

# Hillsborough County Office of Neighborhood Relations

Volume 8 Issue 1 [www.hillsboroughcounty.org/onr](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/onr) Jan./Feb 2005  
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



## Don't Forget to Register!



The 2005 Hillsborough County Neighborhoods Conference is approaching. It will be held March 12, 2005 and will be bigger and better than last year. This year's one-day conference will feature 27 workshop topics that will educate members of homeowner associations and residents of Hillsborough County about various topics important to our community.

The program will include a choice of three workshops, exhibit booths from county agencies and businesses, continental breakfast, lunch during the Neighborhood Recognition Awards Ceremony, door prizes and other giveaways. This is also an excellent opportunity to network with other associations and elected officials. All for only \$10!

To register call the Office of Neighborhood Relations at 272-5860 or visit our web site at [www.hillsboroughcounty.org/onr](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/onr) to download the registration form. The registration deadline is Feb. 25. Don't miss this opportunity! The Board of County Commissioners and the Office of Neighborhood Relations hope to see you there.

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## 2004 Lonnie Lea Napier Award Winner Announced

In December, Tom and Irene Collins were chosen as the recipients of the 2004 Lonnie Lea Napier Good Neighbor Award. The couple was nominated by Mrs. Bonnie Miele, their next door neighbor. Mrs. Miele will tell you first hand the many things that the Collins' have done to help her all year long.

Mrs. Miele has been seriously ill and often requires immediate medical attention. Enter Tom & Irene Collins. On many occasions, Tom and/or Irene have driven Mrs. Miele to the doctor's office or hospital and have never asked for anything in return. When Mrs. Miele and her husband were away at a hospital, the Collins' would watch their home and take care of their cats. On one occasion, their house was hit by lightning. Mr. Collins was there to disarm the alarm system and check to make sure the house was not in danger. On another occasion a water line broke and Mr. Collins was there to shut the water off. Many times when Bonnie Miele would be at the hospital, Irene Collins would provide Mr. Miele with dinner.

Mrs. Miele regrets that one day she will have to move away and said, "Tom & Irene are always there and at the right time. They are an unusual couple. They are unusual because they really care about their neighbors." Mrs. Miele admits that she would like to take the Collins family with her when that day comes. Because Tom & Irene Collins have shown Bonnie Miele and her family unconditional love and friendship, they were unanimously chosen the Lonnie Lea Napier Good Neighbor Award winners for 2004.

Both Tom and Irene Collins will be recognized for their service and commitment to their neighbors on March 12, 2005 at the Hillsborough County Neighborhoods Conference where they will be formally presented with the Lonnie Lea Napier Award.



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**Serving Neighborhoods Throughout Hillsborough County!**

## Editors Corner

By Tony LaColla  
 Neighborhood Connections Editor



The holidays are over and it seems neighborhood activities are in full swing again. Our office has been busy working hard to help you in any way we can.

Currently we are gearing up for the 2005 Hillsborough County Neighborhoods Conference. We encourage everyone to come out for a day of learning and networking that will provide you the tools needed to gain a greater understanding about how to improve your community. This is not just for association presidents and board members, but for any resident of Hillsborough County.

A key part of the conference will be the presentation of the neighborhood recognition awards. If you feel your neighborhood is deserving of recognition for a community-wide project we encourage you to submit an application for consideration. We have so many citizens in Hillsborough County working hard to make their neighborhoods better places to live. Apply and get recognized!

As part of the conference program we will also be recognizing our offices tenth anniversary. 2005 marks 10 years of service. Be with us as we celebrate this milestone and plan for the future. See you there on March 12!

### SEND ONR YOUR STORIES!

Every year Hillsborough County neighborhood, civic, and crime watch associations are busy working to improve their communities. If your association or group has what you believe to be a newsworthy story, we'd like to publish it.

Send your story, with photographs, to Tony LaColla at [lacollaa@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:lacollaa@hillsboroughcounty.org) or call him at 307-3564 for more information. Please keep article to no more than 1,000 words and please submit everything in digital format if possible.

