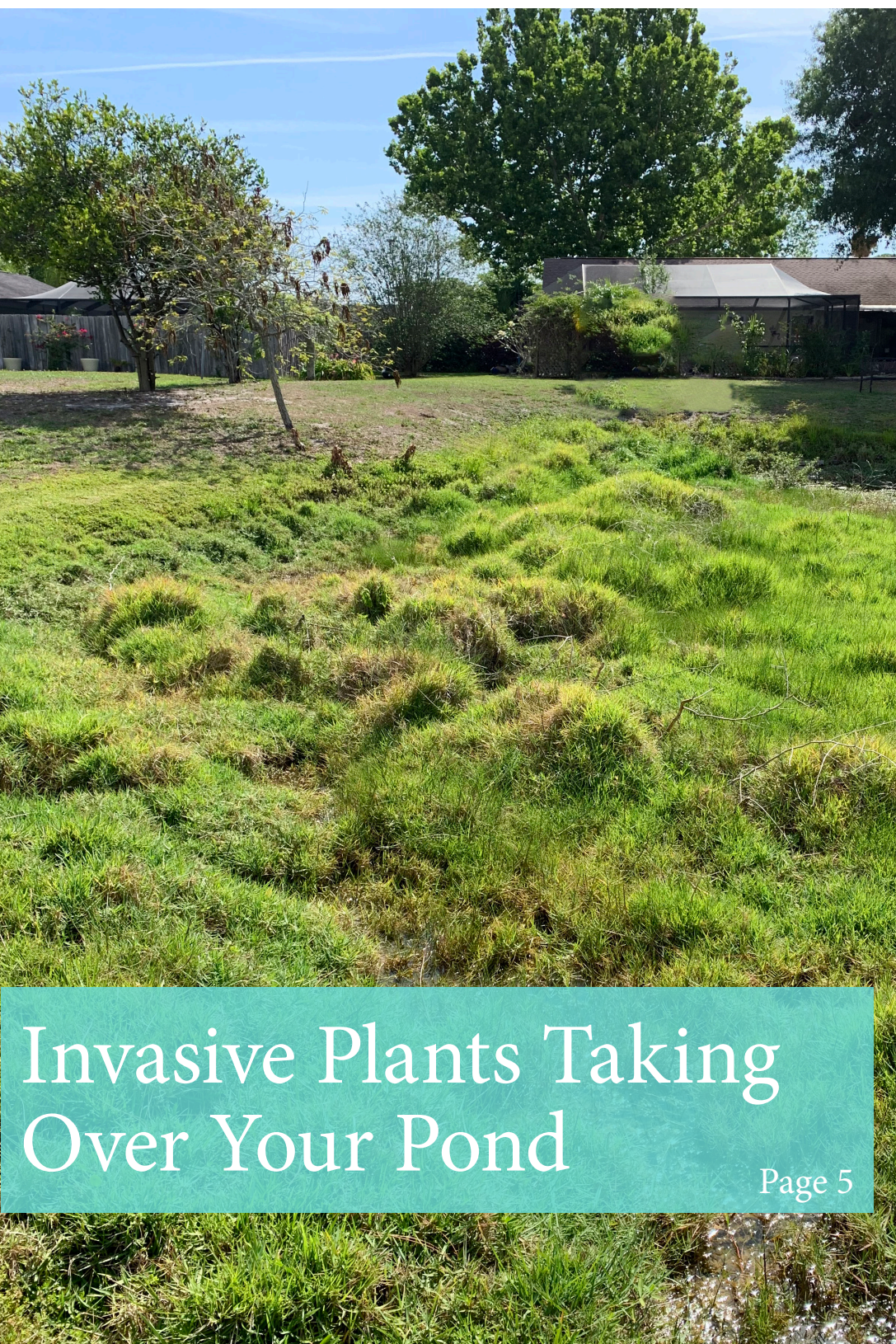




On Our Pond



Quarterly Newsletter Published By: Hillsborough County Environmental Services Division



