



IFAS EXTENSION

Enviroscaping to Conserve Energy: Ground Covers for South Florida¹

A.W. Meerow and R.J. Black²

Introduction

A ground cover is any low-growing plant that can be used to cover an area in the landscape. Many woody and herbaceous plants fulfill this role. And as part of passive, energy-saving landscaping (enviroscaping), ground covers can provide a surprising amount of residential energy savings during Florida's 5 to 7 months of high temperatures.

Plants release water through pores in their leaves by transpiration. As warm air passes over leaf surfaces, heat is absorbed by the water, which then evaporates and lowers the temperature of the air. Called evaporative cooling, this interaction lowers air temperature immediately surrounding vegetation by as much as 9°F (5°C). The greater the leaf-surface area in the landscape, the greater the cooling effects.

Paved surfaces around the home contribute substantially to summer heat loads. These surfaces absorb the sun's heat or reflect it back into the

immediate environment, increasing the amount of discomfort experienced by people during the day. Paved areas also store heat during the day, keeping temperatures high around the home even after sunset. Temperatures over ground covers can be 15 to 25°F (8.3 to 14°C) lower than over asphalt or concrete.

Turfgrass

Turfgrass qualifies as a ground cover. Many people find great aesthetic appeal in sweeping, well-manicured green lawn. On the practical side, no other plant can withstand as much foot traffic as turf. Maintaining a lawn in prime condition, however, requires energy-intensive mowing, regular fertilization, irrigation, and, at times, expensive pest and disease control. A quarter-acre lawn requires four times the total energy costs of a landscape of the same size that has a one-sixteenth-acre lawn with the remaining area planted in low-maintenance vegetation (Parker, 1982).

As fossil-fuel prices rise, so do the costs of fertilizing, watering and mowing a lawn. Some

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turfgrasses, like bermudagrass, do best with 218 pounds of nitrogen per acre per year, a 7.2 million Btu investment. A medium fertilization level of 174 pounds of nitrogen per acre per year (5.8 million Btu) is recommended for St. Augustine lawns. At the lowest fertilizer level, centipede lawns need 87 pounds of nitrogen per acre per year (2.9 million Btu). Choosing centipede instead of St. Augustine can save 29 million Btu of energy (equal to the energy in 232 gallons of gasoline) per acre over 10 years (Whiffen, 1993).

On average it takes a quarter of a gallon of gasoline (31,250 Btu) [combustion engine] or 1.4 kwh (15,000 Btu) [electric motor] to mow a quarter-acre lawn. Depending on location and fertilizer frequency, the lawn probably gets mowed 10 to 20 times a year. To minimize energy and time inputs, only cut one-third of the grass blade at a time and don't over fertilize (Whiffen, 1993).

Water quality and availability have become important issues in Florida. Depending on location, Florida lawns need 20 to 35 inches of water from irrigation per year. Over 8 million Btu of energy are required to supply water to a one-half-acre lawn in Orlando. If a one-half-acre yard is landscaped so one-fourth is lawn and the rest is planted with ground covers, shrubs and trees in mulched areas, over 4 million Btu of energy can be saved annually along with 224,000 gallons of water (Whiffen, 1993).

Alternatives to Turfgrass

There are ground covers besides turf that require a fraction of the upkeep and are frequently more adaptable to a wider range of environmental conditions. For instance, turf does not grow well in dense shade and is difficult to establish in extremely wet or dry areas. There are several other ground covers adaptable to such problem situations. Lily turf (*Liriope muscari*, *L. spicata*) and mondo grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*) are excellent, low-maintenance performers in dense shade. Lippia (*Lippia nodiflora*) has an outstanding tolerance of wet soils. Golden creeper (*Ernodea littoralis*), a native seacoast species, is highly tolerant of both salt and drought. Proper selection can minimize irrigation, fertilization and mowing after ground covers are established.

