

FLORIDA-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPING™ PROGRAM
2009 ANNUAL REPORT

I. Overview

This report covers the months of January through December 2009 for the activities of Annemarie Post, Extension Agent (Environmental Horticulture) and overall coordinator of the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program, working under the guidelines of the University of Florida /IFAS Sarasota County Extension Service. This program is funded through Sarasota County general funds, with \$25,000 provided by Sarasota County Utilities Department.

Educational assistance is provided to community associations, neighborhoods and associated professionals. This Extension Agent also coordinates (collaborates on program development, presentation and grant funding) the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods (FYN) program for individual homeowners, which is funded through a grant from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (part-time through October 31, 2009 and full-time from November 1, 2009); and the FYN Builder/Developer program (no longer funded). In addition, the Extension Agent provides educational assistance to the Green Industry Best Management Practices (GIBMP) training for the landscape maintenance industry.

The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program is based on Environmental Landscape Management practices, and was developed in 1992 by the University of Florida, Sarasota Bay and Tampa Bay National Estuary programs, EPA, FDEP, SWFWMD, and local governments to help reduce the pollutant load from stormwater runoff.

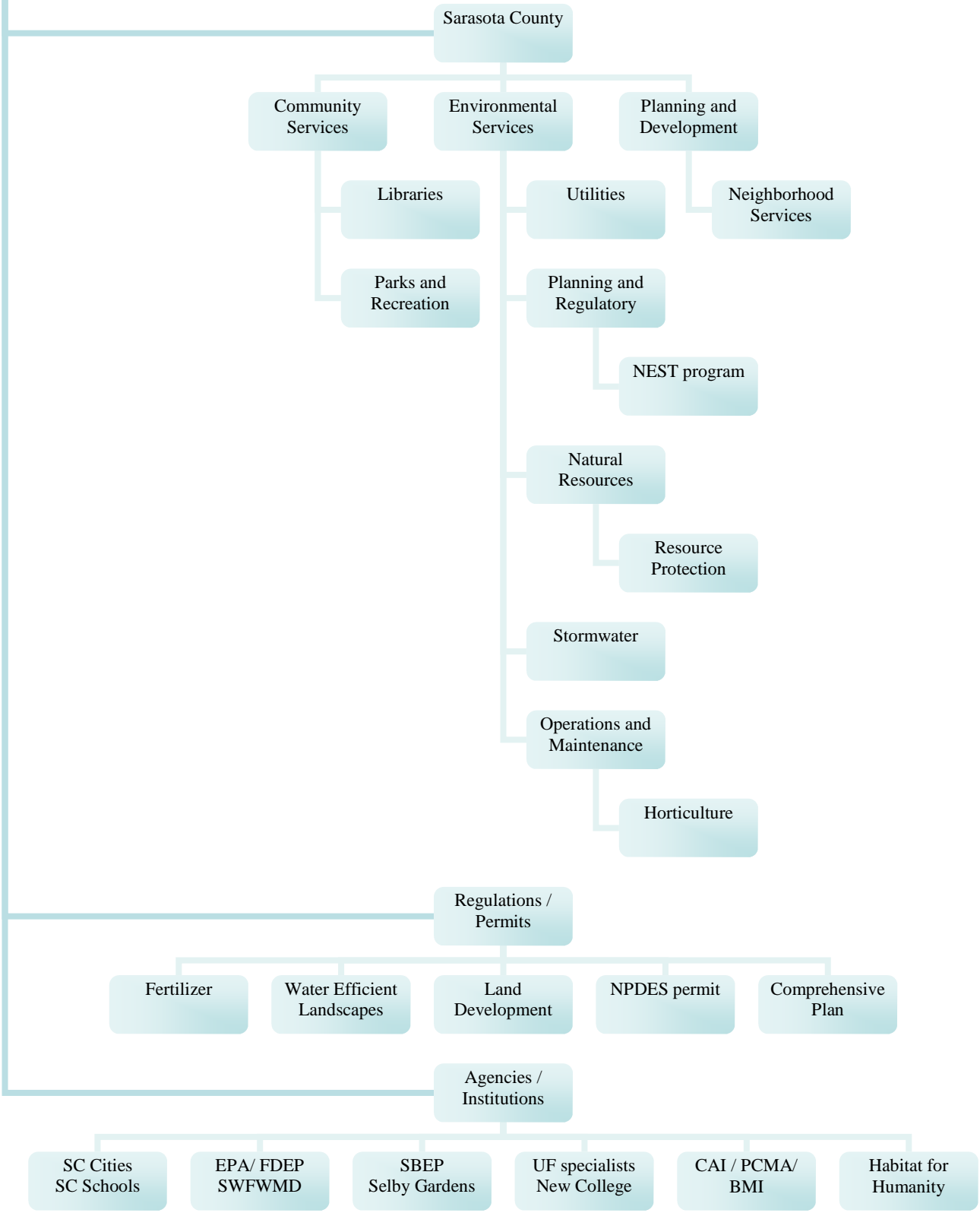
The main objective of the program is to educate the public on how to develop and maintain sustainable landscapes that impact the environment as little as possible. It has been documented that certain landscaping practices contribute to many different forms of air, noise and water pollution. The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program is working to change behavior by teaching alternative forms of design and maintenance practices to create and sustain a landscape that is more ecologically in step with the surrounding environment.

