

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Ideas: Top 5 Drought-Resistant Trees

Florida-Friendly Landscaping

So what exactly is Florida-Friendly Landscaping? It is an integrated approach to landscaping developed by the University of Florida that allows homeowners to design, install, and maintain attractive and environmentally friendly landscapes.

The 9 principles of Florida-friendly landscaping are:

- Choosing the right plant for the right place
- Fertilizing appropriately
- Attracting wildlife
- Recycling yard waste
- Protecting the waterfront
- Watering efficiently
- Using mulch in plant beds
- Managing yard pests responsibly
- Reducing storm water runoff

Trees

Now that you understand the concept behind Florida-friendly landscaping, let's talk a bit about trees. Trees are woody perennials in Florida landscapes. They improve air quality, stabilize the soil with their expansive root systems, and provide wildlife habitat to birds and other creatures.

Deciduous trees, if planted on the south and west sides of a home, provide shade and passive cooling effects on structures. The shade from trees in the heat of summer can potentially reduce indoor cooling costs by as much as 20 percent.

The following are some particularly tough, colorful, and drought-resistant trees for Central Florida landscapes.

Florida-Friendly Trees

<p>Weeping yaupon (<i>Ilex vomitoria</i> 'Pendula')</p> <p>Optimal Light: Sun Mature Height: 15ft-20ft Light Range: Full/Part Sun Mature Spread: 12ft-15ft Soil Moisture: Well-drained Soil Texture: Any Salt Tolerance: High Florida Native: Yes Florida Region: N, C, S Hardiness Zone: 8-10 Color: Year-round</p>		<p>Weeping Yaupon is a Florida native tree that grows quickly to about 15'-20' with a spread of 6'-12'. Very old plants get somewhat larger. The tiny leaves on the graceful drooping stems make a dramatic statement when paired with other plants. The dappled shade from weeping yaupons is ideal for cooling Florida plants growing beneath them from the hot sun. The red berries produced by this tree are a favorite of many birds.</p>
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Vitex (*Vitex agnus-castus*)

Optimal Light: Sun
Mature Height: 15ft-20ft
Light Range: Full/Part sun
Mature Spread: 12ft-15ft
Soil Moisture: Well-drained
Soil Texture: Any
Salt Tolerance: Med
Florida Native: No
Florida Region: N, C, S
Hardiness Zone: 7-10
Color: Year-round



Vitex is a small deciduous tree with a showy summertime flower display and aromatic foliage. Branched flower clusters are produced on new wood in late spring and early summer, and it continues to bloom sporadically until early fall. It attracts pollinating bees and hummingbirds. Prune in winter, since blooms form on new wood. It is susceptible to mushroom root rot and nematodes, so make sure it is planted in well-drained soil.

Sweet acacia (*Acacia farnesiana*)

Optimal Light: Sun
Mature Height: 15ft-25ft
Light Range: Full sun
Mature Spread: 15ft-25ft
Soil Moisture: Well-drained
Soil Texture: Any
Salt Tolerance: Med
Florida Native: Yes
Florida Region: C, S
Hardiness Zone: 9-11
Color: Year-round



Sweet acacia is a tall, semi-evergreen, small native tree with feathery, finely divided leaflets. The slightly rough stems have long, sharp, and multiple thorns. The small, yellow, puff-like flowers are very fragrant and appear in clusters in late winter then sporadically after each new flush of growth, providing nearly year-round bloom. The fruits are a food source for birds and other wildlife. Keep well-pruned for a strong structure.

European olive (*Olea europaea*)

Optimal Light: Sun
Mature Height: 20ft-30ft
Light Range: Full/Part sun
Mature Spread: 20ft-30ft
Soil Moisture: Well-drained
Soil Texture: Any
Salt Tolerance: Med
Florida Native: No
Florida Region: N, C, S
Hardiness Zone: 7-10
Color: Year-round



The olive tree is an evergreen tree native to the Mediterranean, Asia and parts of Africa. It is short and squat, and rarely exceeds 20-30 feet in height, with silvery green leaves and a gnarled and twisted trunk. This tree will typically not produce fruit in central Florida. It requires a sunny spot with well-drained soil, but once established is very drought tolerant, thanks to its sturdy and extensive root system.

Golden dewdrop (*Duranta erecta*)

Optimal Light: Sun
Mature Height: 15ft-18ft
Light Range: Full/Part Sun
Mature Spread: 15ft-18ft
Soil Moisture: Well-drained
Soil Texture: Any
Salt Tolerance: Low
Florida Native: No
Florida Region: C, S
Hardiness Zone: 9-11
Color: Year-round



Golden dewdrop is a sprawling, evergreen shrub or small tree that can get up to 18 ft tall and just as wide. The showy lavender flowers bloom almost all year long and attract butterflies. The fruit is a spherical yellow drupe on showy hanging bunches. Golden dewdrop tends to sprawl and will need regular thinning and pruning to keep it under control. This plant does best in full sun, but will tolerate partial shade.