



On Our Pond



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Apply for Adopt-A-Pond Now!



The wintertime is the perfect time to apply for Adopt-A-Pond!

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Free Pond Recommendation Reports

Pond Recommendation Report



Hillsborough County
Adopt-A-Pond Program



Hillsborough
County Florida



Call Hillsborough County Environmental Services Division to schedule a FREE pond walk today!

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Saving Money and Protecting the Environment

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Apply for Adopt-A-Pond Now!

The wintertime is the perfect time to apply for the Adopt-A-Pond Program because it gives residents and staff time to plan out spring and summer 2025 plantings! The application can be found at this link. Not sure if Adopt-A-Pond is right for you? Schedule a pond walk where Adopt-A-Pond coordinator Sarah Sacco will come out and evaluate current pond conditions as well as provide recommendations in the form of a report (physical or digital). Once enrolled in the program, it takes time to collaborate with group members over items such as which plants they prefer, where each type of plant would be best suited, and the best time to plant them. Applying early also allows group members to coordinate enough people to help with the planting process. Hillsborough County supplies the plants free of charge alongside detailed reports and diagrams for planting them, but labor is not provided. Still have questions about Adopt-A-Pond? Check out the Summer 2024 Adopt-A-Pond newsletter article!



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!

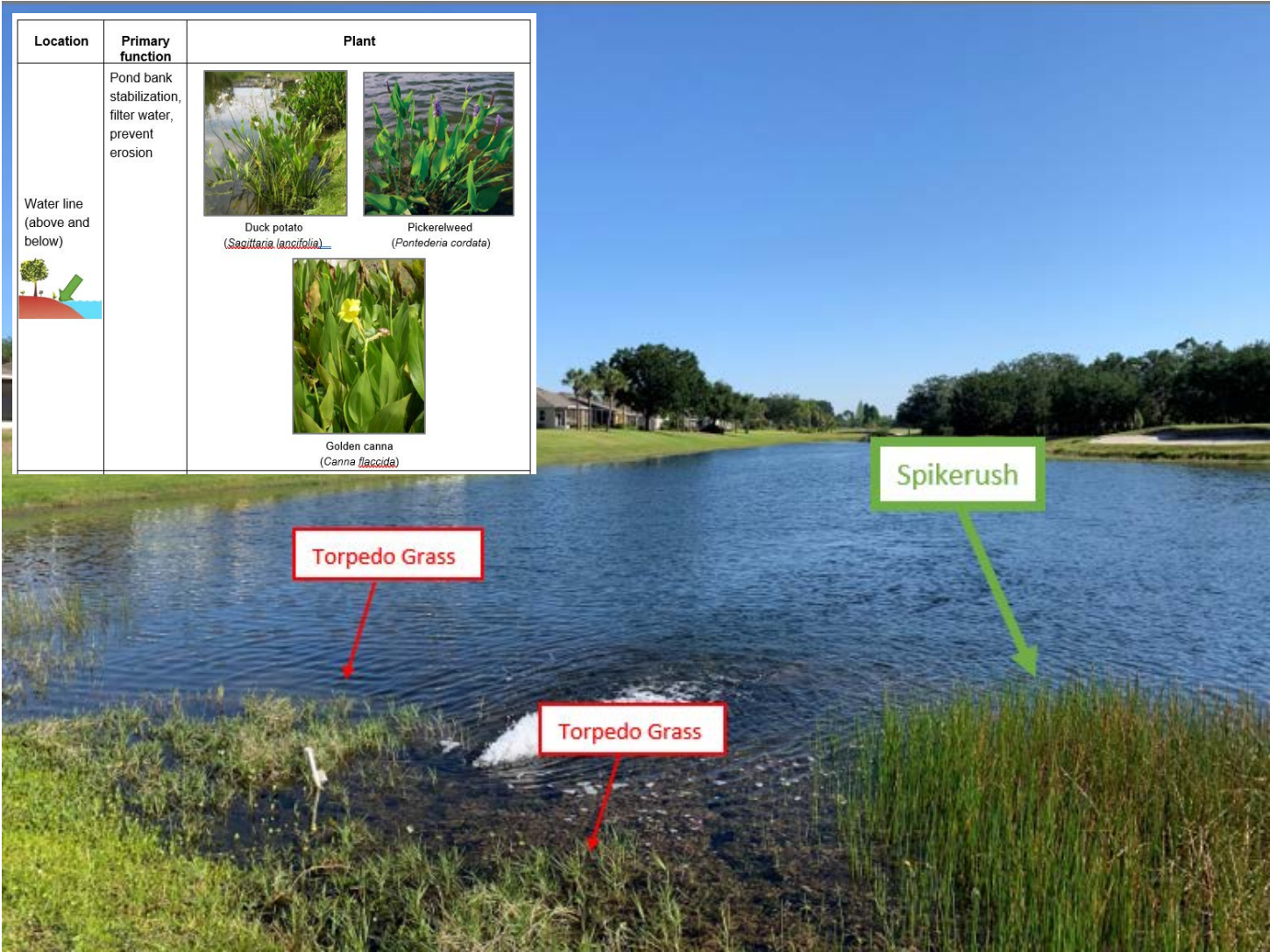


Free Pond Recommendation Reports

Do you live on a pond and have questions about your pond’s health or function? Call Hillsborough County Environmental Services Division to schedule a FREE pond walk today! Somebody with the department will come out to assess your pond’s current conditions as well as answer any questions you may have. A week or two later the staff provide a detailed pond recommendation report. These reports detail current pond conditions such as presence of algae, invasive plants, and/or wildlife observed throughout the walk. The report will also provide recommendations, if needed, that detail how to get rid of algae or invasive plants. Finally, the report will provide recommendations for plants that would be best suited for your pond. In most cases, problems such as algae and invasive plants can be solved with native, aquatic plants. Algae especially feed off nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus. A heavy presence of native, aquatic plants will reduce the amount of algae by absorbing those nutrients instead.

