

## North Florida Landscape Plants for Wet Areas<sup>1</sup>

---

Frank Regulski, Jr. and David Marshall<sup>2</sup>

Most areas of north Florida have soil conditions which enable many ornamental plant species to thrive. However, some sites create special planting problems if plant selection is not done carefully. One such site is the wet site.

A wet site can range from an area which is occasionally flooded to an area which is constantly wet. It is usually an area which collects and holds water longer than the areas surrounding it. These conditions may be caused by several factors:

1. The area might have a high water table beneath the soil surface. To test for this, dig a hole 2' deep. If it fills to within 1', a high water table is present.
2. 3. The area catches runoff from other areas.
4. 5. The area has a soil with a high clay content which impedes downward drainage.

Any of these factors can cause a wet site situation in which the soil is saturated with water. This excess soil water reduces the oxygen in the soil necessary for proper root growth. If at all possible, a wet site should be drained either by diverting runoff, regrading the area, or installing drainage tile.

If such site is not feasible or not desired, the plants used on the site should be selected according to their tolerance of wet soil conditions. The following shrubs and trees are well adapted to wetter-than normal sites in the north Florida landscape. See Table 1.

### REFERENCES

- Barrick, W.E. and R.J. Black. "Landscape Trees for Energy Conservation: North Florida Trees." Florida Cooperative Extension Service *Circular EES-1*.
- Barrick, W.E., D.L. Ingram, and J.T. Midcap. "Selected Shrubs for North Florida." Florida Cooperative Extension Service *Circular 500*.
- Dirr, Michael A. 1977. "Manual of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification." *Ornamental Characteristics, Culture, Propagation, and Uses*. 2nd Ed. Stipes Publishing Co. Champaign, Illinois. 536 pp.
- Foote, Leonard, E. and Jones, Samuel B. Jr. 1989. *Native Shrubs and Woody Vines of the Southeast: Landscaping Uses and Identification*. Timber Press. Portland, Oregon. 199 pp.

---

1. This document is ENH66, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date May 1992. Reviewed October 2003. Visit the EDIS Web Site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Frank Regulski, Jr., former assistant professor, ornamental horticulturist, Agricultural Research and Education Center, Monticello, FL; David Marshall, agricultural extension agent and program leader, Leon County, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.

Meerow, Alan W. and Black, Robert J.  
"Landscaping to Conserve Energy: Ground Covers  
for North Florida." *EES-37*.

Watkins, J. and T. Sheehan. *Florida Landscape  
Plants*. University of Florida Press, Gainesville.

Whitcomb, Carl E. 1983. *Know It and Grow It*.  
*II*. Lacebark Publication. Stillwater, Oklahoma. 720  
pp.

Wyman, D. 1971. *Shrubs and Vines for American  
Gardens*. Macmillan Company. New York. 613 pp.

Wyman, D. 1971. *Trees for American Gardens*.  
Macmillan Company. New York. 502 pp.

Table 1.

<b>Table 1.</b> North Florida Landscape Plants for Wet Areas.			
<i>Scientific Name</i>	Common Name	Size	Comments
Evergreen Shrubs			
1. <i>Bambusa</i> spp.	Bamboo	2-30'	Can be a pest, depending on species
2. <i>Elaeagnus pungens</i>	Silverthorn	8-12'	Durable screen plant, fragrant flowers
3. <i>Euonymus</i> spp.	Euonymus	10-12'	Durable with variegated cultivars
4. <i>Fatsia japonica</i>	Japanese Fatsia	5-7'	Large, unusual leaves
5. <i>Ilex cornuta</i>	Chinese holly	3-20'	Dark green glossy foliage
6. <i>Ilex glabra</i>	Inkberry	2-8'	Good foundation plant or screen
7. <i>Ilex opaca</i>	American Holly	12-30'	Attractive winter fruit, numerous cultivars
8. <i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	Yaupon Holly	4-25'	Responds to pruning, berries for birds
9. <i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	Mountain Laurel	4-6'	White to rose flowers, native shrub
10. <i>Leucothoe fontanesiana</i>	Drooping Leucothoe	2-6'	White, fragrant flowers, lustrous green foliage
11. <i>Ligustrum</i> spp.	Ligustrum	6-12'	Most are durable, fast-growing
12. <i>Myrica cerifera</i>	Southern Wax-Myrtle	15-25'	Attractive bark, tendency to develop multiple stems
13. <i>Nerium oleander</i>	Oleander	6-16'	Yellow, red, pink, or white summer flowers; all parts poisonous if eaten
14. <i>Osmanthus fragrans</i>	Fragrant Tea Olive	15-20'	Very fragrant fall flowers
15. <i>Prunus caroliniana</i>	Carolina Cherry-Laurel	30-40'	Can be a pest by birds spreading seed
16. <i>Rhapidophyllum hystrix</i>	Needle Palm	4-8'	Small, slow-growing, landscape palm
17. <i>Trachycarpus fortunei</i>	Windmill Palm	6-20'	Very showy small palm
Deciduous Shrubs			
18. <i>Calycanthus floridus</i>	Sweetshrub	6-9'	Very fragrant flowers in late spring
19. <i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>	Fringetree	20-25'	White, fragrant flowers in late spring

Table 1.

