

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Virtual Programs Inspire Change

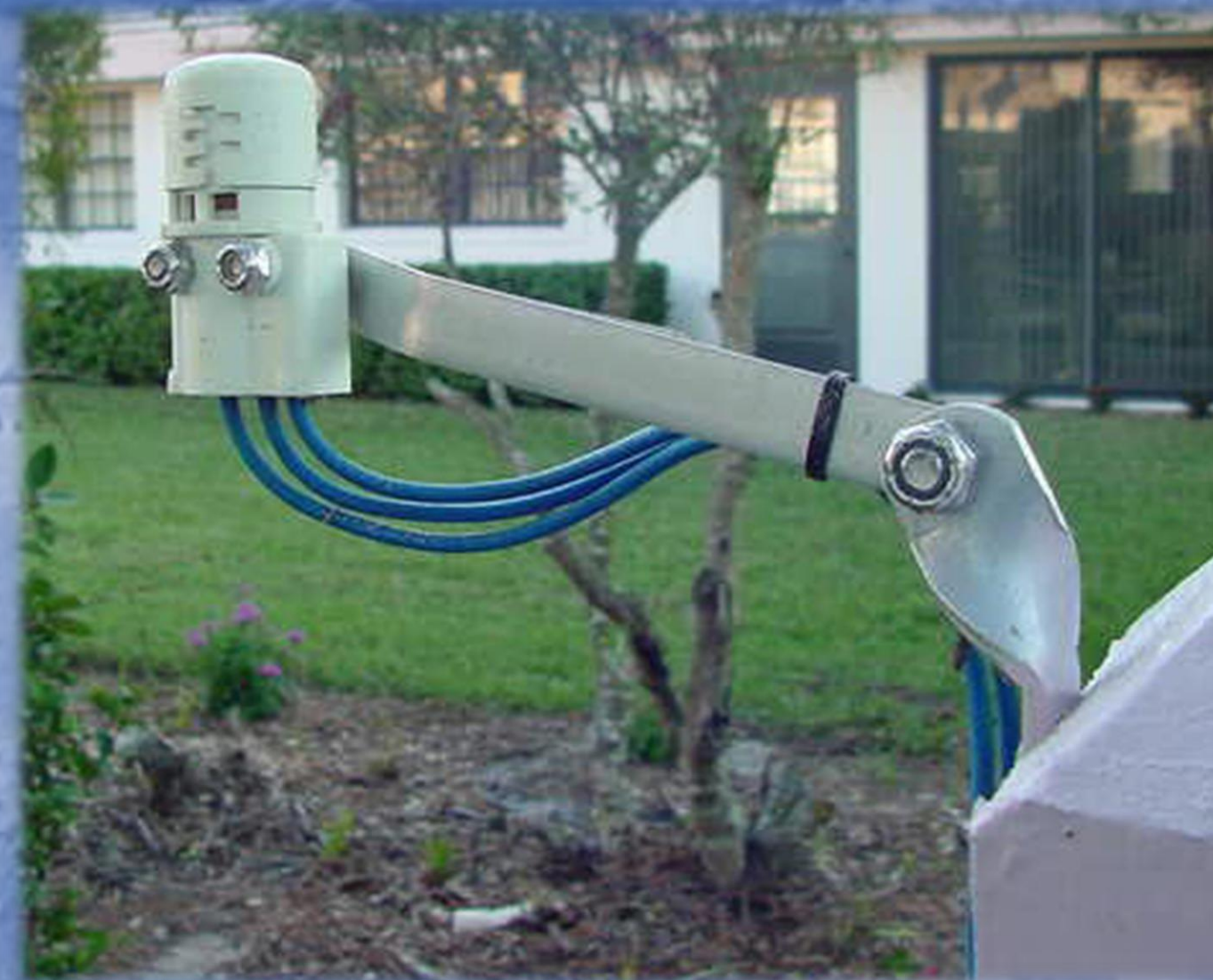
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Why Virtual Florida-Friendly Landscaping™?

The Florida population continues to grow at almost 1,000 new residents a day. Sumter County, FL has an estimated population of 136,396 residents, which includes the largest area of The Villages retirement community which continues to grow exponentially. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, not only did the current Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (“FFL”) educational program transition to a Zoom virtual format, but also a new educational series, “Gardens Grow with Extension,” incorporated FFL principles in its weekly sessions. FFL is particularly important as the principles are designed to protect Florida’s fragile water resources, even during a pandemic.



Functioning Rain Sensors prevent irrigation when adequate rain has fallen. *FFL photo.*



Multi-stream nozzles can reduce water use and irrigate more evenly. *FFL photo.*



Calibrating irrigation to deliver 1/2-3/4" of water delivers water only to turf roots. *FFL photo.*

Results

A survey was administered to participants in Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ for New Residents and Gardens Grow with Extension. These results were based on those surveys.

29% of respondents (n=59) will seasonally adjust irrigation. 25% of respondents (n=26) will install or replace a non-working rain sensor.

30% of respondents (n=29) calibrated irrigation to deliver 1/2" to 3/4" per irrigation event.

33% of respondents (n=34) plan to manually turn off irrigation when it rains.

19% of respondents (n=44) fertilize only when the grass is actively growing.

24% of respondents (n=49) will incorporate drought tolerant plants in their landscapes.

Objective & Educational Sessions

The objective of Virtual FFL programming offered was to educate and encourage participants to implement sound environmental practices in their landscapes which may lead to conservation of water quality and quantity.

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ for New Residents, an existing program, presented all nine of the FFL principles in two two-hour sessions monthly offered virtually April 2020 to March 2021 which focused on irrigation practices of warm season turf and landscapes, as well as fertilizing appropriately and managing pests responsibly.

Gardens Grow with Extension weekly sessions were offered April 2020 to March 2021. Topics included: Lawns for Central Florida, From the Ground Up: Compost and Mulch, Choosing Plants that Attract Wildlife, Drought Tolerant Shrubs, Creating Rain Gardens to Manage Storm Water Runoff, Performing your Spring Irrigation Check, and Groundcovers and Vines.

Impact

Specific data from above was plugged into the UF/IFAS Water Urban Water Conservation Impact Calculator to determine impact. Virtual FFL programming resulted in an estimated water savings of 3,295,182 gallons of water annually based on respondents’ reported behavior changes. This water savings represents enough water to supply nearly 37 households with water per year based on the average of 88,000 thousand gallons per household per year. This water savings is valued annually at a total of \$11,368.38 in water bill savings for participating households based on \$3.45 per 1,000 gallons of water. This also represents a savings of \$8,567.47 in water delivery costs for utilities based on \$2.60 per 1,000 gallons of delivery.

Other behaviors which respondents adopted which will protect Florida’s water resources include sound fertilization practices reducing leaching potential and selecting drought tolerant plants which would require less water once established.