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Louisiana Yards and Neighborhoods

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ABOUT THE LOUISIANA YARDS & NEIGHBORHOODS (LYN) PROGRAM

The focus of this program is to encourage homeowners to create and maintain landscapes in ways that minimize environmental damage. This will include looking at water quality and conservation, reducing stormwater runoff and decreasing nonpoint source pollution of surface water, enhancing desirable wildlife habitats and creating functional, attractive landscapes.

The program, which is implemented through the parish LSU AgCenter Extension agents with the support of Louisiana Master Gardener volunteers, provides education and outreach activities in the community to help residents reduce pollution, conserve water and enhance their environment by improving home and landscape management.

This integrated approach to landscaping emphasizes seven interrelated principles:

- ➊ Right plant right place
- ➋ Watering efficiently
- ➌ Maximizing mulch and recycle yard waste
- ➍ Fertilizing appropriately
- ➎ Managing yard pests
- ➏ Protecting surface waters and wetlands
- ➐ Providing for beneficial wildlife habitat



This LYN handbook provides helpful ideas, information and techniques to create and maintain a more environmentally friendly landscape. You will learn the basics of designing a landscape using carefully selected plants suited to Louisiana growing conditions. This handbook also contains information on cost-saving, energy-efficient landscape maintenance to help you reduce water, fertilizer and pesticide use. The information provided in this handbook will be helpful to individuals designing new landscapes or making changes to existing ones while achieving an attractive, functional and environmentally responsible landscape.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This handbook is organized into two sections. The first section contains background information that will help you as you make plans to create a Louisiana-Friendly Yard. The second offers detailed description of landscape ideas and practices that explain and illustrate the seven basic LYN principles.

The information contained in these pages describes the fundamentals of creating a low environmental impact landscape. More gardening and landscaping information is available through other LSU AgCenter publications. Publications are available through your local parish LSU AgCenter Extension office or online at www.lsuagcenter.com.



Photo: UF/IFAS Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Handbook

FROM YARD TO WATERWAY

It is important to remember that our yards and neighborhoods are channels to our waterways. What you do in your landscape certainly needs to take this into consideration. The health of Louisiana's **estuaries**, rivers, lakes and **aquifers** depends partly on how you maintain your yard and gardens. You don't even have to live on the water to make a big difference. Rain that falls on yards, roads and parking lots can wash into waterways or leach into ground water, carrying pollutants – including fertilizer, pesticides, animal waste, soil and petroleum products. In particular, improperly applied fertilizers and pesticides from urban and suburban residential areas can play a role in polluting Louisiana's waters.

Louisiana is rich in natural habitats that function well in preserving the quality of the environment. Unfortunately, when land is developed for residential use, land is covered by impervious surfaces, such as asphalt and concrete, and neighborhoods with landscapes that make use of few native plants and bear little resemblance to

estuary: The wide lower course of a river where it flows into the sea. Estuaries experience tidal flows and their water is a changing mixture of fresh and salt.

aquifer: An underground layer of permeable rock, sediment (usually sand or gravel), or soil that yields water. The pore spaces in aquifers are filled with water and are interconnected, so that water flows through them.



native Louisiana habitats. Expansive planting of high-maintenance lawns have formed the dominant landscape in most of our communities for years, but that may be changing. You can be a part of the movement in Louisiana to have a more environmentally friendly landscape.

Look around your neighborhood or nearby parks to see if any natural landscapes remain. Can your own landscape be redesigned to replace a piece of what has been lost?

The ideal Louisiana-Friendly Yard — the smart way to garden — should reflect the beauty of natural habitats and ecosystems in our state. To be truly effective, these landscapes must be created and sustained by landscape practices that have a low impact on the environment. What are some of these practices?

- Cooperate with pre-existing natural conditions instead of altering them or changing them to suit the desires of the gardener or needs of plants not suited for those conditions.
- Conserve water and energy – both indoors and out.
- Use more native species in your landscape. Plant native and non-native trees, shrubs, vines and ground covers that require minimal water, fertilizers and pesticides under the right growing conditions.
- Choose plants that are appropriate and attractive but also provide environmental benefits.
- Tolerate some pest damage in the landscape and focus on gardening techniques that reduce pest problems. Use pesticides only when necessary and according to label directions. Always choose the least toxic products that will do the job.