The key to the success of the program is in its efforts to conceive and nurture the sense of responsibility that people must have for the protection of their natural resources. Participants will usually not change their behavior, even with incentives, if they do not feel personally involved, responsible, or attached in some way.

The scientific backbone of the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program is its nine principles (*Right Plant/Right Place, Water Efficiently, Fertilize Appropriately, Mulch, Control Yard Pests Responsibly, Recycle, Reduce Stormwater Runoff, Attract Wildlife and Protect the Waterfront*), and their related actions and/or activities that participants can incorporate to develop a more sustainable landscape.

These activities can reduce the impact of the landscape on the environment and reduce non-point source pollution from stormwater and irrigation water runoff. The Extension Agent partners with several county departments and other agencies and institutions, and supports county regulations and permits (see chart on page 2). Several ordinances such as the Water Efficient Landscaping and Fertilizer ordinances refer to Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles.

Florida-Friendly Landscaping



II. Accomplishments

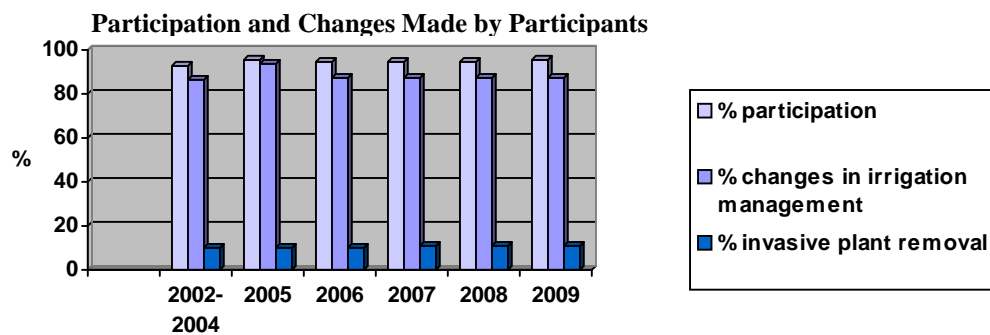
A. 2009 Accomplishments

The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program seeks commitment from participants through actively involving the target group, through site visits and presentations, by conceiving and nurturing the sense of responsibility that people have for the protection of natural resources. Participants at site visits are interviewed after one year. Those present at presentations receive an evaluation form, and all participating community associations receive quarterly newsletters and follow-up educational programs for reinforcement.

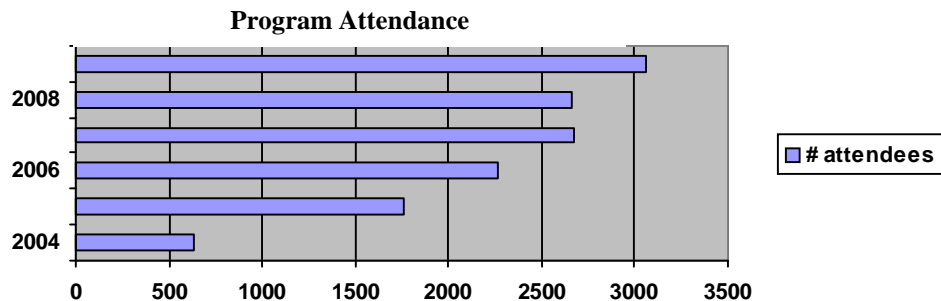
The 2009 audit of the 405 community associations receiving site visits during the length of the program (September 2000 – December 2009) revealed that 95 percent reported that they have made some positive changes and that they make better plant choices when making landscape changes. In addition, many of the community associations that received presentations made changes.

