

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**  
**RESIDENTIAL IRRIGATION / LANDSCAPING: ORD. 2008-02**

**1. When does the new landscape ordinance take effect?**

Ordinance 2008-02 requirements are effective on all applications submitted on or after February 4, 2008; however, building applications received prior to February 4<sup>th</sup> will be reviewed under Ordinance 2004-13.

**2. Does the new ordinance allow me to install an irrigation system that covers all of my landscaped areas?**

Yes, as long as a minimum of 50% percent of the landscaped areas are in a low-water use zone. This means that half of the irrigation system must utilize low water emitters such as drip, micro-spray, or bubbler systems and no more than 50% percent of the landscaped areas are irrigated turf grass.

**3. Which turf grasses are considered high-water use species?**

St. Augustine grass is a turf grass that has many cultivated forms available, most of which require a considerable amount of soil moisture to adequately survive. Zoysia grass requires less water than St. Augustine, however, it is not considered drought tolerant. The areas of your property that have these turf grasses are high-water use zones.

**4. What are some alternative turf grasses used that would not require so much water?**

Some of the most commonly used drought tolerant species in Hernando County are Bahia and Bermuda grasses. Bahia grass is more prominently used than Bermuda and is less expensive. Once established, these turf grasses need very little to no irrigation assistance to survive.

**5. Can I mix turf grasses to meet the minimum code requirements for low-water use zones?**

Although not prohibited by the ordinance, this is not recommended because the stronger of the two grass species will eventually overtake the other. Fertilizers and lawn maintenance will all need to be adjusted in order to facilitate the separate specie's preferences. Also, remember that only 50% percent of the landscaped area can be an irrigated turf grass. Selecting one species of turf grass and incorporating other landscaping techniques would be a better choice.

**6. What other landscaping techniques do you suggest other than planting low-water turf grasses?**

Florida-friendly landscaping, sometimes called Xeriscape, is an excellent way to minimize water consumption. The principles of Xeriscape include planning and design, appropriate choices of plants, soil analysis which may include the use of solid waste compost, efficient irrigation, practical use of turf, appropriate use of mulches, and proper maintenance. This will also give you a chance to be creative with your landscaping. Information on Florida-friendly landscaping and Xeriscape is available at the University of Florida IFAS Extension Service.

Preserving natural areas on your property benefits you in many ways. Natural areas do not require irrigation and provide shade during some of the hotter months of the year. These areas can be utilized as visual and sound buffers that help increase residential privacy. Also, preserving trees on your property saves you time and money from having to plant trees to meet minimum landscape requirements (see question #7).

**7. What are the tree requirements in Hernando County?**

The tree requirements are based on a property's total square footage:

*Lots up to and including 7,000 square feet = 2 trees*  
*Lots over 7,000 square feet up to 10,000 = 3 trees*  
*Each additional 3,000 square feet over 10,000 = 1 additional tree*

If planted, at least 50% percent of the trees must be shade trees and a minimum 2" inch caliper.

**8. Do I need a permit to cut down a tree in my backyard?**

A permit is required when removing protected specimen or majestic trees. A specimen is a tree with a DBH (diameter at breast-height) of 18" inches or greater but less than 36" inches. A majestic tree has a DBH of 36" inches or greater.

These trees are required to be preserved. Hernando County will permit the removal of a protected tree if the tree is an immediate safety hazard and/or causing property damage. A site inspection is required to determine if other conditions exist such as if the tree is weakened by age, storm, fire or other injury so as to pose a danger to persons or property.