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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 increase in tax on available water resources as well as increase in surface and ground water pollution. 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 provided by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the US Environmental Protection Agency. 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 FFL program educates citizens through a statewide network of Extension agents affiliated with UF/IFAS Extension. The agents coordinate an extensive volunteer network of over 4,000 citizen Master Gardeners and work cooperatively with over 41,000 landscape industry professionals certified (from 2006 through 2016) in GI-BMP. FFL legislation requires GI-BMP training and state licensing for all landscape workers who apply fertilizer commercially.

Results: Florida state legislation, passed in 2009, found that FFL serves a compelling public interest in water conservation, protection and restoration, that participation by homeowner associations and local governments is essential, and that deed restrictions or local ordinances may not prohibit FFL use by homeowners. During 2016 alone, the FFL program directly 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.

Recent Publications

1. Haddock S (2016) Fertilizers 101: Basics You Should Know. SportsTurf, Sports Field and Facility Management. 32-2:12-14.
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5. Haddock, S. (2011). Why Point the Finger at Nonpoint Source Pollution: Managing Urban Runoff and Pollution. In The Field Magazine. 8-1:34.

Biography

Susan Haddock educational background includes a BS in Environmental Horticulture from the University of Florida; BS in Biology from Old Dominion University and a MBA from the University of California, USA respectively. She is currently working in the 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.

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