

The Villages®



WATER WISDOM

SMART MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES IN FLORIDA'S FRIENDLIEST HOMETOWN

Lawn and Landscape Maintenance

A low maintenance lawn and landscape that is *Water Wise* starts with proper plants being in the proper place. You can do numerous things to maintain your lawn and landscape that keeps it environmentally friendly and reduces water pollution.

- **Mowing:** Cut your grass at the highest recommended height for your turf species. 2" for Empire Zoysia and 4" for St. Augustine. Mow regularly, cutting no more than 1/3 of the grass length per mowing. Keep blades sharp, as torn grass blades are more prone to disease.
- **Pest Management:** Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a proven concept for controlling pests and protecting water resources. The idea is to use the least toxic method and to limit any treatment only to affected areas. By spot treating pests and problem areas only, while they are small, you minimize pesticide use. Consult with local experts for insecticide recommendations. Some products may be applied only by state-licensed pest control operators.
- **Weeds:** Remove weeds as soon as they appear because they compete for nutrients and moisture with your plants and your lawn. Identify the type of weed causing the problem before using any chemical controls. Consult with local experts for herbicide recommendations.
- **Fertilizing:** Leaves and pine needles left to decay under plants and trees slowly return nutrients to the soil while keeping the soil moist. However, when a specific nutrient deficiency is evident, fertilizer may need to be used. Take care not to over-fertilize as that can cause pest problems, stimulate excessive growth, and require more frequent watering. Excess fertilizer can also leech into groundwater or be carried into waterways by storm runoff, which contributes to water pollution. The best choice for plants and the environment is a slow-release fertilizer.
- **Pruning:** This should be minimal for a plant that is located in the right place. Prune to retain a plant's natural shape. Pruning can be stressful to a plant, which may cause it to need more water, so less pruning is usually a better approach.

The Villages Water Wisdom program aims to help you become a *Water Wise* resident and a better steward of our precious water resources.