Of the 95 percent that made changes:

- 87 percent reported changes to irrigation system management such as adjusting irrigation systems seasonally, calibrating irrigation system, capping irrigation heads in areas with mature xeric plants and installing or expanding micro-irrigation components.
- 11 percent reported removing invasive plants and/or restoring natural areas or stormwater retention areas.



Of the 3064 attendees at educational programs during 2009, 98 percent of those evaluated indicated that they intend to make changes in their landscape practices. The knowledge gain was rated as 35 percent.



93 homeowners and 24 government properties (City of Sarasota and Sarasota County public buildings) were awarded *Florida-Friendly Yard Recognition* in 2009, indicating that

the nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles are incorporated in yard design and maintenance.

14 new homes fulfilled the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ requirements for the Florida Green Building certificate (FGBC).

B. 2009 Contacts

- **24 new contacts with Community Associations developed.**
- **6 new contacts with related businesses developed.** These businesses include management companies, landscape maintenance companies and other associated professionals.
- **16 volunteers (Master Gardener Yard Advisors) trained.**
- **Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Advisory Committee (16 members):**

County Commissioner	SC Environmental Services representative
SWFWMD representative	SC Natural Resources representative
SBEP representative	USDA NRCS representative
Aquatic industry representative	Landscape industry representative
Community managers (3)	Community Assoc. representatives (3)
Yard Advisor representative	

C. Major accomplishments during the length of this program (September 2000 – December 2009):

- **590 (47%) of the approximately 1237 HOAs and Condominiums in Sarasota County,** have been reached. Each received informal (on-site outreach) or formal (classroom style) educational programs. All receive quarterly newsletters and other educational materials.
- **152 related businesses, such as management companies and landscape maintenance companies, contacted.** Familiarizing these companies with Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles contributes to changes made by participants.
- **Forty-five newspaper or newsletter articles** with a combined media exposure of over 2,331,060.
- **Six television and radio news reports or features** with a combined media exposure of over 433,680.
- **308 TV airings** of *FYN Nine Landscape Principles* and *Creating Your Florida Yard* DVDs on Sarasota Access and the Sarasota County Education Channel with a media exposure per airing of 147,814.
- **The program received the 2003 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo)** in the environmental protection and energy category for creating and implementing an innovative program.
- **Observed water savings** of four Condominium and Homeowners Associations visited during the length of the program:
 - Approximately 21,400,000 gallons yearly.
 - Total acreage of these associations is approximately 54.5.
 - Water saved per acre approximately 390,000 gallons.
- It is extremely difficult to measure the impacts of this program. Although a community might be incorporating Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles, to date, there is no accurate way to document the reduction of impact. However, **potential future water savings** of the 590 associations visited (total acreage approximately 10,000) during the

length of the program based on 90% participation (10,000 x 0.9) 9000 acres x 390,000 gallon / acre x 50%): 1,755,000,000 gallons yearly.

D. Program Enhancements through Partnerships:

- Sarasota County Utilities Department from the Environmental Services Business Center provided \$25,000 (budgeted through FY14) to general funds in support of the Community Associations program.
- Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) Manasota Basinboard provided \$50,000 in support of a full-time coordinator for the FYN Homeowner program for FY2010.
- Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) provided \$20,000 for printing costs of supporting materials, such as the *Neighboring Nature* brochure, *Guide to the Mangroves of Florida*, *The Community Landscape: An Environmental Approach* (a publication for community associations that gives recommendations on selecting a landscape maintenance contractor and contract specifications); *Turning Point* software (an electronic evaluation tool); the project to add Spanish and English subtitles to *Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles* and *Creating Your Florida Yard* DVDs; and rain barrels and micro-irrigation kits.
- The Community Associations Institute (CAI) provided \$250.00 in-kind donation (booth for 2009 CA Day).
- The Sarasota Association of Realtors provided \$50.00 in-kind donation (booth for 2009 Green Expo).
- Aquatic Systems provided \$80.00 for reprints of the *Practical Maintenance Guidelines for Stormwater Ponds* and *Wildlife Habitat Creation In-and-Around Urban Ponds* fact sheets.
- The Professional Community Management Association (PCMA) provided \$80.00 in speaker fees.
- The Step-by-Step Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Training generated \$1,900.00.
- Master Gardener Yard Advisors provided 700 volunteer hours @ \$20.25 /hr = \$14,175.