Herbaceous and woody ground covers offer a variety of colors and textures in contrast to the uniformity of turf grass. They can unify the home landscape and complement trees and shrubs.

Establishment of Ground Covers

Generally, ground covers are established in two years, although some species require slightly more or less time. During this period, a regular program of irrigation, fertilization and weed control ensures strong, rapid growth. Mulch aids water retention in new plantings and helps the spread of ground covers that root along their stems. Once established, many ground covers need only an occasional trimming to keep them tidy and within their designated area.

Selecting a Ground Cover

The accompanying table will help home gardeners and landscape professionals select ground covers appropriate for south Florida site conditions. Each species has the expected height of the mature plant, along with the color of both leaves and flowers. The drought-tolerance ratings refer to Florida conditions only and should be interpreted as follows - High: survives without supplemental irrigation after establishment; Moderate: requires supplemental irrigation during very dry periods to maintain satisfactory appearance and health; and Low: little or no drought tolerance. Drought tolerance also varies with soil and other environmental conditions. 'X' indicates whether a particular ground cover can be used in each of five landscape situations. Finally, the "Comments" section has special notes about each species.

Turf grass is still the best ground-cover choice for outdoor areas that have heavy recreational use. For situations where turf serves no practical purpose, alternative ground covers perform equally well or better at a fraction of the energy input required by a lawn.

References

Parker, J.H. 1982. *An energy and ecological analysis of alternate residential landscapes*. J. Environ. Syst. 11: 271-288.

Whiffen, H.J.H. 1993. *E² & E energy efficiency & environmental news*. UF/IFAS Energy Extension Service, Feb., Gainesville, FL.

Table 1. Groundcover selection for south Florida.

| Scientific Name Common Name * = Native | Height | Light ¹ | Drought Tolerance | Salt Tolerance | Under trees | Banks & slopes | Edging | Seaside | Open areas |
|---|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------|---------|---------------|
| <i>Aloe spp.</i> Aloe | 12 inches | S, PS | High | High | | X | | X | X |
| Description: Succulent. Often has bi-colored leaves. Red, orange or yellow flowers in summer. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: A number of low-growing species are available. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Aspidistra elatior</i> Cast iron plant | 20-30 inches | Sh | Low | Moderate | X | | | | |
| Description: Green foliage (variegated form is available). | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Slow growing. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Begonia spp.</i> Begonia | 6-18 inches | PS, Sh | Low | None | X | | X | | |
| Description: Wide range of foliage color. Flowers are usually red, white, or pink. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Hundreds of species and hybrids are available, many suitable for ground cover use (the rhizomatous type is best for this purpose). Prefers fertile, moist but well-drained soils. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Billbergia spp.</i> Bromeliad | 12-18 inches | PS, Sh | Moderate | Low | X | | | | |
| Description: Leaves are various shades of green, often striped white or silver. There are many variegated forms and hybrids. Flowers are pink and blue. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Vigorous. Some plants form large clumps. <i>B. nutans</i> and <i>B. pyramidalis</i> are common; <i>B. 'Fantasia'</i> is a variegated hybrid. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Carpobrotus edulis</i> Hottentot fig, iceplant | 6 inches | S | High | High | | | | X | X |
| Description: Grayish-green leaves. Yellow to rose-purple flowers in summer. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Excellent seaside ground cover and sand binder. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Carissa macrocarpa</i> Dwarf carissa | 12-15 inches | S, PS | High | High | | X | X | X | X |
| Description: Dark green leaves. White flowers | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Select dwarf cultivars only. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Catharanthus roseus</i> Madagascar periwinkle | 10-18 inches | S | High | High | | X | X | X | X |
| Description: Pink or white flowers. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Plants persist for 2 to 3 years, but naturalize readily from seed. Avoid planting in wet areas. | | | | | | | | | |
| * <i>Licania michauxii</i> Gopher apple | 3-12 inches | S | High | High | | | | X | X |