We would love to put your association in the **Spotlight** and give it the attention it deserves.

## TIPS FOR HAVING A SUCCESSFUL PICNIC

From the City of Renton, Washington Neighborhoods Program

Beautiful weather will be around for the next few months and with it comes many neighborhood association picnics and block parties. Here are some tips to make your party a bit more successful and enjoyable.

- Make sure you have a committee. Seek volunteers to head each of your major areas. They can solicit the help needed from fellow neighbors or their families.
- Set-up early! Know what you want your volunteers to do and this will help with knowing how many are needed.
- Assign greeters to welcome neighbors as they come. Do not assume everyone knows everyone. Have name tags available. This is a good time to have a sign-in sheet for future mailings (include e-mails), or areas of interest. This is also a good time to talk about the goal of the event. If there is an agenda, hand it out now.
- Food table volunteers will direct, if necessary, where to put main dishes, side dishes and deserts. They can also help serve. Volunteers should also handle the ongoing clean up.
- Play games! There are two different kinds of games—those that need someone to direct and those that are self directed. Have someone in charge of the games— it is a good idea to have a mix of organized contest and self-directed activities. A great event that involves young and old is "Simon Says." Prizes are always a great motivator for participation.
- Prizes—if you decide to give prizes, it is a good idea to keep it simple. Ribbons can be made, and candy can go a long way. "White elephant" prizes can be fun if



you know your group well enough. Perhaps let them pick their own. Door prizes can also be drawn. Nevertheless, have someone in charge because everyone can contribute; however it is not fair to the person doing the games to also do the prizes.

- A Master of Ceremonies keeps things flowing. If there are announcements, or speakers they take the lead in presenting them.

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# Preparing and Reinforcing Your Home Before Hurricane Season

**Sponsored by: Tampa Bay Builders Association**

- When:** March 5, 2005 - 9:00am -12:30pm
- Location:** Hillsborough County Extension Service  
5339 County Road 579, Seffner 33584
- Registration:** Pre-registration is required and seating is limited. Register by contacting Jennifer Fernandez at 813-744-5519 x137 or online at <http://hillsborough.extension.ufl.edu>

For persons with disabilities requiring special accommodation, please contact Jennifer at least five working days prior to the program so proper consideration may be given to your request.

**Class topics will include:**

- Tree care and protection
- Evaluating residential structures
- Hiring a contractor
- Reinforcing your home - garage doors, windows, trusses
- Preventing Moisture Problems

**Program Partners:**

Hillsborough County Extension, Hillsborough County Planning and Growth Management, Bracken Engineering, and the Tampa Bay Builders Association.

# Water Department

## MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING RESIDENTIAL RECLAIMED WATER

### How can property owners obtain reclaimed water service for their community?

Reclaimed water in Northwest Hillsborough County is presently fully committed. Hillsborough County staff will work with homeowner association representatives to evaluate the feasibility within your community. If it is identified as a feasible reclaimed water project, the community will be placed on a waiting list and will be notified in writing when reclaimed water becomes available.

Reclaimed water capacity in South/Central Hillsborough County is currently available. Hillsborough County staff will work with homeowner associations to determine the feasibility and cost involved to construct a reclaimed water distribution system to their subdivision. A member of the homeowner association or neighborhood representative should contact Randy Sears, 272-5977, ext 2108 to obtain more information.

### What are the benefits of using reclaimed water?

The benefit to the environment is the conservation of the potable (drinking) water supply. The financial benefit is that reclaimed water is less expensive than potable water.

### What is the monthly user charge for residential reclaimed water service?

Single-Family Residential Accounts shall be assessed in accordance with the adjacent table.

### Are rates subject to increases in the future?

Possibly. Water, wastewater and reclaimed water rates and fees are set annually. These rates are normally submitted for review and approval to the Board of County Commissioners at a public hearing in the spring.

