

HIGHLIGHTING FLORIDA NATIVES IN A COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE

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The efforts of the Environmental Horticulture and Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) programs in Indian River County (IRC) are focused on Florida-Friendly Landscaping (FFL). FFL lecture series and other learning opportunities have been offered to program participants; however, the extension office does not have its own grounds to provide demonstrations of FFL techniques or landscaping options for water conservation. A partnership between Indian River County Parks and Recreation Department and IRC Extension emerged to improve a failing landscape at a newly constructed multi-generational activities facility, the interGenerational Center (iG), and to promote FFL and water conservation through utilization of low water requiring plant species

The urban horticulture agent performed various site visits and provided recommendations to remedy the unfortunate appearance of failed landscape. On condition that the IRC area would be utilize as a FFL demonstration site, MGVs renovated the three largest beds in the entryway. Plants selected and installed for this project were a combination of colorful natives and popular non-invasives that were drought tolerant. The native plants were highlighted at the forefront of the beds. Signage in the beds indicated plant names and the rationale for their selection based upon FFL. Feedback from visitors to the iG Center has been tremendous with many inquiring about where native plants used in the beds could be purchased.

These renovated landscaped beds have helped to provide a more favorable view of Florida-Friendly Landscaping Principles. The Right Plant in the Right Place for this design includes colorful natives, provides for wildlife, and can utilize water more efficiently. Based upon the success of this renovation, plans are already in development for the renovation of highly visual landscapes at other county facilities.

PRESENTER BIO: Leslie Nicole Munroe has been the Environmental Horticulture Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator in Indian River County for the past 5 years. She promotes Florida-Friendly Landscaping and all its benefits in all her programmatic efforts.