III. Activities

A. Educational Efforts and Community Events:

- **233 on-site educational programs to 774 attendees.** These programs include:
 - **86 programs provided to decision makers** (boards and committees) **of community associations.** Since the participating community associations range from 20 to 3400 homes, the number of residents and commercial and municipal professionals that are indirectly reached extends far beyond the program.
 - **133 programs** (conducted by FYN Homeowner Coordinator and Master Gardener Yard Advisors) **provided to homeowners.**
 - **14 FGBC consultations provided to builders/developers.**
- **97 educational programs** conducted to **2,290 attendees** through presentations and classes to community associations, associated professionals, builders/developers, homeowners, and youth. These programs include:
 - **Outreach Community and Civic, Twin Lakes Park, Gulf Gate Library and Shamrock Park Series (33 programs):** *Florida-Friendly Landscaping* (10x), *Florida Lawns, Drought, Turf Alternatives* (2x), *Senate Bill 2080* (2x), *Palms in the*

- Landscape, Native Shrubs, Irrigation Efficiency, Snakes (3x), Invasive Plants (2x), Hurricanes vs. Trees, etc.*
- **Continuing Education Unit (CEU) classes for Landscape Professionals (GIBMP) and for the Community Association Management (CAM) license (6 programs):** *GIBMP Overview (2x) and GIBMP Lawn and Landscape, Selecting a Landscape Maintenance Contractor (2x), Tree Identification.*
 - **Step-by-Step Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Training (25 programs, team-teaching with Master Gardener Yard Advisors)**
 - **Youth Education (6 programs):** *Rain Barrel, Compost, and tours.*
 - **Master Gardener Training (2 programs).**
 - **Extension Professionals Training (4 programs).**
 - **Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles and Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Creating Your Florida Yard DVD presentations at Gulf Gate, Fruitville, Venice and North Port Libraries (27 programs, conducted by Master Gardener Yard Advisors).**
 - **438 telephone consultations** (all programs)
 - **2538 e-mail consultations** (all programs)
 - **452 one-on-one contacts at 12 Community Events:** *CA Day* (Trade Show and Educational Expo organized by the Community Associations Institute); *Green Home Expo*; *Watershed Event*; *North Port Environmental Festival*; *Florida-Friendly Yard Tours*; and *Master Gardener Plant Sale*.

B. Media, Website, and Publications and Materials:

- **Media**
 - **Nine Landscape Principles and Creating Your Florida Yard DVDs:** 60 airings on Access Sarasota. Media exposure per airing: 147,814.
 - **Four issues of Palm Prints,** the quarterly newsletter for Community Associations and Associated Professionals. Media exposure per issue: 1000.
 - **Water Conservation in the Landscape and Florida-Friendly Landscaping: the West Florida Wire,** newsletter of the Community Associations Institute. Media exposure per issue: 1,000.
 - **The Calusa lakes Community Pepper Busting Initiative: Wildland Weeds.** Media exposure per issue: 2000 (across S.E. U.S.A.)
 - **The South Venice Beachwave** publishes information on the **Shamrock Educational Programs** monthly
 - **The Herald Tribune (Home and Garden Calendar) and Pelican Press (Community Events)** regularly post educational programs.
 - **Homeowners Associations** are reprinting articles from “Palm Prints” for their internal newsletters.
- **5802 Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ web page visits**
- **Publications and Materials**
 - **Neighboring Nature** brochure: with Nancy Edmondson (Sarasota County Natural Resources).
 - **Wildlife Habitat Creation In and Around Urban Ponds:** Sarasota County Extension fact sheet AP-0121009-001.
 - **Practical Maintenance Guidelines for Stormwater Ponds:** Sarasota County Extension fact sheet AP-0121009-002.

- *Community Managers' Impact on Water Quality and Water Use* abstract for the 2009 Extension Professionals Association of Florida (EPAF) Conference.
- *The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program for Community Associations* abstract for the 2010 Association of Natural resource Extension Professionals (ANREP) Conference (to be presented in June 2010).
- *Florida-Friendly Landscaping for Community Associations Program* brochure.
- *Step-by-Step Florida-Friendly Landscaping™* brochures (5).

