

No fertilizer? No sweat

How to keep your yard looking great this summer

It's true: new laws mean you can't use fertilizer from June 1 to September 30 in St. Lucie, Martin, Indian River, Brevard and Volusia Counties.

But why would you want to?

People who love Florida know that summer rains wash fertilizer from our yards and into the nearest lake or bay, ruining the waterways that make our community so special (and prop up our property values).

Gardeners who have adapted their landscaping to Florida's unique climate also know that with just a few small changes, you really only need fertilizer twice a year at most, in April and October. Here's how they do it:

5 ways to make your yard the envy of your neighbors

Pump some iron. An application of iron will keep your lawn green during the summer. You can find it at most garden centers, along with macronutrients like potassium and magnesium that can help keep your lawn healthy.

Get better plants: Plants adapted to Florida's hot, humid climate need less water and fertilizer year round. Ask your garden center or county Extension office about how to go Florida-friendly; you'll reduce your water bill and pay less for fertilizer.

Put your lawn on a diet. Replace a corner of your lawn with shrubs, small trees, or an easy-to-maintain groundcover like Asiatic jasmine or perennial peanut. Expand your landscape beds a little bit at a time, and before you know it you'll be devoting your weekends to relaxing instead of mowing, weeding, and edging.

Make pay dirt. Use your own compost to enrich your soil. It's better than anything you can buy — and it's free.

Reclaim your water. Ask your water provider if you can hook up your irrigation system to reclaimed water (it's only available in certain areas). Reclaimed water may contain enough nitrogen to meet all your lawn's needs.

Visit BeFloridianNow.org for more ideas on how to garden the Florida way.

