

On Our Pond



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Freshwater Fish Feature: Chain Pickerel

By: Clay McKinley, University of South Florida Volunteer

Chain Pickerel, *Esox Niger*, are routinely spotted in freshwater bodies along the east coast of the United States. Originally, it was only found in the northern states, but managed to migrate down to Florida. It has a body shape and color that is ideal for hiding in vegetation. Olive-green scales and a soft-yellow underbelly decorate the pickerel's sleek frame. The numerous chain-like stripes wrapped around its body give the fish its name. It can live up to 10 years, grow to a length of three feet, and weigh over seven pounds.

Chain pickerel spend most of their time in the cover of vegetation, whether spawning or hunting. It is an ambush hunter, so it prefers to use dense vegetation as camouflage against unsuspecting prey. Its diet consists of shellfish, insects, small fish, frogs, and even mice. Spawning typically occurs in the early spring. The female will lay around 50,000 eggs that, unlike other species, the fish does not protect. After hatching, young pickerel will reach nearly two feet in length by the time they are three years old.

The chain pickerel is often confused for a bass when first hooked. They give a thrilling fight to any angler who manages to snag one. Spinnerbaits, crankbaits, surface plugs, and jigs have all been effective in hooking pickerel, but the most effective bait are minnows. The pickerel is more active in the warmer months, but it can be fished year round. Chain pickerel fillets have good flavor. Their meat is white and flaky, but, be wary, they can be quite bony. Currently, the largest chain pickerel caught in Florida weighed 6.96 pounds and had a length of 27 inches.

The chain pickerel is a fish to appreciate for both sport fishing and for being a powerful hunter. It is quite active in many rivers, lakes, and ponds, and thriving throughout Florida. Next time you are out on the water be on the lookout for chain pickerels dashing through the vegetation.

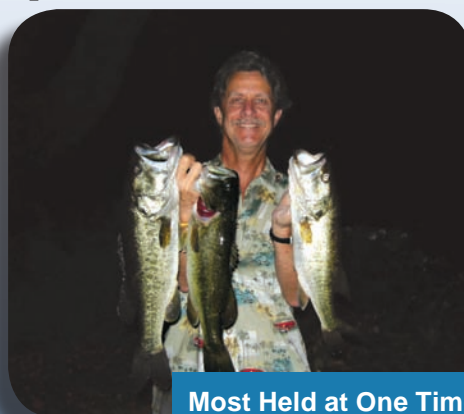


Bass Bragging Board Photos

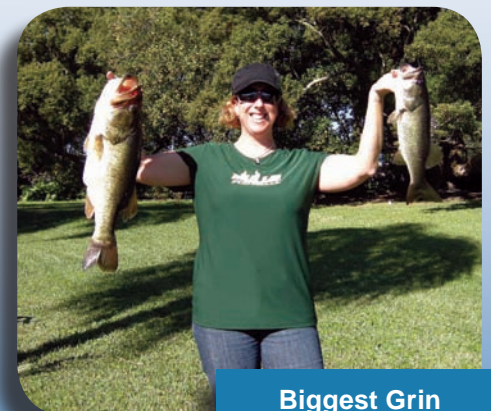
There was a lot of bass fishing around these parts and several of our readers were out to enjoy the sport! Below is a highlight of some of the photos posted on our Bass Bragging Board. To see more, visit the gallery at www.HillsboroughCounty.org/gallery.aspx?AID=51.



**Biggest Catch
by Sid Tingen**



**Most Held at One Time
by Danny O'Neal**



**Biggest Grin
by Monica Sturgeon**

Living Shorelines

Turf grass to the water’s edge is a thing of the past. More and more communities are capitalizing on the benefits of “living shorelines.” When turf grass meets the water, the roots cannot hold dirt in place and gradually the shoreline begins to erode. Areas that once had a gradual slope turn into abrupt drop-offs. Living shorelines, however, help prevent erosion by slowing the flow of water as it washes off yards and help curb wave action pushing against the shore.