### Are there any additional charges for reclaimed water?

In addition to the monthly user fee, there are additional costs for each flat or metered rate connection to the County's reclaimed water system.

The connection charge for a standard residential 5/8 X 3/4 dual-check back-flow prevention device is currently \$60. The charge for a standard pre-tapped residential metered connection is an **additional \$25. (This charge will be billed as a one-time charge on your monthly water bill)**

The homeowner is responsible for all costs to connect their sprinkler system to the County's Reclaimed water connection box. This connection must be performed by a licensed

MONTHLY USER RATES—SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL				
Type Of Charge		Charges by Connection Subclass		
		Unmetered		Metered
		Initial <sup>(1)</sup> ( <sup>2</sup> )	Committed <sup>(2)(3)</sup>	
<b>Base Facility Charge</b>		\$6.00	\$9.00	\$3.75
Usage Charge (per 1000 gallons)		None	None	Per - usage blocks
Block 1	0 to 5,000 gallons	N/A	N/A	\$0.25
Block 2	5,001 to 15,000 gallons	N/A	N/A	\$0.40
Block 3	Above 15,000 gallons	N/A	N/A	\$0.55

(1) Residential properties in reclaimed water improvement units created pursuant to County ordinances (RWIUs) on or before **April 1, 1997** are eligible for Initial-Class reclaimed water connections. Initial-Class rates shall remain fixed through **March 31, 2007**. Beginning **April 1, 2007**, Initial-Class rates will be increased over a **3-year** phase-in period to the then-current rates for Committed-Class connections.

(2) The rates in this subclass apply only to reclaimed water connections of 1 inch or smaller. Connections larger than 1 inch are subject to Metered-Class rates.

(3) Residential properties in RWIUs created prior to **November 20, 2001** and residential properties in neighborhoods for which a conditional approval for connection of the neighborhood to the County's reclaimed water system was issued prior to **November 20, 2001** are eligible for Committed-Class reclaimed water connections. The owners of residential properties within such neighborhoods or their legal representatives may enter into an agreement with the County—individually or collectively—documenting a 30-year exemption from metered reclaimed water service within the neighborhood.

irrigation or plumbing contractor and does require a permit. To confirm the validity of a contractor's license, homeowners can contact Development Services, Contractor Licensing, at (813) 635-7308.

**What is required to connect a residential irrigation system or to install an in-ground hose bibb connection to the reclaimed water distribution system?**

Upon approval of reclaimed water availability to a subdivision, the property owners must read and sign a "Residential Reclaimed Water Service Application" and "Hold Harmless Agreement" which can be obtained from the Water Department's Customer Service Section at (813) 272-6680. The County will then install a backflow prevention device. Then, a purple door hanger will be placed on the front door notifying the property owner that the licensed plumber or irrigation contractor may apply for a plumbing permit and proceed with the reclaimed water connection.

**Are there any watering hour restrictions on reclaimed water?**

No. The use of residential reclaimed water is not currently restricted. Residents are encouraged to irrigate before 8:00 am or after 6:00 pm.

Homeowners are allocated sufficient water to irrigate their landscape in drought conditions. This is a precious resource and should be used wisely. Over-watering could temporarily deplete the system. The result of this temporary depletion could result in low pressure to your community.

**Who is responsible for the maintenance and repairs of the reclaimed water system?**

Hillsborough County is responsible for the maintenance and repairs of the reclaimed water transmission and distribution lines. This includes the reclaimed water curb stop located in the County easement of the property. The homeowners are responsible for any repairs or maintenance from the reclaimed water box to their irrigation system that is located on their private property.

