

## WATER-WISE YARDS - HOW TO START

**The Water-Wise Yards program is a partnership between Seminole County government and the Seminole Soil & Water Conservation District, with support from the St Johns Water Management District. This initiative is designed to promote landscaping and water practices that conserve water in residential communities.**

Here are three steps to a Water Wise Yard:

Step One. Decide on how you want to use your yard - bar-b-queing, entertaining, watching butterflies and birds, working in a garden, or do you prefer a low maintenance yard.

Step Two. Determine what your hardscape will be - a pool, Bar-B-Que area, meandering walkways, trellis or pergola?

Step Three. Select plants that fulfill the desired function for your yard and that appeal to you - lush and tropical, natural with wildflowers, wildlife habitat for birds and butterflies, etc.

Consider the plants in general terms, such as tree, shrub, ground cover, and perennials or annuals. Then the soil type must be considered. For example, do you have a wetland area or high, sandy soil. To determine this, dig a hole and fill it with water. If it drains quickly, you can plant drought tolerant plants here. If it takes hours or even a day to drain, plant a wet-loving plant. In addition, have your soil tested for pH. Azaleas should be planted in an acid soil. Contact the Seminole County Cooperative Extension for a soil pH test at 407/ 665-5550.

Once you know what general type plant you want, your soil pH and its water holding capacity, look through books of plants for what appeals to you and your needs. Once again, native plants are recommended in a higher proportion to exotics in your landscape because they are adapted to our native soils, pests, and climate, and overall require less maintenance.

Some recommended books for plants.

Gardening and Landscaping in Central Florida by Marlys Bell.

Xeriscaping for Florida Homes by Monica Brandies

Native Florida Plants by Robert Haele and Joan Brookwell.

Submitted by Seminole Soil & Water Conservation District. Questions may be referred to Michelle Thatcher at 407 321-8212. [www.sswcb.org](http://www.sswcb.org)