Yard Retrofit Program

While volunteering as a master gardener, you will undoubtedly interact with members of the public that want to make changes to their home landscape but aren’t quite sure where to start. Whether they want to replace their grass lawns with flower and shrub beds, create a butterfly garden, or address problem areas within their landscape, they are probably good candidates for the Yard Retrofit Program.

A Yard Retrofit begins with a complete landscape evaluation, scheduled through Kate O’Neill, of a homeowner’s yard by two to three master gardeners and can be as simple as consulting on a specific gardening problem or as involved as advising on a complete landscape conversion into a ‘Florida-Friendly’ yard.

Some of the issues that this program helps address for the homeowner are plant identification (including exotics and invasives), troublesome areas, new plant and landscaping suggestions, and future landscape planning. The consultation focuses on education and encourages the homeowner to practice environmentally friendly gardening through right plant-right place, low maintenance landscapes, water conservation, natural pest resistance techniques, and conservative chemical and fertilizer use. When complete, a follow-up report is written up by the master gardeners with recommendations discussed during the visit and is sent to the homeowner along with additional fact sheets that cover their particular issues. It is up to the homeowner to implement the suggested changes.

Master Gardeners Kim Willis leads retrofit visits in Fort Pierce and Dale Galiano in Port St. Lucie. If you are interested in joining Kim or Dale on a retrofit visit to see if this might be a rewarding volunteer opportunity for you, please contact them directly. Desirable skills include: enjoy talking with the public, interest in researching, plant identification, and report/letter writing.

Florida–Friendly Recognition

Through the Yard Retrofit Program, many retrofit yards have been recognized through the Florida-Friendly Yard Recognition Program and some of the homeowners have even become master gardeners.

For more information about the Yard Retrofit or Recognition Programs, contact Kate O’Neill.

Master Gardener Program - http://stlucie.ifas.ufl.edu/master_gardener.html