**Does any agency establish standards for reclaimed water?**

Hillsborough County's reclaimed water complies with all requirements established by Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for public access reuse. Reclaimed water produced at our facilities is a very high quality resource. The DEP has developed stringent regulations for the quality of reclaimed water including the operation and design of reclaimed water "public access" systems that provide reclaimed water. In developing these requirements, DEP's highest consideration is the protection of public health. Reclaimed water is monitored and tested daily to make sure DEP standards are

met or exceeded. Reclaimed water is generally of much higher quality than the surface water which individuals might come in contact with in nearby rivers, streams, lakes or ponds

**Can I eat vegetables if watered with reclaimed water?**

The DEP does not permit reclaimed water for human consumption, therefore, direct contact of reclaimed water is only allowed on crops that will be peeled, skinned, cooked, or thermally processed before consumption. Indirect application methods, such as ridge or furrow irrigation, drip irrigation, or a subsurface distribution system that preclude direct contact are allowed for edible crops that are not peeled, skinned, cooked, or thermally processed before consumption. (DEP Rule 62-610)

**Why can't I use reclaimed water to fill my pool or spa?**

DEP Regulation Section 62-610.469(4) specifically states that reclaimed water shall not be used for drinking and filling swimming pools, hot tubs, or wading pools. Since the DEP does not permit reclaimed water for human consumption, the likelihood of reclaimed water being ingested in a swimming pool, hot tubs, or wading pools should be eliminated.

**Is reclaimed water in any way detrimental to landscape plants or turf?**

Reclaimed water is safe for most plants and lawn grasses. However, a few plants, such as certain species of azaleas and roses, are sensitive to the slightly higher chloride (salt) content of reclaimed water and care should be taken when watering these plants. For additional information about the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods program, please contact Marina D' Abreau-Pryce with the Hillsborough County Cooperative Extension Service at 774-5519, ext. 144.

**Does reclaimed water have an odor or does it stain?**

No. Other than a slight chlorine scent, reclaimed water has no odor and there is no staining.

**What pressure can I expect from the 5/8 to 1 inch service line reclaimed water connection?**

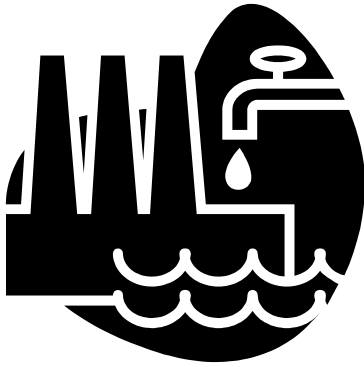
The homeowner's reclaimed water line pressure will be about 45 PSI.



*Continued on Page 6*

## Reclaimed Water

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### What are the regulatory guidelines regarding reclaimed water use?

The following outlines the approved uses, restrictions, and operating guidelines for reclaimed water to protect human health and the environment, as regulated by Federal, State, and/or County agencies.

#### 1. **Approved uses for reclaimed water** identified in Florida Administrative Code (FAC) Chapter 62-610:

a. **Landscape irrigation** via an in-ground sprinkler system. Reclaimed water may also be applied using a hose bibb (connection) assembly that is located in a below-ground locked vault or service box and clearly labeled as being of non-potable quality (bearing the words in English and Spanish: "**Do Not Drink -- No Beber**" together with the equivalent standard international symbol). Hillsborough County requires that the hose bibb connection assembly, including the lock box and rubber hose, be as specified in the *Water, Wastewater, and Reclaimed Water Technical Manual*, Section 6.

b. **Cooling water, wash water, or process water** at industrial facilities per DEP Rule 62-610.650 FAC.

c. **Irrigation of edible crops.** Direct contact (application) is allowed on crops that will be peeled, skinned, cooked, or thermally processed before consumption is allowed, such as tobacco or citrus. An indirect application method, such as ridge and furrow irrigation, drip irrigation, or a subsurface distribution system that will preclude direct contact of the crops, is allowed for edible crops that are **not** peeled, skinned, cooked, or thermally processed before consumption.

d. **Aesthetic purposes.** Reclaimed water may be used in decorative pools, fountains, ponds, and other aesthetic features. An aesthetic feature that is a water of the state or will discharge to waters of the state is subject to compliance with Chapter 62-650 F.A.C.

e. **Toilet Flushing and Fire Protection** for commercial or industrial processes as per DEP Rule 62-610.476 FAC.

f. **Dust Control** at construction sites per DEP Rule 62-610.478 FAC.

g. **Other reuse applications** such as washing of

vehicles, roads, sidewalks, and outdoor work areas and mixing of concrete as per DEP Rule 62-610.480 FAC. Reclaimed water shall **not** be used to fill swimming pools, hot tubs, or wading pools.

