

Florida Extension Initiative 2: Enhancing and Protecting Water Quality, Quantity, and Supply Statewide Educational Programs in Urban Water Conservation: 2017 Impact Statement

*Summary: Water resources are strained by a growing population and pressure on this limited resource is projected to increase. To address this issue, UF/IFAS Extension urban water conservation programs encourage responsible water use through the adoption of good irrigation practices and technologies throughout Florida. Because of these programs in 2018, Florida residents and green industry professionals adopted best management practices and technologies which will result in a **savings of about 390 million gallons on an annual basis**, or enough water to supply about 4,400 homes with water for one year.*

Relevance: Water is among Florida's most valued resources. Despite having extensive water resources and high rainfall, water resources are stressed by the 21 million people who live here. By 2025, Florida's population is expected to exceed 22 million residents. To meet the expected demand, Florida will need 9.1 billion gallons of fresh water per day, a 26.4 percent increase from 2015. As the demand continues to grow, water supply needs are already exceeding capacity in some areas of the state and forecasted growth and demand must be addressed by the development of additional water supplies. Conservation of existing water resources is considered an important solution. Post-program evaluations reveal that Extension clients who engage in UF/IFAS programs are likely to adopt sound irrigation practices and technologies, such as converting turfgrass areas to landscape beds and installing technologies that limit the amount of water applied through an irrigation system. By making changes to the way they manage their landscape irrigation, Floridians are making a positive impact on the state's water resources.

Response: UF/IFAS Extension addresses the need to conserve water by conducting major statewide programs such as Florida-Friendly Landscaping™, Master Gardener, and Green Industries Best Management Practices programs which consist of group educational events, workshops, and one-on-one educational programming statewide. These activities are designed to reach Florida residents and professionals who care for Florida's landscapes to help them conserve water by encouraging the adoption of sound landscape water conservation practices and technologies. These programs are conducted throughout the state, often in partnership with local governments and with the support of volunteers.

Results: Because of UF/IFAS water conservation programs, Florida residents and green industry professionals are adopting sound landscape management practices that minimize water waste. During 2018, UF/IFAS reported a combined estimated water savings of 386,541,761 gallons of water annually, based on Extension clients' reported behavior change. To put this in perspective, this water savings is sufficient to supply water for a whole year to 4,393 households, or 104 subdivisions [based on the average of 88 thousand gallons per household per year, and subdivision size of 48 single family homes]. This water savings is valued annually at a total of \$1,279,453.23 in water bill savings for participating households [based on the average statewide value of \$3.31 per 1,000 gallons] and \$1,005,008.58 in water delivery costs for utilities [based on the average cost of \$2.60 per 1,000 gallons in delivery costs] statewide. This water savings also reduced wastewater fees for some households, and potentially contributed to water resource protection in communities across Florida.