



# Get Started with Your Native Plant Landscaping

- Planting trees in Miami-Dade County
- Have your plants ... and live with water restrictions, too
- Special tips for South Florida slash pines
- Sources for landscaping information

Dade Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society  
[dade.fnpschapters.org](http://dade.fnpschapters.org)

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## PLANTING TREES IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY



**Anticipate the mature size of the tree.** Pick a location away from utilities, structures or areas which would require excessive pruning of the tree.

**Dig a hole wider but only as deep** as the tree's root ball (set the pot in the hole to test before removing the tree from the pot). Some prefer a planting hole just wider than the container. Others recommend digging a hole twice as wide as the container, sloping to the edge, or other variations.

**Do not add** special soil or any fertilizers in the hole. (You want the roots to grow into the surrounding native soil, not to stay in the hole with rich amended soil.)

**Carefully loosen** the tree from the pot by tapping the bottom. **Turn the pot on its side;** gently pull the tree out by the trunk; try to keep the soil and root ball intact.

**Plant the tree only as deep as it was in the pot.** Fill the hole with **same soil** that you dug out.

**Carefully tap the soil** around the roots to avoid air pockets that will kill the root hairs. Then **water** thoroughly to fill in any air pockets.

**Mulch the tree** with several inches of commercially available or tree service mulch. Pull the mulch several inches away from the trunk to avoid rot. Don't use cypress mulch, which comes from Florida's disappearing cypress forests.

**Water thoroughly every day for at least a week.** Decrease frequency over the next few months until the tree is established, watering as needed to prevent stress.

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## HAVE YOUR PLANTS AND LIVE WITH WATER RESTRICTION, TOO

Newly-planted plants (and plants in pots) need to be watered until their roots are established.  
This means native plants, too - even drought-tolerant species.

**Group plants** with similar moisture needs into beds at appropriate spacing.

**Mulch** 3-4 inches deep around entire beds (or individual plants if not grouped).

- Keep mulch several inches away from the trunk.
- Use chipped trimmings from a landscape company or buy bagged mulch.
- DO NOT USE cypress to preserve cypress forests.

**Water every 1-2 days for a couple weeks** after planting if there is not enough rain.

- Restrictions allow watering **new or stressed plants** (check current specifics).
- Taper off watering gradually.
- Water before 8 a.m. for best results.

**Check daily. Water as needed** during dry weather.

**Obey watering regulations.** See the South Florida Water Management District website [www.sfwmd.gov/](http://www.sfwmd.gov/) for current regulations and water conservation suggestions.

**Skip the lawn-watering. Hand-water** or use a soaker hose on new plants only.

**Soak the plants** deeply with 1-2 inches of water when plants are being established.

**Catch rainwater** runoff from your roof.

- Make a rain barrel or use large buckets (see [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov) for ideas).
- Attend a **Rain Barrel Workshop** by Miami-Dade Extension (305-248-3311) or see [fll.ifas.ufl.edu/barrels.htm](http://fll.ifas.ufl.edu/barrels.htm) and other websites for step-by-step instructions.

**Save water** that would be wasted (shower warm-up, veggie washing, etc)

**Pots:**

- Water once, let it soak in, then water again.
- Put a saucer under the pot until the soil is soaked.
- Plunge pots into a bucket to soak for a few minutes.

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## SPECIAL TIPS FOR SOUTH FLORIDA SLASH PINES

In Miami-Dade County, the South Florida slash pine, *Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*, (also called Dade County pine) grows naturally in forests called pine rocklands, generally atop the Miami rock ridge. Pines are the only large tree in these forests, and the species composition of the forests is maintained by periodic fires which kill invading hardwoods and weeds but do not kill the pine trees. In the home landscape, pine trees will do best in conditions similar to the pine rocklands: dry, infertile, no tree species other than pines. Having a separate area of your yard for pines (and possibly other pineland understory species such as saw palmetto, shrubs, wildflowers) works best.

**Pick a location for each pine tree that is away from utilities, sprinklers, or high traffic areas, and other trees that are not South Florida slash pines.** The pines may be planted a few yards apart, but each should be at least 5 feet (10' is better) from the edge of the canopy of other kinds of trees. (Remember to anticipate the future growth of the other trees!). Heavy traffic over the root area of pine trees is very stressful - do not place them near where you drive, park your car, or operate machinery such as lawn mowers.

**Bare soil works, but mulch with pine needles if you can get them.** They may often be collected where they fall on pavement. (Note: Commercially-available pine needles are collected from natural areas and may cause damage to the site where they are harvested. Bales of needles are available at Bushel Stop in Pembroke Pines, 954-434-1729). **If you use pine bark mulch**, be sure to pull the mulch away from the trunk to avoid rot. Pineland wildflowers may be planted with pines (avoid disturbing the tree roots) if the soil is bare or mulched lightly with pine needles.

**Do not overwater or overfertilize, and don't use lawn fertilizer** anywhere near the root area of pines. Water several times a week after planting for a few weeks, decreasing in frequency. **When it is established, water only if stressed.**

**If you fertilize pines** during the first few years, do so only with a weak acidic fertilizer (such as ammonium sulfate) or one that contains chelated iron. You can use Miracle Grow with iron, Ironite or other fertilizer for acid-loving plants, a slow-release fertilizer such as Osmocote or palm special. **Use ½ the recommended dosage.**

**For more information about pine rocklands:**

- The Institute for Regional Conservation ([www.regionalconservation.org](http://www.regionalconservation.org) > Natives For Your Neighborhood > Habitats).
- Call Miami-Dade DERM for a Pineland Plant Guide (305-372-6586).

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## SOURCES FOR LANDSCAPING INFORMATION

**Dade Chapter Florida Native Plant Society:** [dade.fnpschapters.org](http://dade.fnpschapters.org)

**Florida Native Plant Society:** <https://fnps.org/home>

**Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council:** [www.fleppc.org/landowners.htm](http://www.fleppc.org/landowners.htm)

**Florida Friendly Landscaping:** [www.floridayards.org/](http://www.floridayards.org/)

**Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (UF Extension):** [fyn.ifas.ufl.edu](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu)

**Miami-Dade/UF Extension:** 305-248-3311, [sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/miami-dade/](http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/miami-dade/) and [hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandpowerlines/](http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandpowerlines/)

**The Institute for Regional Conservation:** [www.regionalconservation.org](http://www.regionalconservation.org) > Online resources > Natives For Your Neighborhood

**South Florida Water Management District:** [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov) > Community and Residents

**Florida Power and Light:** [www.fpl.com/reliability/trees/tree-location.html](http://www.fpl.com/reliability/trees/tree-location.html)