1. **Customer's irrigation system.** Reuse customers shall install and maintain both a **cut-off valve** on the customer's side of the service connection and an operable automatic rain sensing **shut-off device**, per County Ordinance 94-12. Customers shall maintain their irrigation systems in proper working condition and adjust sprinklers and timing schedule to preclude reclaimed water from pooling or draining onto adjacent properties, streets, storm sewers, or water bodies.

2. **Separation distance.** A separation distance of 75 feet is required between a potable water well and the reclaimed water spray area. Low trajectory nozzles are required for any areas irrigated by reclaimed water within 100 feet of public eating, drinking, or bathing facilities.

3. **Potable water protection.** To protect the public potable (drinking) water supply, the customer shall install and maintain a reduced pressure principle backflow prevention device at points of connection where the customer's potable system is connected to the public potable water main.

4. **Cross connection protection.** The customer's reclaimed water system shall be completely isolated and may not be linked by valve or direct connection to any other water source including the public water supply, any groundwater well, or lake withdrawal system. Cross connections or dual connections with other potable or non-potable water sources are **not** allowed.

5. **Identification of pipes, valves, etc.** All reclaimed water pipes, valves, and outlets shall be color-coded purple or appropriately tagged or labeled in English and Spanish: "**Do Not Drink --No Beber**" together with the equivalent standard international symbol to differentiate reclaimed water from domestic or other water sources and to inform the public that the water is not intended for drinking.

6. **Signage.** The customer shall post County approved advisory signage notifying the public of the use of reclaimed water in accordance with DEP Rule 62-610.468(2) – (5), at their facility entrances and intermittently throughout the zone of application. The County will provide the appropriate signage to the customer.

#### **Who can I contact if I still have questions about reclaimed water?**

For additional information please contact Randy Sears at 272-5977, extension 2108 or by email at [SearsR@HillsboroughCounty.ORG](mailto:SearsR@HillsboroughCounty.ORG)

## Federal Income Tax Breaks Available

Hillsborough County is participating in the Prosperity Campaign of Hillsborough & Pinellas Counties in a national effort to help working families and individuals claim available tax credits. Every year millions of dollars go unclaimed because eligible individuals are not aware of important tax benefits that could result in larger refund checks.

The Prosperity Campaign is a strong community collaborative supporting low to moderate income working people through the promotion of Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), free tax preparation, financial education and affordable deposit accounts and Individual Development Accounts. The Prosperity Campaign's main objectives are to increase community access and usage of the EITC, CTC, free tax preparation sites and financial education and thus increase levels of mainstream banking and savings for working families.

To claim the **Earned Income Tax Credit**, individuals must meet the following rules:

- Must have earned income
- Must have a valid Social Security Number
- Investment income is limited to \$2,650
- Filing status cannot be "married filing separately"
- Generally must be a U.S. citizen or resident alien all year
- Cannot be a qualifying child of another person
- cannot file form 2555 or 2555-EZ (related to foreign earned income).

You may qualify for the **Earned Income Tax Credit** if:

- You have more than one qualifying child and you earned less than \$34,458 (\$35,458 if married filing jointly)

- You have one qualifying child and you earned less than \$30,338 (\$31,338 if married filing jointly)
- You do not have a qualifying child and you earned less than \$11,490 (\$12,490 if married filing jointly)

### Child Tax Credit:

- The Child Tax Credit is a nonrefundable credit and may be as much as \$1,000 per qualifying child depending upon your income
- The Additional Child Tax Credit is a refundable credit and may give you a refund even if you do not owe any tax
- Additional information is available in IRS Publication 972. File form 8812 to claim the Additional Child Tax Credit.