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| Description: Leaves are dark green above and downy white below. Red fruit in summer | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Tolerates poor soils. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Chlorophytum comosum</i> Spider plant | 12 inches | S, PS, Sh | Moderate | Low | X | | X | | X |
| Description: Green, or green and white variegated leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Solid green form more vigorous; spreads by runners. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Cuphea hyssopifolia</i> Cuphea, false heather | 12-15 inches | S, PS | None | None | | | X | | X |
| Description: Purple to white flowers most of the year | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Low, shrubby heather-like habit. Requires moist soil. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Cryptanthus</i> spp. Cryptanthus Earth star | 2-10 inches | Sh | Moderate | Low | X | | X | | |
| Description: Leaves are different shades of green to red, often striped. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Prefers shady, moist locations. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Cyrtium falcatum</i> Holly fern | 24 inches | Sh | Low | Moderate | X | X | X | | |
| Description: Glossy, green foliage. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Shade tolerant. | | | | | | | | | |
| * <i>Dichondra carolinensis</i> Dichondra | 1-2 inches | S, Sh | Moderate | Low | X | | X | | X |
| Description: Bright green foliage. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Prefers moist soil. Withstands some foot traffic. Susceptible to <i>Alternaria</i> fungus. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Dyckia brevifolia</i> Miniature agave | 6 inches | S, PS | High | Moderate | | X | X | | X |
| Description: Glossy green leaves with white midrib on underside. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Well-drained soil is essential. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Dissofles rotundifolia</i> Spanish shawl | 6 inches | PS, Sh | Low | Low | X | | | | |
| Description: Pink flowers. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Demands moist conditions. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Evolvulus</i> spp. Blue daze | 12 inches | S | Moderate | High | | X | | X | X |

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| Description: Silvery leaves and blue flowers. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Fails in wet soils. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Episcia</i> spp. Flame violet | 6 inches | PS, Sh | Low | None | X | | | | |
| Description: Leaves can be variously green, bronze or coppery, and are sometimes variegated. Flowers are red, orange or yellow throughout warm months. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Many cultivars, mostly of <i>E. cupreata</i> are available. Demands moist, fertile soil. Temperatures below 40°F will damage plant. | | | | | | | | | |
| * <i>Ernodea littoralis</i> Golden creeper | 12-36 inches | S | High | High | | X | | X | X |
| Description: Yellowish-green foliage. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Tolerates poor conditions and neglect. <i>Var. angusta</i> is a pineland form with very narrow leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Euphorbia millii</i> Dwarf crown of thorns | 9 inches | S | High | High | | X | X | X | X |
| Description: Red bracts surround flowers most of the year. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Cultivar 'Fireball' is best. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Ficus montana</i> Oakleaf fig | 6-9 inches | PS, Sh | High | Low | X | | | | |
| Description: Bright green leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Interesting oak-like leaves. Coarse texture. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Ficus pumila</i> Creeping fig | 12 inches | S, PS | High | Moderate | | X | | X | |
| Description: Fine-textured green leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Occasional shearing is required. Plant will climb up walls and trees. Stems grow thick and woody with age. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Ficus sagittata</i> (<i>F. radicans</i>) Trailing fig | 12 inches | S, PS | High | Moderate | X | X | | | |
| Description: Gray-green foliage. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Prefers moist, heavy soils. Better ground cover than <i>F. pumila</i> . | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Fittonia verschoffeltii</i> Nerve plant | 6 inches | PS, Sh | Low | None | X | | | | |
| Description: Dark green leaves with red or white veins. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: White-veined form tends to be easier to grow. Plants are damaged below 45°F. Requires moist, fertile soil. | | | | | | | | | |