C. Highlights of the past twelve months:

Success Stories (selection)

- **Calusa Lakes:** About 16 acres of wetland preserve areas in the Calusa Lakes community, a deed-restricted 460-acre community association (575 homes), were infested with mainly Brazilian Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*). Volunteers of this community have removed Brazilian Peppers in about 12.5 acres (80%) of the infested areas, and replanted appropriate native wetland species. Their enthusiasm has also spilled over to their neighbor, Mission Valley Golf Course. Plans are underway for a collaborative effort to remove non-native invasive plants between the Calusa Lakes Community and this golf course. Preserving and restoring natural areas will improve natural processes, and improve water quality and quantity (Langeland, 2003).
- **Yard recognition Program:** The landscapes of 24 public sites in the City of Sarasota and Sarasota County received Florida-Friendly Yard recognition. These landscapes will serve as demonstration gardens to educate the approximately 340,000 Sarasota County and City of Sarasota residents how Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles and micro-irrigation can be utilized. Results of studies suggest that the behavioral changes implemented by homeowners as a result of the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program can have a significant impact on water quality (FLDEP 2006 FYN Report).

Collaborative Efforts

- **Sarasota County Water Resources:** Data to support NPDES and SWFWMD permits and materials and input for Water Efficient and Fertilizer ordinance workgroups was provided.
- **Sarasota County Resource Protection:** Working partnerships continue to be maintained. This partnership has led to better understanding and maintenance of preserve areas and stormwater retention areas throughout the County.
- **Sarasota County Neighborhoods Grant Program:** Site visits were provided to prospective applicants and grant applications were reviewed to assure that landscape plans adhered to Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles.
- **Sarasota County Parks (Community Services), Shamrock Park:** Educational programs provided for community associations and the South Venice Neighborhood.
- **Sarasota County Libraries:** Educational programs were provided at Gulf Gate, Fruitville, Venice, Jacaranda, Englewood and North Port libraries.
- **Sarasota County Extension:** Educational programs provided to support regular Extension programming and GIBMP, Master Gardener, Agriculture/ Natural Resources, and Family and Consumer Sciences programs.
- **Sarasota County, General:** The *Guide to the Common Epiphytes of Florida*, *Guide to the Mangroves of Florida*, and the *Neighboring Nature* brochure made available to educators at Parks, Resource Protection, and Natural Resources departments.

- **Sarasota Bay Estuary Program:**
 - *The Neighboring Nature* brochure and the subtitles (English and Spanish) for the *Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles* and *Creating Your Florida Yard* were developed in partnership with this organization.
 - Provided input for the CCMP through the Technical Advisory Committee
- **Sarasota County Schools:**
 - Judged student presentations of “Watershed Group Projects” at the Suncoast Polytechnical High School.
 - Made contacts and provided educational programs for three Sarasota County schools.

Multi-County Efforts

- **Manatee County Extension:** Collaboration on programs for community managers.
- **Manatee, Lee and Charlotte County Extension:** Educational materials shared and program input provided.
- **Hillsborough/Polk and Pinellas/Pasco County Extension:** The coordinators of the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Community Association programs in these counties (modeled after the Sarasota program) are supported and resources shared.

State Collaboration

- **State FYN and SWFWMD:**
 - Educational materials, such as the *Nine Landscapes Principles* and *Creating Your Florida Yard* DVDs, and *The Environmental Landscape: An Environmental Approach* are made available state wide.
 - Links to electronic copies of educational materials are provided.
 - Materials pertaining to the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program were reviewed.
 - Provided Yard Recognition to SWFWMD Sarasota District office.
- **Extension Professional Associations of Florida (EPAF):** *Community Managers’ Impact on Water Quality and Water Use* was presented at the 2009 Conference.

National Collaboration

- **University of Tennessee:** Information was provided to the developers of the Tennessee Yard Program

International Collaboration

- **Sister-City Program:** Coordinated a Florida-Friendly Landscaping Tour by Master Gardener Yard Advisors of Sarasota County Extension landscape during visit of 24 students from Perpignan, France.

Professional Outreach

- **Community Associations Institute (CAI), Professional Community Managers Association (PCMA) and Building Managers International (BMI):** CEU classes for the Community Association Management (CAM) license are presented to managers associated with these organizations. The evaluation of the classes revealed that the attending managers have control over 6,200 acres!
- **Working relationships developed with landscape maintenance companies.** These companies refer many of their clients and this not only has immediate impact but will have lasting implications by reducing water demand and fostering better understanding of environmental landscape management practices.