For **Free Tax Preparation** locations in Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties:

- Visit [www.UWTB.org](http://www.UWTB.org)
- Call 211 (or 813-234-1234 from a cell phone in Hillsborough County or 727-562-1542 from a cell phone in Pinellas County)

This information will be updated as sites and hours of operation change.

You may contact Kristen Phillips with the Hillsborough County Department Health and Social Services at 813-301-7335 for more information. In addition, the IRS website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) provides tax instruction booklets containing information on these and other credits.

## Registration Period Extended for FEMA Assistance



The Federal Emergency Management Agency has extended the registration period for its Individuals and Households Program. People affected by hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne have until Monday, Feb. 28, to apply for additional assistance.

FEMA agents also want to remind registrants to complete and return their Small Business Administration applications to be considered for any type of assistance.

Homeowners, renters and business owners should call 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) to apply for assistance. The TTY number for persons who are hard of hearing or speech impaired is 1-800-462-7585.

**DAVID'S DID YOU KNOW THAT!!!**

By David Ash, Jr., Neighborhood Coordinator



Sign welcome visitors to Forte Nursery, Inc.

Did you know that there are over 450 nurseries in Hillsborough County? Well, one could say that there should be because this, after all, is Florida; the land of sunshine, palm trees and sandy beaches. Central Florida, particularly Hillsborough County, was once open range filled with native cactus, palmetto bushes, scrub stumps, pine trees and swamps

filled with rattlesnakes and cotton-mouth moccasins. A land that was not conducive for anything or anybody except for the pirates, escaped criminals and moon-shine runners. So what does that have to do with nurseries and landscaping? A lot!

If you listen to any nurseryman, they will tell you that Florida and Hillsborough County has plenty of sunshine and rain which is a must for plants and other vegetation to grow, an ingredient that is rare compared to the majority of other states.

So what David? Get to the point! Well, did you know that of the over 450 licensed nurserymen in Hillsborough County, that there are only two (2) Black men who meet that standard. Ironically, both of these men's first names are Ben. However, It was Ben Forte who was the very first black nurseryman to open in Hillsborough County.

Ben was born, raised and educated in East Hillsborough County and still resides there today. He has owned and operated his nursery and landscape business for over 30 years. Again David, what's so big about that!? Well, I ask you the question; How many licensed and successful Black landscape/nurseryman do you know? None? I thought so. According to the Hillsborough County Agricultural Extension Office, there are approximately twenty-five (25)



Mr. Ben Forte

Hispanic nurserymen and two Black nurserymen operating in a business that generate over three-hundred million dollars a year.

I first met Ben Forte about 24 years ago. He was referred to me by a mutual friend of our family who knew that I was a struggling and near-broke homeowner that needed help to finish the landscape of his home. I will never forget the first question he asked of me when we met in the bare yard of my home in 1979. "David, how much of a budget do you have set aside for your landscaping?"

I really did not know what he meant about a budget for landscaping because I only had about \$250 left in cash, to finish the entire project. Ben, looked at me as if to say, this guy must be crazy if he thinks that I am going to layout his yard with sod and landscape materials for \$250. I immediately read his face and pleaded with him to just to do what he could for me and my wife with the \$250 and assured him that I would pay him on a pay as we go basis. Well, I believe Ben felt sorry for me as he did landscape the front yard with an assortment of evergreen plants mixed with some blooming Gardenias, Azaleas and giant Junipers.

Since that time, things have been fairly good for Ben. He began on a small two acre piece of land next to his home and now has expanded to a 40-acre site along Smith-Ryals Road in Bealsville. Ben told me that you must have a true love for the nursery/landscape business. Many times he has been faced with obstacles and setbacks due to a number of reasons. However, you must have a strong drive in yourself to provide a good product to your customers. Once you have formulated a respectful relationship with your customers/clients, they will always return for business over and over again.

Ben Forte, landscape/nurseryman, native Hillsborough County resident and truly an integral part of Hillsborough County history.



