



Learning From Experts To Improve Rivendell's Pond Health P&P Participates in Sarasota County's "Healthy Pond Workshop"

By the Ponds and Preserves Committee

[Woodlands Word – February 2022]

In November, three P&P Committee members participated in a two-day workshop hosted by **Mollie Holland**, Coordinator, (L) Sarasota County Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team (NEST) and **Abbey Tyrna**, Ph.D., (R/inset) University of Florida. The "**Healthy Ponds Workshop**" was designed to expose community members to the factors behind thriving stormwater ponds. Participants, including Rivendell P&P residents **Bob Frank**, **Frank Freestone** and **Sue Remy**, learned how to evaluate and enhance water quality through education, mitigation, and management goals.

Our instructors: **Mollie** uses a Secchi Disk to measure water clarity, while **Abbey** shows off their new **Pond Assessment Tool** app.->



The primary focus of the course was how to improve the water quality of stormwater ponds and the downstream impact of that water quality. We learned that our stormwater ponds are typically considered to be "eutrophic," meaning that they have a high level of nutrients that promotes plant growth and some algae formation. Aquatic plants in ponds help manage the water quality and can help control algae formation. Specifically, plants along the shoreline contribute beneficially to erosion control, and manage the nutrients that are discharged from the pond into local estuaries, and ultimately to the Gulf.

"Stormwater pond maintenance is new to Florida residents," Mollie told us. "It is important that HOAs focus on education for decision makers within the community so that knowledge can be communicated to the residents. Only when embraced by the entire community can these best practices be completely successful."

Workshop discussions confirmed that Rivendell's current approach using low-maintenance zones (LMZs) coupled with shoreline aquatic plantings is a good strategy for pond health, and that these two actions are considered best practices. Another outcome of the workshop is that we are developing individual goals for some of our ponds with unique challenges.

"It is important for Sarasota County residents to know that in our area ponds should have plants. In fact, the only way to have a pond without plants is to rely on a consistent arsenal of poison," Abbey told us. "Plants in the pond are a sign of good health."



(Bob Frank photos.)

Your Actions Do Make A Difference!

We also learned more about how our own actions affect the water quality of our ponds. Our need to manage algae in our ponds with toxic herbicides and the water quality of the pond discharges are all influenced primarily by what **nutrients are washed from our lawns** and into our ponds. Our choices for fertilizer use, as a community and as homeowners, affect both our algae management requirements and the water quality discharged to estuaries and the Gulf. We are working with our community contractors regarding reduced use of toxic herbicides and fertilizers. We also remind all homeowners to follow Sarasota County's guidelines for responsible fertilizer and irrigation practices and reduce usage where possible.

The P&P will continue to install shoreline plants as part of our healthy ponds initiative - however that is only half the story. We need to work together to reduce the amount of fertilizer that goes into our ponds especially from our own backyards. Reducing the nutrient load will enhance the effectiveness of the LMZs and plantings, thereby improving water quality. Working together, we can keep our ponds healthy and vibrant. The benefits are significant: improved water quality, attractive wildlife habitats, and beautiful natural aesthetics... plus strong property values.



P&P members, **Sue Remy**, **Frank Freestone**, and **Bob Frank** successfully completed the **Healthy Ponds Workshop**.