Louisiana-Friendly Yard — the smart way to garden



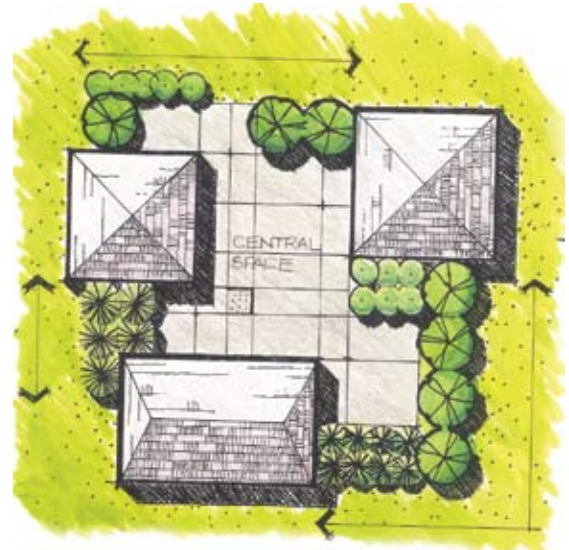
CREATING YOUR LOUISIANA-FRIENDLY YARD

A Louisiana-Friendly Yard doesn't merely offer a good-looking landscape, it also becomes an asset to the local environment, protecting natural resources and preserving our state's unique beauty. An important part in creating a Louisiana-Friendly Yard is recognizing that the home landscape is connected to and a part of a larger natural system.

Designing a landscape more in harmony with the environment requires commitment and careful planning and largely depends on what you and your family require from the landscape. You should consider:

1. Your family's needs and desires.
2. The conditions of your site.
3. Maintaining a healthy environment.

Understanding a few basic concepts will help you make environmentally appropriate decisions when planning your landscape and avoid potential problems.



Drawing: UF/IFAS/ FYN Handbook

PROPER PLANNING IS CRITICAL

A key to creating a successful landscape design is relying on a commonsense planning process. Using a step-by-step process, where the next step builds on the one before, you can develop your own plan that will create an attractive, functional and environmentally sensitive landscape.

First, think of the style you want your landscape to have. Look at other gardens and figure out what style you are most comfortable with. Gardening books, magazines and books on landscaping present photographs that can inspire you and help you make a decision. The style you choose is generally a matter of taste, but should strongly be influenced by the architecture of the house. The chosen style will guide the more aesthetic aspects of the landscape design. Styles generally fall in one of several categories, such as formal, informal, naturalistic, ethnic or ecological. Next, follow the steps outlined on the next page. For a complete list, refer to Right Plant, Right Place beginning on page 19.



1. Decide what your landscape needs to provide.

Most people focus primarily on the appearance of their landscape and how it beautifies the home and grounds. Early in the planning process, it is also important to look at what the landscape needs to provide and how it will function. Examples of needs include a play area for kids, shade, privacy, colorful flowers, growing vegetables and outdoor living. The Louisiana Yards & Neighborhoods program adds one more need — protecting the environment, which includes creating wildlife habitat and lowering maintenance — particularly, reducing water, fertilizer and pesticide use and preventing erosion.



Photo: John Wozniak, LSU AgCenter

2. Study your site. The site is what is enclosed by your property lines. Walk your property and become familiar with the grounds. Notice the compass directions. Which areas are shady or sunny, wet or dry? Soil tests will help you learn about soil characteristics on your site. Note existing features such as trees, buildings, beds, fences, walks and the like. What do you want to change, get rid of or keep? Draw up a simple sketch of the property showing the relevant features.



Drawing: UF/IFAS/FYN Handbook

3. Draw a land-use plan. Draw up a simple sketch of the property showing the relevant features (house, existing trees, beds, patio, etc.). Better yet, draw up a scale drawing. A scale drawing is much more effective when you actually start to do the design. If you have the survey completed for your mortgage, photocopy it — it is really helpful at this stage. You will be playing with various ideas, and need copies to try those ideas out. Never draw on the original.

In this step you decide how much space different activities and areas will need and where in the landscape they will be located. At this time you will see how many things in your list you will actually be able to fit into the landscape. On your scale drawing copy, draw circles or ovals to indicate where and how large areas will be. For instance, a circle would represent where and how large the vegetable garden would be, where the play area would be, where the patio would be and so forth. Try several arrangements until you find the best one.

