

The purpose of the stormwater pond is to remove pollutants before they are transported to natural lakes, rivers and streams. They will never be pristine swimming or fishing lakes (i.e. clear of vegetation or phytoplankton) because their purpose is to trap and transform pollutants before water is transported downstream. Some algae and plants that homeowners sometimes find objectionable help provide this pollution removal function.

Stormwater ponds need to be cleaned out periodically (about every 25 years) to keep them functioning properly. Aeration may also be beneficial. Consult a professional for information on the methods that can be used and proper disposal of dredged materials. However, some things can be done in the pond and the watershed to improve water quality and extend the periods between extensive maintenance efforts. An efficient functioning stormwater system takes as much time and effort as maintaining the rest of the landscape. In fact, highly maintained upland landscaping is a big part of the problem in keeping stormwater systems attractive.

Many homeowners do not connect their landscape design and maintenance practices to the problems in their stormwater ponds. Highly maintained lawns and direct discharge of stormwater into ponds cause

much of the weedy growth in stormwater ponds. One of the most important steps in having a more attractive stormwater pond is to form a partnership with all the people in the community and then learn as much as possible about your particular pond. If you use a company for pond maintenance, please make sure to include them. Some practical maintenance guidelines for stormwater ponds are:

- Remove debris especially at the inflow and outflow of ponds and give special attention to drains and drop boxes. This will reduce the amount of pollutants that the pond will have to remove.
- Inspect the entire stormwater system on an annual or semiannual basis and make brief inspection trips after each storm. Cleaning up debris is an important part of the inspection. Leaves, limbs and other debris should be removed from the conveyance system.
- Establishing a buffer or no-mow zone and making sure the discharge of your mower is not directed towards the pond will help keep grass cuttings out of the pond.
- Keep records of all maintenance needs plus work done on the pond.

*(Continued on page 2)*




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February 12, 2009

*The Florida-Friendly Landscaping program is based on Environmental Landscape Management (ELM) practices, and was developed in 1992 by the University of Florida, Sarasota Bay and Tampa Bay National Estuary programs, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Southwest Florida Water Management District, and local governments. The main objective of the program is to educate the public on how to develop and maintain sustainable landscapes that reduce stormwater runoff and impact the environment as little as possible.*

*Valuable natural resources are put at risk everyday by the decisions made in the landscape. It has been documented that certain landscaping practices contribute to many different forms of air, noise and water pollution. The Florida-Friendly Landscaping program is working to change behavior by teaching alternative forms of design and maintenance practices to create and sustain a landscape that is more ecologically in step with the surrounding environment.*

*For more information about Florida-Friendly Landscaping and other programs available at UF/IFAS Sarasota County Extension, visit our website at <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu>*

➤ A permanent open water pool that never goes dry helps in sedimentation of pollutants and mosquito control. The permanent pool water should contain adequate amounts of dissolved oxygen. If this is a particular problem then perhaps an aeration device can be added. Also, at least one third of the pond should be maintained as a shallow littoral shelf with desirable plant species to remove dissolved pollutants. For more information about littoral zones please contact Sarasota County Resource Protection at 861-6113. To find out where littoral zones exist in your neighborhood, you can visit their office at 1301 Cattlemen Rd. and view construction plans that clearly identify these zones.

➤ Removal of algae and nuisance plant species can be accomplished by rakes or hand pulling. If plant removal is part of the plan developed for your lake, obtain advice from your water management district (SWFWMD), Sarasota County Resource Protection and your pond management company.

#### **Resources:**

- Main, M. B., Allen, G. M. & Langeland, K. A.. (2006). *Creating Wildlife Habitat with Native Florida Freshwater Wetland Plants*. UF/IFAS Extension Service, CIR 912
- Southwest Florida Water Management District (n.d.). *Stormwater Ponds; A Citizens Guide to Their Purpose and Maintenance*.
- Southwest Florida Water Management District (n.d.). *Stormwater Systems In Your Neighborhood*.



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