require permit or SSL authorization.)	1-3”
Clean, native limestone rock (rip rap) placed in front of the seawall to decrease wave action and increase habitat. (May require permit or SSL authorization.)	2”
Mangroves protected if present on the property.	1”
Yard Care (9 inches possible – 5 minimum)	
<i>For yards where a homeowner association or contractor provides yard maintenance</i>	
Language in homeowner association covenants or legal contracts requires landscape maintenance contractors to follow Florida Green Industries Best Management Practices for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation and maintenance of the in-ground irrigation system • Mulching, mowing, and pruning of turf and plants • Fertilizing • Pest control including Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Points awarded for requiring that landscape maintenance contractors have industry or Extension training. Extension staff can assist in providing language for covenants and contracts.	1-6”
Homeowner association covenants allow backyard composting (if applicable).	1”
Homeowner association covenants allow turf species other than St. Augustine.	1”
Homeowner association covenants allow residents to have yards with no turf.	1”
<i>For a yard where the homeowner is responsible for maintenance</i>	
Owner provided with a copy of the as-built irrigation plan, operating manual, and instructions on how to operate the irrigation system’s timers/controllers.	2”
Educational materials provided to owners on wildlife present in subdivision.	1”

	<p>Educational materials and/or workshops provided to owners on recommended FYN practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • watering • mowing (including grasscycling), mulching, and composting • maintenance of shrubs and trees including pruning • pest control including integrated pest management (IPM) • fertilizing methods • stormwater runoff <p>Extension staff can provide assistance with educational materials and workshops.</p>	1-6”
	TOTAL INCHES	

If the yard measures up, you are eligible for a certificate and yard sign that signifies it as a “Florida-friendly Yard.” Contact your local county IFAS Extension Service office for more information and to have the yard checked. If there is no FYN program in your county, please contact the FYN state office in Gainesville (352)-392-1831, ext. 243.

Please note that the recipient of the approved yard certification agrees to remove signage and loses all claim to certified Florida-friendly Yard status once the property is sold. The recipient agrees to inform the new owner(s) that they can contact IFAS Extension to have the yard re-evaluated for recognition as a Florida-friendly Yard.

Recommended educational publications available from Extension include:

- **The Florida Yardstick Workbook for New Residential Construction.** Florida Yards & Neighborhoods, University of Florida IFAS Extension. 2005
- **A Guide to Environmentally Friendly Landscaping:** Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Handbook. University of Florida IFAS Extension. 3rd edition, 2005.
- **Florida Green Industries: Best Management Practices for Protection of Water Resources in Florida.** Florida Department of Environmental Protection. June 2002
- **Invasive and Other Non-Native Plants: A Recognition Guide for 94 Non-Native Plants.** UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants, University of Florida IFAS Extension 2005.

For additional information on lawns and gardens, visit:

- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods website <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>
- University of Florida Electronic Data Information Source website: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>
- <http://FloridaYards.org>

In addition, water management districts offer a variety of educational materials that may be valuable for educating homeowners and landscape professionals including:

- **Waterwise Florida Landscapes: Landscaping to Promote Water Conservation,** Florida’s Water Management Districts

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