A small portion of Mr. Fortes' 40-acre nursery.

## INVASIVE SPECIES AWARENESS

### Japanese climbing fern *Lygodium japonicum*



Japanese climbing fern is a climbing and twining perennial viney ferns that grow to 90 feet. Vines arise from underground, widely creeping rhizomes. Wiry stems may be green to orange, turning dark brown or black. It's leaves are finely divided/dissected when mature and bright green in color. The leaves vary in appearance according to the number of divisions in the leaflet and species. *L. japonicum* leaves have a "lacy" appearance. Leaves are two to six inches long and two to three inches wide.

These ferns occur in disturbed areas such as alongside bridges, roadside ditches and fence lines. Also commonly found along stream and swamp margins and open forests. They will grow in shady or sunny areas. Flooding will not kill the ferns, as they will also thrive in shallow water as well as dry areas. The ferns form mats up to 4 feet thick on trees and shrubs, smothering trees and native vegetation.

The vines are mostly deciduous by late winter—or turn dark to tan in winter. Vines that have died back provide a trellis for next season's growth. Reproduce by millions

of spores spread by wind and other physical carriers.

Cut the viney-ferns to knee- or waist-high then apply glyphosate immediately or foliar spray using glyphosate and metsulfuron methyl with care if treating around desirable plants. Care should be taken to remove upper fronds, as spores may still be viable. Dispose of dead material in plastic bags. For best results, control this plant from July to October during its active growth. Reapplications will be necessary.

Once the Japanese climbing fern is removed, native plant replacement include: Cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*), Royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) and the Chain fern (*Woodwardia virginica*).

**For more information**, please contact the Invasive Species Task Force (ISTF) at 813-671-7754. To request a free invasive species seminar, please contact the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program at 744-5519, x144.



## Hillsborough County Water Conservation Technical Advisory Committee - Update

By Stephen J. McDowell, PhD

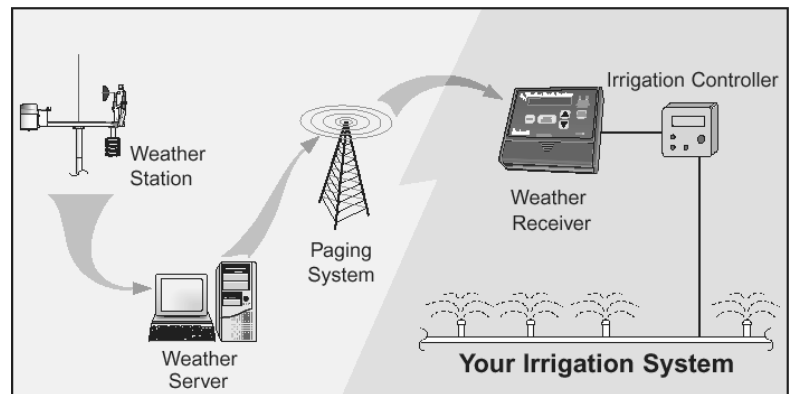


At the November 2004 meeting of the Hillsborough County Water Conservation Technical Advisory Committee, the Southwest Florida Water Management District's presentation showed the tri-county area comprising Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas Counties consumed an average of 1.2 million gallons of fresh water per day. This is an overall increase of 3.8% over last year. Historical usage studies also point out that up to 50% of this water is used outside the home for residential irrigation.

edge technology, imagery and sensors to determine when the best time is to water your lawn. This system will also save you dollars while protecting your investment, i.e., your lawn and shrubs.

One of the topics discussed to reduce the use of irrigation water is a pilot study on Weather-Based Irrigation Controller systems. A few communities in California are implementing this system that is based on cutting

One of the key benefits is that unlike traditional sprinklers or irrigation systems that depend on timers to turn on and off the system, the weather based system uses technology to determine when and how much water is needed to maintain the proper health of your lawn and shrubs. A common problem associated with traditional sprinklers is over watering that results in mold, fungus, and plant disease, and wasting your money. By applying the right amount of water at the right time, the lawn and shrubs get the proper amount of water needed to maintain the lush appearance that signifies healthy lawns and plants void of disease and trouble. Also, by using this system you'll be able to avoid the "watering restrictions" as you'll be using water more efficiently all the time.