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Wetland Protection Changes

A recent decision by the United States Supreme Court affects over 118 million acres of wetlands across the country regarding their federal protection. So what is a wetland and why are they so important? The United States Environmental Protection Agency defines a wetland as an area "where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of time during the year, including during the growing season." These wetlands are invaluable resources which serve multiple functions. Wetlands serve as habitats for several species of birds, fish, amphibians, etc., including endangered species. The plants in and around wetlands can filter pollutants such as nitrogen and phosphorus out of the water, and they are the best defense against flooding because of their large storage capacity. On top of everything else, a majority of the drinking water in Florida comes from the Floridan aquifer, which is recharged by wetlands throughout the state. When wetlands become polluted from sediment, excess nutrients, etc., the drinking water supply is also polluted.



So what changed? For several years, wetlands with a "significant nexus" to regulated waters were federally protected. This meant that certain waterbodies, such as wetlands, were protected under the Clean Water Act "based on their connection to and effect on larger downstream waters that Congress fundamentally sought to protect." Now, the Supreme Court ruled that the Clean Water Act only protects wetlands "with a continuous surface connection to bodies that are 'waters of the United States' in their own right." Ultimately this means that if a wetland is upstream from a "relatively permanent body of water connected to a traditional interstate navigable water[]," but does not have a continuous surface connection to that water, then there is no federal protection for that wetland. As a result, downstream waters are more likely to become polluted without protected wetlands upstream filtering out pollutants. But why does a wetland upstream affect waterbodies downstream? A watershed is an "area of land that drains all the streams and rainfall to a common outlet such as . . . [the] mouth of a bay." Without protected wetlands upstream, all of the waterbodies downstream will experience influxes in nutrients, sediments, etc., which will have an overall negative impact on the watershed. In Hillsborough County, all waterbodies eventually drain to Tampa Bay through a series of storm drains, stormwater ponds, and pipes. If there is less protection for wetlands, Tampa Bay would be the overall victim.

Storm Drain Marking Program



Did you know that Hillsborough County provides storm drain markers to residents for free? Storm drain markers are placed on curb inlets as reminders that storm drains are only for rain - not oil, grass clippings, leaves, fertilizers, trash, or pet waste! Kits can be requested and include storm drain markers, glue, and door hangers to let everyone in the neighborhood know about the markers and the message they carry. Go to <https://hillsborough.wateratlas.usf.edu/adopt-a-pond/storm-drain-marking-kit.aspx> and fill out the requested information for your storm drain marking kit today!



How to Fertilize Responsibly

As of Nov. 17, 2021, Hillsborough County has a seasonal fertilizer ban that regulates fertilizers containing nitrogen and/or phosphorus from June 1 to Sept. 30. The ban applies to residents, homeowners, homeowners association common property management, businesses, governmental entities, and commercial companies. During winter, fertilizers containing nitrogen can be applied to lawns as well as fertilizers containing phosphorus as long as a soil analysis shows a phosphorus deficiency. However, there are still several things to keep in mind when buying fertilizer. Fertilizers containing nitrogen must have at least 50% slow release nitrogen. This information can be found on the fertilizer bag listed as such, or can be calculated with some simple math (dividing the percentage of slow release nitrogen by the percentage of overall nitrogen). Fertilizers containing nitrogen cannot be applied prior to seeding or within the first 30 days after seeding, all broadcast or rotary spreaders must have spreader deflector shields, and most importantly, all excess fertilizer must stay off of all impervious surfaces. All of the information mentioned above plus more can be found at <https://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/en/residents/sustainability-and-green/fertilizer-ordinance-and-regulation>. Excess fertilizer ends up in storm drains and eventually waterways, feeding algae and increasing nitrogen and phosphorus levels, so please make sure to fertilize responsibly and follow the restrictions outlined in Fertilizer Ordinance 21-42.