Professional Awards and Recognitions

- **Community Associations Institute (CAI):** *Recognition for Valuable Services and Dedication to the Education Committee.*
- *Leadership in Developing Human Resources Graduate Certificate* (USF).
- *Green Industries Best Management Practices Instructor Certificate* (UF/IFAS).
- **Arborist Certification** maintained from 1998 (International Society of Arboriculture).

Professional Development

- **Extension Professional Associations of Florida (EPAF) Conference**
- **UF/IFAS District IV All Faculty Training** (2)
- **UF/IFAS District Environmental Horticulture Summit**
- **UF/IFAS District IV Green Team** meetings (2)
- **UF/IFAS In-service (Polycom):** *Threat to Urban Avocados* and *Think Locally, Act Neighborly* (invasive plant control).
- **UF/IFAS Promotion Package Workshop**
- **UF Sea Grant/NOAA/DEP:** *Living Shores Workshop*
- **U of North Carolina (Polycom):** *Rainwater Harvesting Workshop*
- **International Society of Arboriculture (ISA):** *Coast Series Seminar* and *Trees Florida*
- **Southwest Florida Water Management District:** *Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Sharing Day*
- **University of South Florida:** MA Adult Education pending (Summer 2010)

Positive Feedback (selection)

- **Gary Christensen, Savannah Turtle Rock (to C. Gregov):** “Savannah at Turtle Rock is undertaking the review of all of its governing documents.... The help provided by Annemarie Post of your office has been invaluable.”
- **Linda Sicignano, Villas at Sabal Trace (regarding the *Community Landscape publication*):** “valuable information about structuring landscaping contracts” to “benefit our Board when the time comes to renew our Landscaping contracts.”
- **Bruce Dayton, Jacaranda West:** “I never cease to be impressed with the efforts to teach people the principles of environmentally friendly landscaping.”
- **Roberta Maxfield, PCMA Community Manager:** “I know how important staff is but you are inspiring in your commitment, skills, knowledge and you motivate them.”
- **Community Associations Institute (CAI):** “thank you for all that you do for CAI.”
- **Jennifer Putnam, Principal, Suncoast Polytechnical High School:** “We again thank you...for helping to create such an educationally rich day for our students. We eagerly look forward to future endeavors and a productive partnership with...the Cooperative Extensive Service.”
- **Jim Oppy, Sarasota County Utilities (regarding 2008 report):** “Excellent work Annemarie and thanks for your dedication to the program.”
- **Jon Thaxton, Sarasota County Commissioner (regarding 2008 report):** “This is an outstanding effort...Thank you!”
- **Shannon Staub, Sarasota County Commissioner (regarding 2008 report):** “I think this is one of our best programs and Annemarie you have really made it a success. Thank you for the hard work and dedication.”

- **Esen Momol, UF/IFAS FYN State Coordinator (regarding 2008 report):** “This is great! Thanks for your efforts! The FFL program is lucky to have you.”

IV. 2010 Work Plan

Extension Agent (prioritized by Advisory Committee):

- Continue regular program activities with Community Associations to reduce the pollutant load from stormwater runoff
- Continue to provide CEU classes for community managers and other related professionals
- Continue to support the Florida Green Building Certificate (FGBC) program
- Work with Sarasota County Resource Protection and aquatic industry representatives on making the Twin Lakes pond an educational tool.
- Organize *Mangrove Program* with Sarasota County Resource Protection and Manatee County Extension utilizing proposed outdoor mangrove trimming site
- Explore possibilities to link GIS database of community associations with water quality data.
- Convert PowerPoint presentations into online educational programs
- Apply for continued SWFWMD Cooperative funding for FYN Homeowner Coordinator

FYN Homeowner Program Coordinator (prioritized by SWFWMD and Extension Agent):

- Increase number of residents being educated
- Continue Florida Yard Recognition program
- Provide follow-up visits and support to Florida Water Star Gold (FWSG) program
- Recruit and train Master Gardener Yard Advisors
- Identify appropriate areas to distribute FYN materials
- Educate students (K-12) on Florida-Friendly landscaping, responsible water use and local habitats and implement pilot *Junior Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program*
- Explore contacts with retail garden centers