

In addition to development of BMPs for the landscape, FNGLA participated in a cooperative effort with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Agricultural Water Policy and UF/IFAS to develop BMPs for container nurseries, field grown, greenhouse and cut foliage producers. Joint consideration of the best available science, sound agronomic principles, grower input and economic factors resulted in a list of unique production strategies embraced and practiced by Florida’s plant industry.

BMPs are practical, cost effective actions that plant producers can take to reduce the amount of pesticides, fertilizers, and other pollutants entering our water resources. When implemented, BMPs prevent, reduce, or treat pollutant discharges, help improve water quality and conserve water supply. They are designed to benefit water quality and water conservation while maintaining or even enhancing production efforts.

Using the best production practices outlined in the *Water Quality / Quantity Best Management Practices for Florida Nurseries*

manual by the Florida Department of Agriculture helps growers feel confident that everything possible has been done to assure water leaving the nursery property meets state water quality standards and will not impair the natural waters of the state. Plant production and maintenance recommendations in this manual will remain consistent with scientifically recognized and approved BMPs. The guide is available at www.floridaagwaterpolicy.com.

Grades and Standards

There are two sets of standards that assist in the selection of plant material and provide a guide to specify and negotiate plant quality. Florida Statute 581.031 (2)(3) provides a vehicle to establish precise communications between buyer and seller about grade standards for nursery stock. Plant grades that are specified in any landscape contract must

- 1) Meet tolerances for plant pests under the Division of Plant Industry certification rules and regulations.
- 2) Originate from a Division of Plant Industry registered nursery.

photos by division of plant industry, florida department of agriculture



Figure 18. Example of Florida Fancy *Quercus virginiana*.



Figure 19. Example of Florida #1 *Quercus virginiana*.

- 3) Meet the grade standards for quality set forth by the Division of Plant Industry.
- 4) Be correctly labeled with scientific or accepted common name, grade and date of delivery.
- 5) Be living stock and not be in a dying condition or seriously broken, frozen or damaged.

Florida plant quality standards are detailed in *Grades and Standards for Nursery Plants, 5th Edition 2015* by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry (DPI). The grades and standards guide can be accessed from the information list provided at www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Plant-Industry/Business-Services.

Grades established by Florida Grades and Standards are Florida Fancy, Florida #1 and Florida #2. Florida Fancy is the premium grade with decreasing quality indicated by Florida #1 and Florida #2. Plants that fall below the Florida #2 grade are culls. The better grades will require less pruning and maintenance after planting and are likely to establish more quickly.

The use of Florida Grades and Standards is becoming widespread. A common specification on landscape plans is “all plants shall be Florida #1 or better.” While this specification is good, it is limited by the fact that only those plants listed in the Grades and Standards manual can be graded. A result is that some of the plant material available is not graded. A study of the standards and grading matrix guidelines will indicate aspects that make a quality plant and those that make a poor plant. With this knowledge, one can do a much better job of selecting quality plant material.

The *American Standard for Nursery Stock* (ANSI Z60.1) published by AmericanHort is a standardized system of sizing and describing plants using common terminology to facilitate commercial transactions involving nursery stock. AmericanHort has been accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), an organization that helps make standards development an equitable and open process to

serve both industry and the public good. ANSI accreditation assures that developed standards have been evaluated against a set of criteria to confirm openness, balance, due process, and consensus in standards establishment.

The use of these recognized standards should help prevent disputes between buyer and seller because they establish common techniques for (a) measuring plants, (b) specifying and stating the size of plants, (c) determining the proper relationship between height and caliper, or height and width, and (d) determining whether a root ball or container is large enough for a particular size plant. These standards are provided for numerous plant types ranging from fruit and shade trees to bulbs and Christmas trees. The most recent revision took place in 2014 and can be accessed online at http://americanhort.org/documents/ANSI_Nursery_Stock_Standards_AmericanHort_2014.pdf.

Invasive Plants in Florida

Nursery and landscape industry professionals have a strong vested interest in environmental stewardship. FNGLA is aware how destructive invasive plants are to Florida’s unique environment and has chosen to be proactive in protecting valuable resources by joining with land managers and researchers to stop the spread of invasive species.



Figure 20. Invasive hydrilla degrading the recreational value of a freshwater lake.