



Healthy Pond Plants – Your Questions Answered

By the Ponds & Preserves Committee

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(Nancy Dobias photo.)

In mid-May, you likely noticed that crews were busy around our community ponds planting more aquatic vegetation. This is a continuation of a multi-year program to install Rivendell Natural Shorelines along our ponds. These native plants, along with our low-maintenance “no-mow” zones, help control erosion and absorb nutrient runoff to improve water quality. Here are responses to **Frequently Asked Questions** about our ongoing pond maintenance actions.



Q – How do Aquatic Plants Benefit the Ponds and Enhance Low-Maintenance Zones (LMZs)?

A – Native species selected for our ponds are **Duck Potato, Pickerelweed** and **Gulf Coast Spikerush**. These emergent aquatic plants were chosen for their deep roots that help stabilize the bank, hold soils in place and reduce damaging wind & wave action that cause erosion damage. Plants aid the LMZs and make them more effective to control erosion and runoff. These plants adapt to our fluctuating seasonal water levels, plus, they offer vital shelter, nesting, and food sources for wildlife.

Q – Will these Aquatic Plants Overtake the Ponds?

A – No, the native species of plants being installed are shoreline plants will not propagate beyond a foot or so of shoreline. They will spread along the edge, but do not grow in deeper waters. Visit **Egret Pond** (across from our pool) – the plant clusters are growing and becoming more dense, but have not migrated beyond the pond’s shoreline.

Some residents fear that these plants will take over our ponds – not likely – they naturally grow in waters no more than about 12 inches deep. Plants that appear in the middle of a pond are intentionally planted in very shallow water on what is called a **littoral shelf** that acts to filter the pond water. This is part of the original design of the stormwater management system - not an invasion of undesirable aquatic plants, nor the intrusive spreading of plants beyond our pond edge.

Q – What is a Littoral Shelf? What Role does it Play in our Ponds?

A – Littoral shelves are man-made shelves of land that are part of the stormwater management system. It is a shallow shelf in a water body that is planted with native aquatic vegetation, located by the outflow structure of stormwater retention ponds. The purpose of a littoral shelf is to help filter out nutrients and minerals in the water prior to it leaving the pond via the outflow structure. In our community, a littoral shelf is easily visible on **Rivendell Lake**, where it appears to have floating plants in the pond – in fact they were deliberately planted on the shallow littoral shelf.

Q – What Can We Do To Help?

A – **Your Actions Make a Difference!** Every resident can help keep our community vibrant and strong for wildlife and each other. Follow Sarasota County’s rules for applying fertilizer to reduce nutrient runoff in our ponds. Irrigate only on your assigned day. Inspect your sprinkler system annually. Reduce water usage where possible. Healthier ponds attract more buyers to our community, increase our quality of life, and keep property values strong.



Pickerelweed



Gulf Coast Spikerush



Duck Potato