

Introduction

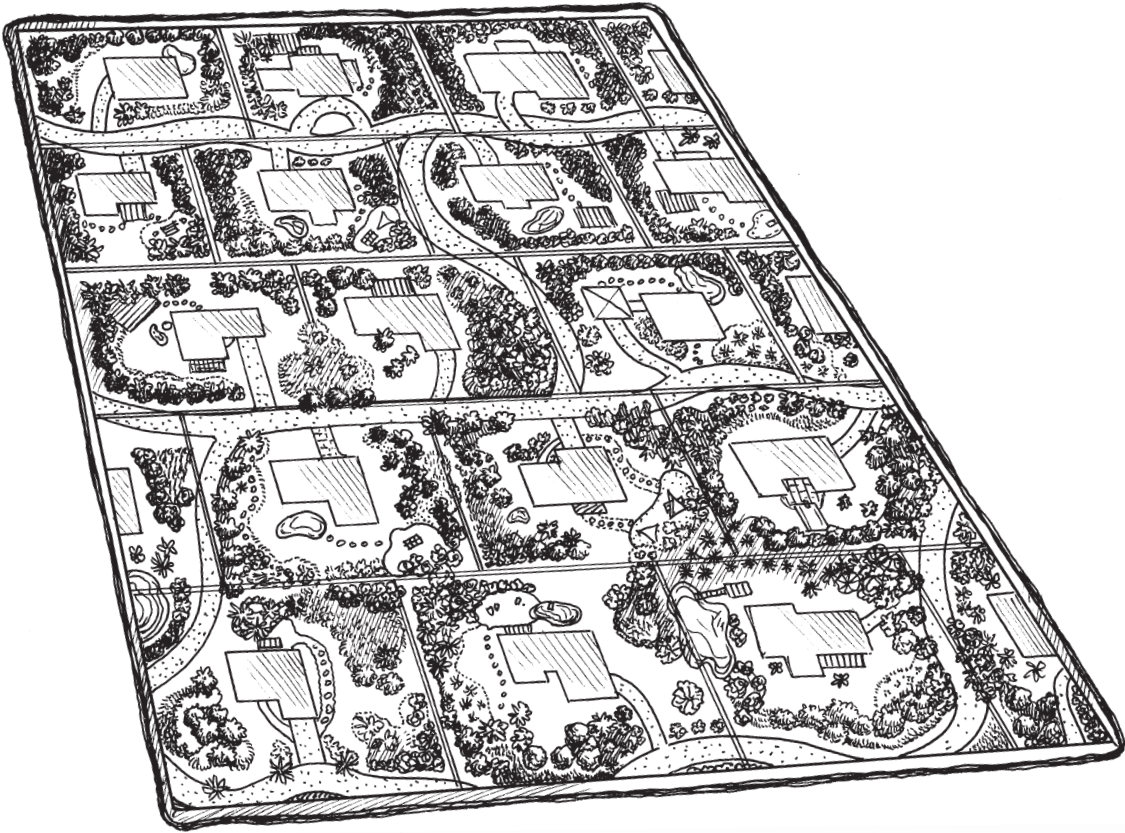
The costs of increasing the percentage and biomass of natives in our suburban landscapes are small, and the benefits are immense. Increasing the percentage of natives in suburbia is a grassroots solution to the extinction crisis. . . . We can each make a measurable difference almost immediately by planting a native nearby. As gardeners and stewards of our land, we have never been so empowered—and the ecological stakes have never been so high.

—*Doug Tallamy*

Many Floridians are adding more Florida native plants to their landscapes. The reasons for this trend vary widely:

- To reduce maintenance costs—both time and money
- To reduce irrigation and water use
- To reduce pollution and runoff for the sake of nearby waterways
- To attract birds
- To use fewer pesticides—organic or not—for health reasons
- To save monarch butterflies and other pollinators
- To reduce utility bills by cooling the air and shading south or western exposures
- To reduce frustrations with dealing with poor turf grass condition
- To create an authentic Florida yard

“How do I get started with a more native landscape?” is the question many people are asking. Most of Florida’s urban and suburban landscapes are dominated by acres of lawn that are typically overfertilized, overwatered, and regularly sprayed with herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides. In addition, lawns are often not allowed to go dormant and are overseeded with cool-weather grass to keep them bright green in the winter. Planting beds around the lawns are often filled with thirsty exotic plants that are replaced each season. Landscapes are frequently outlined by



*WHEN A NEIGHBORHOOD GOES NATIVE, IT WELCOMES
BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES, AND OTHER WILDLIFE.*

monoculture and monolithic hedges of exotic plants (often full-sized trees) that are severely trimmed. Many yards feature plants that are invasive in Florida, and surprisingly, as bad as these plants are for Florida's natural areas, garden centers still sell them and neighbors who don't realize that these plants are harmful to Florida's natural habitats still share them.

This book takes a step-by-step approach to creating a more native landscape in one small urban or suburban yard. Our sample yard is 100' by 145' (about one-third of an acre), which is typical of many Florida yards. There are many ways to approach native landscaping, and several real-life vignettes have been included throughout the text to demonstrate other approaches and methods to fit specific situations. These describe how real people handled their problems to end up with beautiful, mostly native landscapes.

So let's get started!