Native Plants for Sustainable Landscapes

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Pine flatwoods landscape, Lake Wales Ridge

Credit: Deborah Hilbert
Urban landscape, Tampa

Credit: Justin Battles
Tampa Bay aerial image
Credit: Google Earth
What are native plants?

- Present in Florida prior to European colonization
- Based on our best historical and ecological records
- Opposite of exotic/alien/non-native species
Why native plants?

- Adapted to our climate
- Low inputs
- Wildlife
- Conservation
- Diversity
Traditional landscaping

Credit: Pamela Crawford (left), and RP Funding (right)
Florida native landscaping

Credit: FNPS, council.fnpschapters.org
Native Plants for Ponds

Submersed, floating, floating-leaved, emergent
### Alternatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of This</th>
<th>Try This</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parrotfeather</td>
<td>Coontail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water hyacinth</td>
<td>Water lilies*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican petunia</td>
<td>Pickerelweed*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papyrus, umbrella sedges</td>
<td>Rushes*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Free plant!

Credit (left to right): André Karwath, H. Zell, Wikimedia Commons, Vic Ramey/UF
Coontail
Ceratophyllum demersum

Native Habitat:
Ponds, lakes, swamps, streams

Planting requirements:
Low light
Constant water
Not salt tolerant

USDA hardiness zone:
6a - 9b
Native Habitat:
Ponds, lakes, swamps

Planting requirements:
Full sun
Constant water
Not salt tolerant

USDA hardiness zone:
7-10
Pickerelweed*  
*Pontederia cordata*

**Native Habitat:**
Ponds, lakes, ditches, streams

**Planting requirements:**
Full to partial sun
Moderate to high water
Not salt tolerant

**USDA hardiness zone:**
3-9
Jointed spikerush*  
Eleocharis interstincta

Native Habitat:  
Ponds, lakes, wetlands, bogs

Planting requirements:  
Full sun to shade  
Average to water  
Salt tolerant

USDA hardiness zone:  
7-11
Native Plants for Damp Areas

Wetlands, springs, occasionally flooded parts of yard
# Alternatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of This</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oleander</td>
<td>Buttonbush*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword fems</td>
<td>Fems*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican petunia</td>
<td>Cardinal flower*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Free plant!

Credit (left to right): Ian W. Fieggen, Krish Dulal, Wikimedia Commons
**Buttonbush**
*Cephalanthus occidentalis*

**Native Habitat:**
Borders of swamps, ponds, and rivers

**Planting requirements:**
Full sun to part shade
Moderate to high water
Not salt tolerant

**USDA hardiness zone:**
4-10A
Cinnamon Fern* & Royal Fern*
Osmundastrum cinnamomeum &
Osmunda regalis var. spectabilis

Native Habitat:
Damp woods, marshes, wet ditches, and stream banks

Planting requirements:
Part shade to full shade
Moderate to high water
Not salt tolerant

USDA hardiness zone:
3-9

Credit: illinoiswildflowers.html
Cardinal Flower*  
*Lobelia cardinalis

Native Habitat:  
Moist meadows, bogs and along stream banks

Planting requirements:  
Full sun to part shade  
Moderate to high water  
Not salt tolerant

USDA hardiness zone:  
3-10

Credit: NetPS Plant Finder (top) and selectseeds.com (bottom)
Native Plants for Dry Areas
Sandy, sunny, raised areas
## Alternatives

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<tr>
<th>Instead of This</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arborvitae</td>
<td>Red cedar*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwarf ixora</td>
<td>Tropical sage*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shasta daisy</td>
<td>Blanket flower*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Free plant!

Credit (left to right): DEA/RANDOM/De Agostini Picture Library/Getty Images, UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions, UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions
Redcedar*
Juniperus virginiana

Native Habitat:
Upland woods, moist hammocks, old fields and ridges

Planting requirements:
Full sun
Low to moderate water
Highly salt tolerant

USDA hardiness zone:
8A-10B

Credit: Ed Gilman
Tropical sage*  
Salvia coccinea

Native Habitat:
Disturbed sites, calcareous bluffs, shell mounds

Planting requirements:
Full sun to part shade
Low to moderate water
Moderately salt tolerant

USDA hardiness zone:
8A-11
**Blanket flower**
Gaillardia pulchella

**Native Habitat:**
Dry sites, often near the coast.

**Planting requirements:**
- Full sun
- Low to moderate water
- Highly salt tolerant

**USDA hardiness zone:**
8A-11

Credit: UF/IFAS, Polk County
Native Plants for Shady Areas
Understory, shadier parts of gardens
## Alternatives

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<tr>
<th>Instead of This</th>
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<tr>
<td>Areca palm</td>
<td>Dahoon holly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ixora</td>
<td>Firebush*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philodendron</td>
<td>Coontie*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Free plant!

Credit (left to right) Scott Zona, UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions, Forest & Kim Starr
**Dahoon holly**
*Ilex cassine*

**Native Habitat:**
Swamps, coastal flatwoods

**Planting requirements:**
Full sun, part or full shade
Range of water levels
Not salt tolerant

**USDA hardiness zone:**
7A-11

Credit: Ed Gilman
**Firebush**
Hamelia patens

**Native Habitat:**
Dry sites, coastal forests, upland forests, hammocks

**Planting requirements:**
Full sun to part shade
Moderate to low water
Not salt tolerant

**USDA hardiness zone:**
9A-11

Credit: UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions
Coontie*
Zamia pumilla

Native Habitat:
Upland hardwood forests, high pine, coastal hammocks, shell middens

Planting requirements:
Full to part sun
Moderate to low water
Moderately salt tolerant

USDA hardiness zone:
8A-11
Native Plants with Salt Tolerance

Coastal areas, high salt from irrigation and fertilization
## Alternatives

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<th>Instead of This</th>
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<tr>
<td>Allamanda</td>
<td>Seaside goldenrod*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wedelia (creeping oxeye)</td>
<td>Beach (or dune) sunflower*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Free plant!

Credit (left to right) USF Herbarium Slide Collection, Vic Ramey (UFL)
**Seaside goldenrod***
*Solidago sempervirens*

**Native Habitat:**
Coastal upland forest, coastal marshes, estuarine and bay shores.

**Planting requirements:**
Full to part sun
Low water
Moderately salt tolerant

**USDA hardiness zone:**
8A-11
Beach (dune) sunflower*  
Helianthus debilis

Native Habitat:  
Beach dunes, coastal grasslands, sandhill, and scrub

Planting requirements:  
Full to part sun  
Low water  
High salt tolerant

USDA hardiness zone:  
8B-10
Final Tips

• Choose "the right plant for the right place."

• Ask for a plant by its scientific name.

• Ask for the origin of the plant.

• Don't let the appearance of plants in their natural habitats discourage you from using them.

By Jeffrey G. Norcini, http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep297
Resources

Websites and articles:
- https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/plants
- https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_native_plants
- https://www.fnps.org/
- https://flawildflowers.org

Web-based plant selectors:
- Natives for your neighborhood (South FL): https://www.regionalconservation.org/beta/nfyn/plantlist.asp
- https://www.plantrealflorida.org/plants/filter

Books:
- Native Florida Plants, Robert Haehle & Joan Brookwell.
- Florida's Best Landscape Plants, Gil Nelson.
- Native Wildflowers and Other Groundcovers for Florida Landscapes, Craig Huegel.
Thank you!
Questions?

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