

Native Lakefront Landscape Plants for Central Florida

Fact Sheet
Residential Horticulture - 030
UF/IFAS Extension Orange County

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Protecting the waterfront is Principle #9 in Florida-Friendly Landscaping. Waterfront areas can include lakefronts, ponds, ditches, other water bodies and environmentally sensitive areas. A Florida-Friendly lakescape would include many species of aquatic native plants, managed nuisance vegetation, provide habitat for wildlife, and be aesthetically pleasing.

Protecting the shoreline from erosion, plants stabilize sediment and makes the water body cleaner and clearer. Aquatic plants filter pollutants, uptake nutrients. They also provide habitat for fish, birds, and invertebrate species. Shoreline plants help to slow stormwater runoff, catch sediment, capture nutrients, and protect water quality. Ultimately, this will result in a healthy water body with clear, clean water.

This list of Florida native species will be helpful if you live on the lakefront, a freshwater water body, or are doing a rain garden in a wet spot in your yard. These plants are water loving and live in different zones on the shoreline. While there are many more species that are Florida-Friendly and suitable for wet areas, this list includes the most common species that are commercially available. Check the website www.fann.org to find Florida native plant nurseries.



Upland plants grow just above the water line. They can tolerate wet feet and seasonal flooding. They include bunching grasses like cordgrass, shrubs such as wax myrtle, and trees such as cypress and maple. Plants in the riparian zone grow right at the water's edge. They are less drought-tolerant than upland plants and prefer to grow in moist soil. They can also tolerate seasonal flooding.

Emergent plants generally live in at least 2" of water or right next to the water line. They are aquatic plants and need constant moisture for their fleshy stems. Popular emergent plants include the purple-flowered pickerelweed and the white-flowered duck potato. They are called emergent because their roots are in the water but their leaves and flowers emerge out of the water. Plants in the littoral zone live in deep water. These are rooted at the bottom of the lake or water body and grow up to the surface.

Water lilies, bulrush, and maidencane grass are some examples of plants that can grow in the deep water. Plants that live completely under water are called submergent plants. There are native beneficial submerged plants such as Illinois pondweed, eelgrass, and coontail. There are also nonnative nuisance plants such as hydrilla that can become problematic by clogging up water bodies. These plants are generally not commercially available, but homeowners should learn to identify the common species in their ecosystem.

Learn More: Check out horticulture classes offered by UF/IFAS Extension Orange County at www.ocextension.eventbrite.com and read about Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ at <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

Common name	Scientific name
Littoral (deep water)	
Water lily	<i>Nymphaea odorata</i>
Cow lily	<i>Nuphar luteum</i>
Maidencane	<i>Panicum hemitomon</i>
Cutgrass	<i>Leersia hexandra</i>
American lotus	<i>Nelumbo lutea</i>
Emergent (at least 2" water)	
Pickerelweed	<i>Pontederia cordata</i>
Duck potato	<i>Sagittaria sp.</i>
Soft rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>
Giant bulrush	<i>Schoenoplectus californicus</i>
Alligator flag	<i>Thalia geniculata</i>
Spikerush	<i>Eleocharis geniculata</i>
Cattail	<i>Typha latifolia</i>
Riparian (above water line, still wet)	
Golden canna	<i>Canna flaccida</i>
Blue flag iris	<i>Iris virginica</i>
Frogfruit	<i>Phyla nodiflora</i>
Bacopa	<i>Bacopa monnieri</i>
Lizards tail	<i>Saururus cernuus</i>
Swamp hibiscus	<i>Hibiscus coccineus</i>
Swamp milkweed	<i>Asclepias perennia</i>
Carolina aster	<i>Aster carolinianum</i>
Marsh beggartick	<i>Bidens mitis</i>
Cardinal flower	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>
Cinnamon fern	<i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i>
Upland (above water line, can tolerate flooding)	
Cordgrass	<i>Spartina bakeri</i>
Muhly grass	<i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i>
Wax myrtle	<i>Myrica cerifera</i>
Button bush	<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>
Love grass	<i>Eragrostis elliotti</i>
Beautyberry	<i>Callicarpa americana</i>
Elderberry	<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>
Goldenrod	<i>Solidago spp.</i>
Upland trees	
Bald cypress	<i>Taxodium distichum</i>
Pond cypress	<i>Taxodium ascendens</i>
Red maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>
American Elm	<i>Ulmus americana</i>
Sweetgum	<i>Liquidambar straciflua</i>
Dahoon holly	<i>Ilex cassine</i>
Sweet bay magnolia	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>
Carolina willow	<i>Salix caroliniana</i>