

Green Stormwater Infrastructure: Resource Efficient Landscapes, Florida-Friendly Demonstration Garden, UF/IFAS Extension Alachua County

[00:06] Mark Clark: Hi, I'm Mark Clark.

Eban Bean: And I'm Eban Bean.

[00:09] Eban Bean: We're here to talk about how landscaping can incorporate into low impact development. We're here with Denise DeBusk. Denise, can you tell us a little bit about how UF/IFAS Extension helps homeowners with having a more sustainable and resource efficient landscape?

[00:23] Denise DeBusk: We like to focus on the Florida-friendly principles, which will allow your landscape to be more environmentally friendly, which will reduce water, fertilizer and pesticides, which may require either managing your turf in a responsible way by fertilizing appropriately, watering efficiently, or having alternatives like perennial peanuts, so that you can reduce watering completely.

[00:48] Denise DeBusk: We also like to focus on what's the right plant for the right place, so things like this Princess Caroline grass, which is very drought tolerant, it doesn't need very many inputs. So, having examples like that to be able to help the homeowner select what might be right for their environment.

[01:08] Mark Clark: And what you're doing around the individual homes is what we tend to refer to as source control, so if we can actually reduce the inputs of nutrients or pesticides and then manage the water we use, but also how we manage the water coming off, that's the biggest effect we can have on essentially reducing stormwater pollution, and also wisely using the resources. What's the biggest challenge for homeowners when they want to, you know, maybe transform their landscape from a turf dominated one to something where they're integrating, you know, shrubs and other planter beds? What are some of the challenges that the homeowner faces when they try to do that?

[01:43] Denise DeBusk: Well, some of the challenges may include, if they're in a homeowners' association that require them to have some kind of turf. Also, part of the issue may be cost. There is a cost to changing your landscape over. So you have to remove the grass and you have to put in some of these plants. But over the long term, you're saving money. And it does require some establishment. So, we recommend for establishment, because you do need to add water, you put in something like micro-irrigation instead of having the irrigation or even some rain barrels.

[02:16] Mark Clark: But it actually makes for a more interesting landscape around your house. Although, you know, turfgrass may be attractive for some folks, but the diversity is very low, so from a wildlife benefit or even a curiosity benefit, having, you know, a more diverse landscape with the native species, but also with Florida-friendly species that are not maybe native, but also essentially meet a low resource demand, meaning low water, low fertilizer, low pesticide demand, it just creates a much more interesting place to live.

[02:48] Denise DeBusk: And with the amount of butterflies and birds and hummingbirds we have in here, it's become very popular to have those elements to be able to attract that wildlife. So, being able to add plants that can not only withstand the drought, but also attract a beautiful butterfly or a hummingbird, all the better.

[03:09] Eban Bean: Do you talk to homeowners, educate them about ways to reduce the runoff from their property in their homes?

[03:16] Denise DeBusk: Oh, definitely. Yeah, when it comes to the construction of the home, it's not always the best design. They may have gutters there. If they do, sometimes they're directed the wrong way. Sometimes it goes right onto the driveway, and that will go into the stormwater gutter system, and that can go right out to our aquifers and to our springs, and it carries with it all that fertilizer, pesticides if any of that's applied on the grass, or stuff coming off the roof, and that can damage our environment.

[03:47] Eban Bean: Denise, we really appreciate it, it's been very informative. Thank you for your time today and thank you for all that information.