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| <i>Gardenia jasminoides</i> 'Prostrate' (G. radicans) Dwarf gardenia | 6 inches | S, PS | Moderate | None | X | | | | |
| Description: Small, glossy, green leaves. White flowers in spring and summer. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Prefers moist, acid soils. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Glottiphyllum depressum</i> Fig marigold | 6 inches | S | High | High | | X | X | X | X |
| Description: Yellow flowers in spring and early summer. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Excellent for dry, sandy slopes. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Gynura aurantiaca</i> 'Purple Passion' Velvet plant | 9 inches | PS | Low | None | X | | | | |
| Description: Deep green leaves are purple below, covered with purple hairs, and have purple veins. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Requires moist, fertile soil. Can be sheared if it becomes rangy. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Hedera canariensis</i> Algerian ivy | 6 inches | Sh | Moderate | High | X | X | X | | |
| Description: Dark green foliage. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Prefers moist, shady sites. <i>H. canariensis</i> has larger leaves but is less aggressive than <i>H. helix</i> . Variegated form is available. Highly salt tolerant. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Hedera helix</i> English ivy | 6 inches | Sh | Moderate | High | X | X | X | | |
| Description: Dark green foliage. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Prefers moist, shady sites. Many cultivars with varying leaf shape are available. <i>H. helix</i> is coarse-textured with smaller leaves than <i>H. canariensis</i> . Will climb up trees and walls. | | | | | | | | | |
| * <i>Helianthus debilis</i> Beach sunflower | 12-24 inches | S | High | High | | | | X | X |
| Description: Glossy, green leaves. Yellow flowers all year. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Good sand binder for dry, coastal areas. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Hemerocallis</i> spp. Daylily | 6-12 inches, 12-36 inches when in flower | S, PS | High | High | | X | | X | X |
| Description: Light green leaves. Summer flowers in yellow, pink, and orange. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Relatively pest free. | | | | | | | | | |

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| <i>*Ilex vomitoria</i> 'Schillings Dwarf' Dwarf yaupon holly | 1-3 feet | S | High | High | | X | | X | X |
| Description: Small, glossy, green leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Extremely compact form of this native species. Fast growing. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>*Ipomoea pescaprae</i> Beach morning glory, railroad vine | 4-6 inches | S | High | High | | X | | X | X |
| Description: Light green foliage. Pink-lavender flowers in summer. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Prefers sandy soils. Grows best along the seashore. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>*Iva imbricata</i> Beach elder | 1-3 feet | S | High | High | | | | X | |
| Description: Small, glossy, green leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Excellent dune stabilizer. Spreads horizontally, rooting along stems. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Juniperus chinensis</i> Chinese juniper | 1-3 feet | S | High | Moderate | | X | X | | X |
| Description: Foliage ranges from blue-gray to green. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Cultivars 'Parsonii,' 'Parsonii Varietgata,' var. <i>procumbens</i> 'Nana,' and var. <i>procumbens</i> 'Aureovariegata' are best suited as ground covers. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Juniperus conferta</i> Shore juniper | 1-2 feet | S, PS | High | High | | X | X | X | X |
| Description: Green to blue-green foliage. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Fast grower. Drought and salt tolerant. Cultivars 'Compacta' and 'Blue Pacific' are particularly dwarfed. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>*Lantana depressa</i> Dwarf lantana | 8 inches | S | High | Moderate | | X | | | X |
| Description: Light green leaves. Yellow flowers all year. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Endemic to southern Florida pine rocklands. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Lantana montevidensis</i> Trailing lantana | 18-24 inches | S | Low | Moderate | | X | X | X | X |
| Description: Green leaves. Lavender flowers all year. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Fruit is poisonous. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>*Lippia (Phyla) nodiflora</i> Lippia, match weed | 3 inches | S, Sh | High | High | | X | | X | X |
| Description: Leaves are greenish to purplish. Red, purple and white flowers most of the year. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Drought, wetness, and salt tolerant. Takes some foot traffic. Easily established. | | | | | | | | | |

