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Governor Signs New Water Conservation Bills

Two new bills have been signed by the governor to help conserve water and the environment in Florida. Governor Crist recently signed bills SB2080 and SB 494.

The first new bill, SB2080, replaces the term “xeriscaping” with the term “Florida-Friendly Landscaping™”. These landscapes conserve water, protect the environment, are adaptable to local conditions, and use drought tolerant plants. The principles of such landscaping include planting the right plant in the right place, efficient watering, appropriate fertilization, mulching, attraction of wildlife, responsible management of yard pests, recycling yard waste, reduction of stormwater runoff, and waterfront protection. Additional components include practices such as landscape planning and design, soil analysis, the appropriate use of solid waste compost, minimizing the use of irrigation, and proper maintenance.

The bill prohibits deed restrictions, covenants, and local government ordinances that may prohibit property owners from implementing Florida-Friendly Landscapes.

The second new bill, SB494, revises the requirements for automatic landscape irrigation systems and requires that all commercial fertilizer applicators be licensed. The bill requires any person who buys and installs an automatic landscape irrigation system must properly install, maintain, and have an automatic shut off device installed on the system. Licensed contractors who install or repair systems will be required to install or repair any faulty automatic shut off devices. Contractors will also be required to report systems that are not in compliance.

The bill addresses the installation and use of soil moisture sensor control systems. Soil moisture sensors are devices that assess the available plant soil moisture in order to minimize the unnecessary use of water and optimize the effectiveness of an irrigation system. Systems can be electronically monitored by local agencies to see if the system is being used properly.

SB 494 requires that all commercial fertilizer applicators be licensed. This applies to fertilizers that contain no pesticides. This will go into effect January 1, 2014.

Further information on these bills can be found at:

<http://www.flsenate.gov/data/session/2009/Senate/bills/billtext/pdf/s2080er.pdf>

<http://www.flsenate.gov/data/session/2009/Senate/bills/billtext/pdf/s0494er.pdf>

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