Interested in what the free recommendation report looks like? Some snapshots below show how the report identifies native and invasive vegetation in an easy-to-understand way. The green boxes and arrows are used to represent native, beneficial plants already in your pond, and the red boxes and arrows are used to represent invasive vegetation. There is also a section in the report that provides recommendations for native plants alongside their general function, whether it be pond bank stabilization or filtering nutrients out of the water.

Location	Primary function	Plant
Water line (above and below) 	Pond bank stabilization, filter water, prevent erosion	 Duck potato (<i>Sagittaria lancifolia</i>)
		 Pickerelweed (<i>Pontederia cordata</i>)
		 Golden canna (<i>Canna flaccida</i>)





Saving Money and Protecting the Environment: Reducing Outdoor Water Use with Tampa Bay Water Rebates

Outdoor irrigation is a major contributor to household water consumption, accounting for up to 50% of a typical water bill. This excessive use not only impacts your wallet but also places stress on watersheds, depletes aquifers, and contributes to runoff pollution. Fortunately, Tampa Bay Water offers rebates and incentives to help residents implement water-saving practices, making it easier and more affordable to conserve water outdoors.

Why Conserving Water Outdoors is Essential

Overwatering landscapes isn't just costly—it also harms the environment. Excessive irrigation often leads to:

- **Runoff Pollution:** Fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals are carried into nearby water bodies, contributing to harmful algal blooms and damaging ecosystems.
- **Aquifer Stress:** In regions like Hillsborough County, aquifers supply much of the drinking water. High demand from irrigation can lower these reserves, impacting water availability.
- **Wasted Resources:** Water that evaporates or runs off represents an unnecessary strain on municipal systems, particularly during dry months such as April and May.

By reducing outdoor water use, residents can protect Florida's water resources while saving money. Tampa Bay Water offers several rebate programs designed to encourage water efficiency. One rebate is the smart irrigation controller program, which is a win-win for homeowners and the environment.

Smart Irrigation Rebates

Eligible residents can receive rebates for installing smart irrigation controllers that automatically adjust watering schedules based on weather and soil moisture levels. These devices can cut outdoor water use significantly.

There also are strategies and upgrades residents can implement to reduce water consumption. This includes:

1. **Lawn-to-Landscape Conversion**
Replace water-intensive turf grass with native, drought-tolerant plants. UF/IFAS Extension can provide advice and resources while helping you transition to a Florida-Friendly Landscape that requires less maintenance and water.
2. **Rainwater Harvesting Incentives**
Collecting rainwater for irrigation is an effective way to reduce reliance on potable water. A rain barrel course is offered by UF/IFAS Extension and is designed to be affordable.

To learn more about these programs and apply, visit the Tampa Bay Water and/or the UF/IFAS Extension website or contact your local utility.

continued on next page.

Water-Saving Tips to Maximize Rebate Benefits

While rebates can offset the cost of upgrades, combining them with water-saving practices can amplify your savings:

- **Water During the Right Times:** Early morning and late evening are best to minimize evaporation. Please consult your city or county guidelines for what hours are to be avoided.
- **Inspect Your System:** Regularly check for leaks or misaligned sprinklers. This is an easy way to catch a problem that cascades into a costly and wasteful dilemma.
- **Use Mulch:** A layer of mulch around plants retains soil moisture and reduces the need for watering.
- **Choose Native Plants:** Native and drought-tolerant plants thrive in Florida's climate and require less water.

Benefits of Water Conservation

Reducing outdoor water use goes beyond saving money. It also protects the area as well as the local watershed:

- **Environmental Protection:** Prevent runoff pollution and protect local waterways.
- **Healthier Landscapes:** Overwatering often leads to shallow roots and weaker plants, while proper irrigation encourages deep, healthy growth.
- **Community Sustainability:** Lowering demand on water supplies ensures resources for future generations.

Start Saving Today

Reducing outdoor water use doesn't have to be overwhelming or expensive. With Tampa Bay Water's rebates and incentives, you can make impactful changes to your landscape while keeping costs manageable. Whether you're upgrading to a smart irrigation system or transforming your lawn into a Florida-Friendly Landscape, your efforts will make a difference for your wallet and the environment.

Take advantage of these programs and join the movement to conserve water and protect Tampa Bay's valuable water resources. Visit TampaBayWaterWise.org or contact your local utility to get started!



Check out the next
rainwater harvesting
workshop on February 1,
2025!



Some of the animals seen at ponds during pond walks!

Adopt-A-Pond FAQ

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 Sacco. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please send an email to SaccoS@HCFL.gov.

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.