<b>Table 1.</b> North Florida Landscape Plants for Wet Areas.			
<i>Scientific Name</i>	Common Name	Size	Comments
20. <i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	Summersweet Clethra	3-8'	White, fragrant flowers in summer
21. <i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i>	Oakleaf Hydrangea	6-7'	White flowers in early summer, red-orange fall foliage
22. <i>Ilex decidua</i>	Deciduous Holly	15-20'	Orange to scarlet berries in fall and winter
Deciduous Vines			
23. <i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	Virginia Creeper	-	Bright red fall foliage
Evergreen Vines			
24. <i>Lonicera japonica</i>	Japanese Honeysuckle	-	Very fragrant flowers all summer
25. <i>Lonicera sempervirens</i>	Trumpet Honeysuckle	-	Red or yellow flowers, no fragrant
Ground Covers			
26. <i>Dichondra carolinensis</i>	Dichondra	2"	Small round leaves; considered a weed in lawns
27. <i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i>	Carolina Yellow Jessamine	3-4'	Bright yellow spring flowers; grows upward, making use as ground cover limited
28. <i>Hedera canariensis</i>	Algerian Ivy	6"	Larger leaves than English Ivy
29. <i>Hedera helix</i>	English Ivy	6"	Fast-growing ground cover
30. <i>Liriope</i> spp.	Liriope	1'	Lilac to white flowers; will tolerate no foot traffic
31. <i>Ophiopogon japonicus</i>	Mondo Grass	1'	Finer texture than liriope, but similar
32. <i>Selaginella involvens</i>	Erect Selaginella	1'	Good under trees; has unique, fern-like appearance
33. <i>Trachelospermum asiaticum</i>	Japanese Star Jasmine	1'	Non-climbing vining groundcover with fine texture
34. <i>Trachelospermum jasminoides</i>	Confederate Jasmine	1'	Very fragrant spring flowers; will climb
35. <i>Vinca major</i>	Big Leaf Periwinkle	1'	Blue Flowers; does not climb

Table 1.

<b>Table 1.</b> North Florida Landscape Plants for Wet Areas.			
<i>Scientific Name</i>	Common Name	Size	Comments
Deciduous Trees			
36. <i>Acer negundo</i>	Boxelder	50-80'	Weak wood, fast grower
37. <i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red Maple	50-80'	Good spring, Excellent fall color (orange-red), fast grower
38. <i>Acer saccharinum</i>	Silver Maple	60-100'	Weak wood, roots clog pipes, yellow fall color
39. <i>Ailanthus altissima</i>	Tree of Heaven	30-60'	Very durable tree, few pests
40. <i>Betula nigra</i>	River Birch	50-60'	Attractive bark, yellow fall color, fast grower
41. <i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	American Hornbeam or Blue Berch	20-30'	Native with smooth gray bark
42. <i>Celtis laevigata</i>	Sugar Hackberry	40-60'	Attractive bark, few pests
43. <i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	Green Ash	60-80'	Durable tree, fast grower, yellow fall color
44. <i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	Sweetgum	80-100'	Fruit is messy, red-orange fall color
45. <i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Tulip tree	100-120'	Fast grower, weak wood, yellow fall color
46. <i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	Black Gum	60-100'	Orange-red fall color
47. <i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	Sycamore	150'	Anthrachnose and lace bug problem, fast grower, yellow fall color, messy fruits
48. <i>Quercus alba</i>	White Oak	80-100'	Slow grower, excellent tree, red fall color
49. <i>Quercus bicolor</i>	Swamp White Oak	80-100'	Slow grower, yellow fall color
50. <i>Quercus larifolia</i>	Laurel Oak	80-100'	Rapid growth, not durable
51. <i>Quercus nigra</i>	Walter Oak	60-100'	Rapid grower, not durable
52. <i>Quercus phellos</i>	Willow Oak	80-100'	Moderate grower, fine texture

Table 1.

<b>Table 1.</b> North Florida Landscape Plants for Wet Areas.			
<i>Scientific Name</i>	Common Name	Size	Comments
53. <i>Quercus shumardii</i>	Shumard Oak	80-100'	Rapid grower, red-orange fall color
54. <i>Salix babylonica</i>	Weeping Willow	30-50'	Rapid grower, roots clog pipes, fine texture
55. <i>Salix nigra</i>	Black Willow	40-80'	Rapid grower, roots clog pipes, fine texture
56. <i>Sophora japonica</i>	Japanese Pagoda Tree	40-80'	Rapid grower
57. <i>Taxodium distichum</i>	Bald Cypress	60-100'	Orange fall color, attractive bark, fine texture
58. <i>Tilia americana</i>	American Linden	40-80'	Fragrant flowers, yellow fall color
59. <i>Ulmus americana</i>	American Elm	80-100'	Dutch elm disease not a serious problem in Florida
Broadleaf Evergreen Trees			
60. <i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Southern Magnolia	60-80'	Coarse leaf texture, white flowers
61. <i>Magnolia virginiana</i>	Sweetbay	50-60'	White flower, silvery leaf undersides
62. <i>Quercus virginiana</i>	Live Oak	40-80'	Long lived, attractive form
Needle Evergreen Trees			
63. <i>Pinus elliottii</i>	Slash Pine	80-100'	Serious pest problem (rust, pine-tip moth, pitch canker), rapid grower
64. <i>Pinus glabra</i>	Spruce Pine	80-100'	Grows in shade; very attractive tree
65. <i>Pinus taeda</i>	Loblolly Pine	80-100'	Few good landscape qualities