Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program Follow-up Survey in Northeast Florida

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In 2010, several members of the Northeast Greenteam (horticulture agents) partnered to develop a follow up survey that could be used to collect information from homeowner clientele attending Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL) programs. Surveys were created using Survey Monkey and were sent out to clients 3 to 6 months after the educational program to measure practice changes and adoption of FFL practices in 2011 and 2012. One hundred and thirty-two individuals completed the survey in 2011 and 158 responded in 2012 for a total of 290. Of the 290 responses, 153 (53%) indicated they made one or more changes to make their landscape more Florida-friendly, 92 (32%) started with changes but were not finished, 31 (11%) will make changes over the next 12 months, and 13 (4%) will not make any changes. Questions were broken down into categories that included the following practices: fertilizer, pesticide, irrigation, right plant right place, and miscellaneous. Those who hired a lawn service to spray/fertilize their landscapes were asked to skip fertilizer and pesticide questions. Of 237 participants responding to adoption of fertilizer practices, 171 (72%) blow lawn clippings back onto lawn after mowing, 84 (35%) calculate square footage of landscape to determine fertilizer needed, 92 (39%) remove fertilizer from hard surfaces, 70 (30%) maintain a 10-ft no treat zone, 175 (74%) fertilize only if needed following UF/IFAS guidelines, and 96 (41%) always purchase fertilizers that contain a minimum of 30% slow-release fertilizer. Of the 228 participants responding to adoption of pesticide practices, 102 (45%) will scout for beneficial insects when managing pests, 147 (64%) will use FFL products like soaps and oils when controlling pests, and 118 (52%) will discontinue use of “weed and feed” products. Irrigation practices first asked how participants irrigate their plants, what was their water source, and then adoption of practices. Of 227 participants responding to adoption of irrigation practices, 54 (24%) use a rain shutoff device, 103 (45%) use a rain gauge to track rainfall, 78 (34%) calibrated sprinkler system to deliver between ½ inch and ¾ inch water, 126 (56%) manually turned irrigation system off when adequate rainfall, and 114 (50%) adjusted irrigation run times based on seasonal weather changes. Participants were asked to estimate the square footage of irrigated landscape and if they eliminated irrigation or converted areas to low volume irrigation with corresponding square footage. Water savings were calculated for the participants who eliminated irrigation in some areas and those who converted some areas to low volume irrigation using 2007 studies conducted by Haley and Dukes. To calculate water saved, 38 individuals eliminated irrigation for 175,473 sq ft, which is a savings of 5,577,760 gal per year. Water savings for 65 participants that converted 112,576 sq ft from sprinklers to microirrigation is 1,754,948 gal per year. Of the 262 participants responding to right plant right place, 117 (45%) replaced high maintenance plants with low maintenance plants, 134 (51%) replaced water needy plants with drought tolerant plants, 159 (61%) removed invasive plants, and 146 (56%) selected disease/pest resistant varieties when available.

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