Native Aquatic Plants Word Search

G S O A C C M M U D A U S A W
P O E K A H T F A C D C I E O
L A L F W C G E K U Z P R X L
W I U D D N H A C N E I I O L
C E Z U E W C K J U E C G X A
H R Q A O N P T P A E K A Q M
J U T R R O C N C V W E L W E
Z B R D T D W A N V N R F P S
C A A A V P S Z N Z A E E N O
F I T X F F S T F N Z L U W R
F O J H N Y Z B A U A W L K P
E C N B F I Y A H I T E B W M
Z F F I R E F L A G L E L M A
C Q F G U X R E F I I D P J W
H S U R L U B M E T S T F O S

Can you find all of the native aquatic plants in the Word Search?
Send a picture of your completed puzzle to UsewickS@HCFLGov.net for a free Adopt-A-Pond t-shirt!

- Arrowhead
- Fire Flag
- Pickerelweed
- Blue Flag Iris
- Golden Canna
- Soft-stem Bulrush
- Duck Potato
- Lizard’s Tail
- Swamp Rosemallow





Identifying Invasive Aquatic Vegetation

Have you seen these in your pond or lake?



Peruvian Primrose Willow



Water Hyacinth



Torpedograss



Water Lettuce



Why is it Important to Remove Invasive Aquatic Vegetation?

Why should we remove invasive vegetation from our ponds? In many cases, invasive vegetation is/is was introduced through the aquarium or ornamental trade. Invasive vegetation is non-native and therefore has no natural predators. Vegetation with no natural predators can grow quickly and take over an area, choking out native vegetation. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), “[I]t is estimated that more than 1.7 million acres of Florida’s remaining natural areas have become infested with non-native plant species.” There is an Invasive Plant Management section of FWC that administers programs at the state, federal, and local government levels to manage noxious aquatic weeds, protecting Florida’s natural ecosystems.

Hurricane season started on June 1 and ended November 30. But what does hurricane season have to do with invasive aquatic vegetation? Hurricanes can cause massive environmental harm to waterbodies such as ponds and lakes. One of the biggest concerns with hurricanes is that the high winds can cause vegetation to uproot, leaving behind bare shorelines susceptible to erosion. However, the concern surrounding invasive vegetation is that high winds from hurricanes can uproot and spread invasive vegetation to ponds and/or lakes where it might not have been present before. The more ponds and/or lakes where invasive vegetation is introduced increases the amount of acres mentioned in the above quote from FWC. It is extremely important to maintain ponds and lakes in order to keep invasive vegetation under control. The pictures below are an example of invasive vegetation taking over a pond. Over a relatively short period of time torpedograss went from covering a small portion of this pond to over 50% of the pond. The picture above shows just how dense torpedograss can grow.



April 2012



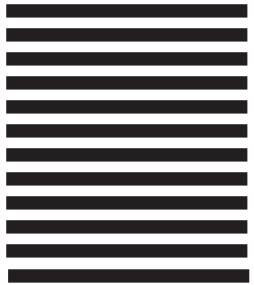
January 2019



May 2021

The Adopt-A-Pond Program
Hillsborough County
Environmental Services
2420 N Falkenburg Road
Tampa, FL 33619
Mail Code 3708

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Tampa, FL 33601
Permit No 295



**Hillsborough
County Florida**

Adopt-A-Pond

The Adopt-A-Pond program is running at full speed, and we're getting a lot of questions. Below you can find some FAQs and answers from our Adopt-A-Pond coordinator, Sarah Usewick. If you have any additional questions or concerns please send an email to UsewickS@HCFLGov.net

Is my pond eligible for the program?

-There are certain eligibility requirements which must be met in order for a pond to be eligible. These requirements can be found at <https://hillsborough.wateratlas.usf.edu/lake-and-pond-management/#adopt-a-pond-program>.

Will the county clean up my pond?

-No, community members who sign on to adopt a pond will be responsible for cleaning the pond before planting and maintaining the pond once vegetation is established. Hillsborough County does not provide labor for pond maintenance or plantings.

Will the plants take over my pond?

-No, the plants we have selected for this program are native and will continue to grow in a healthy environment, but not in an overly aggressive manner. However, routine maintenance will be necessary to keep invasive vegetation from returning to your pond.

What does the county provide?

-Hillsborough County provides information and materials, pond walks, and most importantly plants free of charge. If your pond is not eligible for the program, and therefore not eligible for plants, we will still provide pond walks and pond recommendations.