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| <i>Liriope muscari</i> Lily turf, liriope, big blue lily turf | 12 inches | Sh | High | Moderate | X | X | X | | |
| Description: Dark green leaves. Purple flowers in spring are followed by black fruit. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Resembles turf grass. Forms a dense mat and is excellent for edging. Does not tolerate heavy foot traffic. Variegated forms tolerate full sun. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Liriope spicata</i> Creeping lily turf, creeping liriope | 6-18 inches | Sh | High | Moderate | X | X | X | | |
| Description: Dark green foliage. Purple to white flowers in summer. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Faster growing than <i>L. muscari</i> . | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Malpighia coccigera</i> Miniature holly | 1-3 feet | PS | Moderate | Low | X | | X | | |
| Description: Small, holly-like, dark green leaves. Pink flowers and red fruits. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Susceptible to nematodes. Use dwarf cultivars for ground cover. Plants are slow growing. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Maranta leuconeura</i> Prayer plant | 6-18 inches | PS, Sh | Low | None | X | | | | |
| Description: Light green to dark green leaves, with dark green or brown marks. Veins are gray or red in some varieties. Lower leaf surface is purple in <i>var. erythronera</i> . | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Best in fertile, organic, moist soils. Susceptible to nematodes. Foliage will bleach in high light. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Neoregelia caroliniae</i> 'Tricolor' Neoregelia | 12 inches | PS, Sh | Moderate | Moderate | X | | | | |
| Description: Leaves are green variegated with yellow. Inner half of leaves turn bright red when plant flowers. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Requires well-drained soil. Keep leaf vase filled with water. After flowering, the mother plant slowly dies, but offsets grow from leaf axils. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Neoregelia spectabilis</i> Painted fingernail | 12 inches | S, PS, Sh | Moderate | Moderate | X | | | | |
| Description: Olive green leaves are gray-banded below, with tips that are spotted with maroon. Leaves turn bronze in full sun. Blue flowers. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Requires well-drained soil. Keep leaf vase filled with water. After flowering, the mother plant slowly dies, but offsets grow from leaf axils. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Nephtrolepis exaltata</i> Boston fern | 12-36 inches | Sh | Low | Low | X | X | | | |
| Description: Bright green fronds. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Prefers moist shade. | | | | | | | | | |

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| <i>Ophiopogon japonicus</i> Dwarf lily turf, mondo grass | 6-12 inches | Sh | High | Moderate | X | X | X | | X |
| Description: Dark, glossy, green leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Tolerates poor soils. Good for edging. Does not tolerate heavy foot traffic. Flowers are usually hidden by leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Peperomia obtusifolia</i> Peperomia, dwarf rubber tree | 18-20 inches | PS, Sh | High | Low | X | | X | | |
| Description: Dark green leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Moist, well-drained soils are best. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Philodendron scandens</i> (<i>P. oxycardium</i> , <i>P. cordatum</i>) Heart leaf philodendron | 6 inches | PS, Sh | Moderate | Low | X | | | | |
| Description: Glossy, green leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Fast growing. Will climb unless controlled. Prefers moist, fertile soils. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Pilea microphylla</i> Artillery plant | 12 inches | S, PS | Moderate | Low | X | | X | | X |
| Description: Light green, succulent leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Does not tolerate foot traffic. Grows best in moist areas, but tolerates poor conditions. Cultivar 'Stoplight' is more colorful than the typical form. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Plectranthus australis</i> Swedish ivy | 12 inches | PS, Sh | Moderate | None | X | | | | |
| Description: Bright green, waxy leaves. Purplish veins in strong light. Flowers are pale purple or white. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Will burn in full sun. Fast growing. Will root along stem in moist soil. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Ruellia makoyana</i> Velvet plant | 12 inches | S, PS | Low | Low | X | | X | | X |
| Description: Dark green leaves are silver striped above and purple below. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Moist, well-drained soil is best. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Rumohra adiantiformis</i> Leatherleaf fern | 12-36 inches | Sh | Low | Low | X | X | | | |
| Description: Deep green, leathery leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Best in moist, shady locations. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Sansevieria trifasciata 'Hahnii'</i> Snake plant | 8 inches | PS, Sh | High | Moderate | X | | X | | |

