

The car of the future

Maybe you've seen one on the road and didn't even realize it. But, every day they are saving County residents both fuel and money all at once.

"They" are Hillsborough County's fleet of hybrid vehicles. And, three years ago, Hillsborough County began purchasing the vehicles, which are built to look like any other car.



The Toyota Prius is an example of a new fuel-efficient hybrid vehicle.

The major difference is, hybrids are more cost and fuel efficient and release fewer emissions.

Hillsborough County owns four hybrids, including a new Ford Escape 4x4 hybrid, which run on both gas and electric power.

The vehicles are relatively maintenance free and save the County an average of \$550 annually in fuel costs.

Tips *(From front page)*

Florida-friendly landscaping emphasizes several principles aimed not only at conserving water, but also protecting the environment. These include putting the right plant in the right place, watering only when the plants need it, maintaining two to three inches of mulch, recycling grass clippings and leaves, fertilizing only as needed, providing for wildlife, managing yard pests responsibly,

and reducing stormwater runoff.

And if saving water and helping the environment isn't enough incentive, consider this: Florida-friendly lawns and landscaping almost always require less maintenance.

While you're putting in new plants, it's a good time to install a low-volume drip irrigation system in your landscaping beds. Kits, sold in most home stores, consist of a flexible polyethylene hose with emitters of varying sizes. The hose can be connected directly to an outdoor faucet. You can water flowers and other plants with these systems without having to follow water restrictions, so long as the use is not wasteful.

And don't forget to consider using a rain barrel to collect water for your landscaping and outdoor plants. You can make your own, or buy one ready-made from a garden store.

For more information on Florida-friendly landscaping, warm weather watering and rain barrels, contact the Hillsborough County Cooperative Extension Service at 744-5519, or log on to hillsborough.extension.ufl.edu.

Visit these
water wise web sites
for more conservation
tips:
[www.hillsboroughcounty.org/
water/](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/water/)
www.tampabaywater.org
www.watermatters.org

Planning a Move? Make Sure You're Protected

If you're planning to relocate like the 40 million other Americans moving this year, be sure to protect yourself from being victimized.

Moving scams typically start with an exceptionally low estimate and end with the refusal to deliver or return the property until the higher bill is paid.

Internet web sites have made it easy for moving industry scammers to advertise cheap, and relocate effortlessly through multiple names and hidden locations.

You can reduce your chances of becoming a victim of a moving scam by checking each mover's reputation. Stick to firms approved by the American Moving and Storage Association (AMSA). Find out if other consumers have filed complaints by calling your local Consumer Protection Agency, Better Business Bureau, and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. You can also search consumer web sites dedicated to exposing fraudulent moving companies.

Get at least three moving estimates. Never get an estimate over the telephone or over the Internet sight unseen. If your move takes you to another state, the interstate movers are required to publish their prices and adhere to them. Ask for a copy of a tariff.

If you are moving within the State of Florida, the Department of Agriculture and Division of Consumer Services regulates intrastate movers and they are required to be licensed by the state.

For more information, visit www.800helpfla.com or contact the Hillsborough County Consumer Protection Agency at 903-3430.

Is Your Yard Water Wise?

2005 Community Water Wise Judging Gets Under Way

Every year since 1999, homeowners, businesses, schools, government buildings and other properties across Hillsborough County have entered their landscapes in the Community Water Wise Awards. This competition focuses on outdoor water conservation and appropriate landscape design, typically one of the largest sources of water consumption.

Judges from the Hillsborough County Water Department, Soil and Water Conservation District, City of Tampa Water Department and the Hillsborough County Extension Service will visit properties to determine if they are "water wise".



Judging includes factors like the retention of existing trees and vegetation, reduced stormwater runoff, landscape design and plant selection, and more. Irrigation systems are checked for proper installation and maintenance, and water use records also are obtained to track annual water savings.

Applications are available from the Hillsborough County Extension Service by calling 744-5519, ext. 144 or visiting hillsborough_fyn.ifas.ufl.edu. Also visit Tampa Bay Water's web site at www.tampabaywater.org. Applications are due by the end of August, and judging will take place in September and October.

NEWS BRIEFS...

A Clean Sweep

Hillsborough County launched its first-ever street-sweeping program last month to improve the appearance of an estimated 2,500 miles of county streets. A total of three cleanings are scheduled this year for county roads with curbs and gutters.

After this first trial year, County staff hopes this will become an ongoing project with an increased number of sweepings each year and an established route throughout the County. In addition to beautifying our streets, the program is expected to keep trash and sediment out of the stormwater system, which would greatly benefit the environment.

County Awarded Grant

Hillsborough County received the largest increase in funding within the state of Florida as the recipient of the Ryan White CARE Act Title I grant.

The increased funding will be administered for the local area based on allocations approved by the West Central Florida Ryan White Care Council and are awarded through a competitive process to providers serving people living with HIV/AIDS and their families in an eight-county area, including Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando, Manatee, Polk, Hardee and Highlands.

Hillsborough County Communicator

Published every month by the Communications Department to inform residents about the programs, services and activities of their County government.

For more information, call the Hillsborough Information Line at 272-5900, or visit the county's website at: www.hillsboroughcounty.org

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COMMUNICATOR

Keeping You Informed About County Government
MAY 2005

Warm Weather Watering and Landscaping Tips



May typically sees the highest demand for water in our area. The weather gets much warmer. The summer rainy

season hasn't yet kicked into gear. Homeowners water their lawns, landscaping and outdoor plants more often. Gardening enthusiasts get out their gloves and begin planting a variety of vegetables and flowers.

You can't change Mother Nature, but you can give her some help with Florida-friendly landscaping. Selecting drought-tolerant plants saves water. Grouping plants by water needs helps you irrigate more efficiently.



(See "Tips," inside)

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