The County will be in a Controller Research Phase for about a year prior to actual field studies on individual properties. The research will be conducted at the University of Florida's new facility on State Road 672 in Balm. Following the Research Phase, the County will be looking for volunteer homeowners that would be willing to allow testing at their home and Home Owners Associations (HOA) for testing in common use areas. For more information, check out this website: <http://www.irrigation.org/swat/>

The Hillsborough County Water Conservation Technical Advisory Committee meets quarterly and our next meeting is in February 2005. As your representative, I'd like to hear from you on issues, concerns and suggestions regarding water conservation.



*(In November, Dr. McDowell was appointed by the Board of County Commissioners to fill a volunteer position to represent the HOA's of Hillsborough County. He is a Telecommunications Architect and Program Manager with AT&T supporting the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). He is currently the Vice President of the Lakes of Cristina Phase III HOA in Riverview and can be contacted at [sjmcowell@att.com](mailto:sjmcowell@att.com)).*

## TOWN HALL MEETING SCHEDULED IN SOUTH COUNTY



With several community plans under development and two newly elected countywide commissioners representing their interests, south county residents won't want to miss an opportunity to attend an open forum with Hillsborough County Commissioners at the first Town Hall meeting scheduled for the year.

Residents from the areas of Apollo Beach, Gibsonton, Ruskin, Wimauma, Riverview, Balm, Summerfield and Sun City Center can attend this meeting Thursday, Feb. 3 at the East Bay High School Auditorium, 7710 Big Bend Road in Gibsonton. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. with exhibits and information provided by many county departments, and the open-mike session is scheduled 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Residents who can't attend the meeting in person can watch it LIVE on HTV22, the county government's cable channel. During the broadcast, viewers can also phone a special number-272-5275 with their questions and comments. The messages will be read throughout the meeting, in between comments and questions from the audience.

In addition to Commissioners, directors of key departments will be at the meeting to answer questions about specific projects. A newsletter summing up the evening's discussion will be mailed to everyone who participates in the meeting.

Town Hall meetings are a quarterly tradition for County Commissioners. Every few months, they visit various communities throughout the county for a one-on-one, open dialogue with their constituents.

All meeting facilities are accessible in accordance with the Americans With Disabilities Act. Any additional necessary accommodations will be provided with a 48-hour notice by calling 272-5275.

For more information, call Steve Valdez, Communications Department, at 272-5275 (TTY: 301-7172).



### Picnics

*Continued from page 2*

They will need the agenda explaining what time things should take place, from the opening welcome to the thank-you for coming.

- Safety—Make sure someone has a cell phone and/or first aid kit in case of emergency.
- The job isn't over until the place looks like it did before the event. Don't be the last one there doing this on your own. Ask each of your committee chairs to stay and help because they know who brought what, where they got it from, and where it goes.
- Know what you are going to do with leftover items, spoons, bowls, and jackets. Are you going to keep them for a week and then donate them...let people know how to get a hold of you.
- Be sure to thank your volunteers, a simple hand written note is thoughtful. You could also put something in your newsletter. If you have the means to thank everyone who came (using the sign-in sheet) recap the event (E-mail with pictures). It helps to keep the feeling of good-will going.
- **AND MOST IMPORTANT - HAVE FUN!**

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505 E. Jackson Street  
P.O. Box 1110  
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**Serving Neighborhoods throughout Hillsborough County!**

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March 12, 2005

8:00 am to 2:30 pm

Hillsborough Community College  
Dale Mabry Campus  
4001 Tampa Bay Blvd.

For more information call 272-5860 or visit  
[www.hillsboroughcounty.org/onr](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/onr)

See you there!

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