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| Description: Variegated dark and light green leaves. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Very drought and shade tolerant. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Scindapsus pictus</i> 'Argyraeus' Silver pothos | 6 inches | Sh | Moderate | Low | X | | | | |
| Description: Dark green leaves variegated silver. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Will climb unless controlled. Requires well-drained soil. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Selaginella involvens</i> Erect selaginella | 12 inches | Sh | Low | Low | X | X | X | | |
| Description: Light green, fernlike foliage. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Requires moist soil. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Selaginella uncinata</i> Blue selaginella | 8 inches | PS, Sh | Low | None | | X | | | |
| Description: Pale blue-green, fernlike foliage. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Vigorous in moist sites. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Setcreasea pallida</i> 'Purple Heart' Purple heart | 14 inches | S, PS | High | Moderate | X | | | X | X |
| Description: Purple foliage. Pink flowers in the summer. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Performs well under trees. Prune for more compact growth. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Spathiphyllum</i> 'Clevelandii' Peace lily | 3 feet | Sh | Low | None | X | | | | |
| Description: Glossy, dark green leaves. White flowers. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Requires moist, organic soil. Other dwarf cultivars are available. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Stapelia nobilis</i> Carrion flower | 8 inches | PS | High | Moderate | | X | | | |
| Description: Green stems that turn bronze in full sun. Flowers are a lurid purple, barred with brown. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Drought-tolerant succulent. Odor of flowers may be objectionable. Requires well-drained soils. A number of other species have a similar growth habit. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Syngonium podophyllum</i> Nephtytis | 12 inches | Sh | Moderate | None | X | | | | |
| Description: Green leaves are often variegated. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Rapid growing. Will climb unless controlled. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Trachelospermum asiaticum</i> Small leaf confederate jasmine | 8-12 inches | S, Sh | Moderate | Moderate | X | X | | | X |

Table 1. Groundcover selection for south Florida.

| Scientific Name Common Name * = Native | Height | Light ¹ | Drought Tolerance | Salt Tolerance | Under trees | Banks & slopes | Edging | Seaside | Open areas |
|--|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------|---------|---------------|
| Description: Glossy, dark green foliage. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Forms thick mat that suppresses weeds. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Trachelospermum jasminoides</i> Confederate jasmine, star jasmine | 8-12 inches | S, Sh | Moderate | Moderate | | X | | | X |
| Description: Dark green foliage with new growth contrasting light green. Highly fragrant white flowers in mid- to late spring. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Performs best as a vine due to long, twining stems. Resists trampling. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Tulbaghia violacea</i> Society garlic | 30 inches | S | Moderate | Moderate | | | X | | X |
| Description: Lilac-colored flowers in the spring. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Does not flower well in shade. Alternating periods of wet and dry weather induce frequent flowering. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>*Uniola paniculata</i> Sea oats | 3-6 feet | S | High | High | | | | X | |
| Description: Pale green foliage with attractive seed heads. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Excellent sand-dune stabilizer. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>*Zamia pumila (Z. floridana)</i> Coontie, Florida arrowroot | 12-36 inches | S, Sh | High | High | X | X | X | | X |
| Description: Glossy, dark green, fernlike foliage. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Will not tolerate shearing or mowing. | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Zebrina pendula</i> - Wandering Jew | 4-10 inches | Sh | Moderate | Low | X | | | | |
| Description: Leaves are striped purple, silver and green. | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: Prefers well-drained, moist soil. Excellent under trees. Does not tolerate foot traffic. | | | | | | | | | |
| ¹ Light: S = full sun, PS = partial shade, Sh = shade | | | | | | | | | |