

 [Print This Article](#)

BRADENTON HERALD

Bradenton.com

[Back to web version](#)

Friday, Nov 30,

Posted on Fri, Nov. 30, 2007

New College seeks greener landscape ideas for Florida

By JESSICA KLIPA

jklipa@bradenton.com

In the midst of a regional drought and extended water restrictions for Manatee and Sarasota counties, New College of Florida hosted a Sustainable Landscape Symposium on Thursday.

Driven by the need to conserve natural resources and promote landscaping compatible with Florida's environment, speakers shared ideas on how to accomplish one common goal with topics ranging from Florida-native plants to **Empire Zoysia turf**.

At the symposium, New College also announced the newly formed Sustainable Landscape Council, made up of landscape businesses and organizations, which will seek to provide long-term solutions to many challenges in the industry.

"'Green' is an umbrella under which a lot of things fall," said John Kiefer, vice president of E3 Building Sciences. Between two organizations, the U.S. Green Building Council and the Florida Green Building Coalition, sustainable landscape standards have not been well defined.

"It's something they've been wrestling with," he said.

The aim of the Sustainable Landscape Council is to set standards for the industry. It will allow the council to have an active role in educating the public about environmentally friendly products and practices that will preserve water and natural resources and create less runoff.

One of the benefits to the Sustainable Landscape Council is that it will give a unified voice in setting the standards, said Mike Pope, director of sales and marketing for Bethel Farms.

"It's about time the fertilizer guy and turf guy talk," he said. "This is really the first step."

Laurel Schiller, owner of Florida Native Plants, said people have a tendency to envision Florida as a tropical, lush state without thinking about the challenges of drought, water restrictions, cold spells and coastal saltwater intrusion.

"What I'm wanting you to do is rethink what you thought when you came here," she said.

Schiller's recipe for a sustainable lawn includes providing a shady environment, eliminating or minimizing turf, installing native plants, using mulch and doing away with pesticides.

The symposium at New College went along with the mission of its own landscape project at the entrance of the college. The project, which features about 120 native cabbage palms, Florida-native plants and a few exotic trees, is designed to be self-sustaining within one to two years.

"Having a vacant lot at the entrance of the college is not ideal," said Jono Miller, director of the New College environmental studies program. "Landscape is the fastest and cheapest way to make a difference on the campus."

Jessica Klipa, Herald reporter, can be reached at 708-7906.

© 2007 Bradenton.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.bradenton.com>