Typically, living shorelines are thought of in coastal settings. They involve using natural materials and/or structural materials to stabilize the shoreline, improve water quality, and provide habitat for wildlife. They also ease the transition from upland to aquatic areas.

In coastal areas, living shoreline projects have included creating oyster reefs and planting wetland and submerged aquatic vegetation in place of seawalls and bulkheads. Armored shorelines, like seawalls, are only a temporary fix and can have problems. They can still experience erosion in front of and behind the wall, leading to costly repairs. Additionally, they can cause erosion along neighboring properties and do not provide any wildlife habitat or water quality treatment.



Brookton Pond is lined with an assortment of native plants.



Osprey Place Pond has beach sunflower and muhly grass bordering the water.

Freshwater environments, like lakes and ponds, also benefit from living shorelines. As you can see by these photos, living shorelines can have many different looks. Brookton Pond (above) in Sun City Center, has beach sunflower, muhly grass, and fakahatchee grass planted above the variety of native aquatic plants along their shoreline. Similar plants can be found around the Osprey Place Pond in Sun City Center (left). Shimberg Garden’s Adopt-A-Pond in Town ‘N Country (left below), is surrounded by wildflowers and visitors are greeted by the pink, yellow, and purple flowers, year after year. The pond located in Jean Park in the Forest Hills community (below), was planted with low maintenance, native maidencane and sand cordgrass to improve water quality.



Shimberg Gardens’ wildflower shoreline.



Jean Park Pond’s shoreline is planted with native grasses.

Adopt-A-Pond Activity

The summer season started out with a splash for Adopt-A-Pond plantings. In only a month's time, three pond groups added a new, beautiful array of blossoms to their shorelines.

Neighbors in the Henderson Subdivision of Citrus Park (pictured to the right) planted blue-flag iris and other native plants in their pond. The next morning, a great blue heron was seen perched on the floating island of plants they made.



The Windemere Subdivision in Lutz (pictured to the left) added native plants to their pond in memory of their neighbor, Gene Roberts. He would be proud of the beautiful pond transformation.



St. Timothy Catholic Church parishioners in Lutz (pictured to the right) were amazed by the instant change in appearance of their pond after adding close to 2,000 plants to the shoreline.

More pond transformations coming soon.



Pond Plant Spotlight: Lemon Bacopa

By: Daniel Beechner, University of South Florida Volunteer

Lemon bacopa (*Bacopa caroliniana*), also known as water hyssop, is a native plant to Florida and the southern United States. It gets its name from the lemony scent you smell from crushing its leaves. It is distinguished by its blue flowers and hairy upper stem. The leaves are relatively thick and arranged oppositely on the stem.

Lemon bacopa grows underwater, in fresh or brackish water, or in moist soil. The color of the leaves will vary depending on the amount of light the plant receives. They will turn from green to bronze or red under high light conditions.

Researchers in Taiwan have been studying lemon bacopa because they found it glows with a reddish light when they put small gold particles into its leaves. They are trying to determine whether this ability can be transferred to trees for environmentally friendly street lamps. This could cut energy costs, reduce global warming, and keep streets safely lit at night.



Free Lake Inspections

If you have questions about the condition of your lake, you can request a free lake inspection from our office. We will send out a lake expert to give a brief evaluation of the condition. If you are available, we will be happy to meet with you and discuss it in person. If we can access the lake without you, we can also inspect it and give you a written summary, so you do not need to be there.

Our inspection includes a visual survey of the vegetation, condition of the water, and addresses any other points of specific concern. It also includes a look into available historical and water chemistry information to assess lake conditions and trends.

The inspection can help you identify and understand potential problems. You can use it to guide you in the development of a management strategy or to get a “second opinion” about work you are considering.

To request a free lake inspection, contact John McGee, Lake & Stream Management Program Coordinator, at McGeeJ@HillsboroughCounty.org or call (813) 744-5671.



Water Sample Kit Give-Away

Attention program volunteers and teachers! We have several water sample test kits in overstock from our discontinued Stream WaterWatch Program and we are offering a chance to get one free! We have different kits that test dissolved oxygen, pH and salinity in the water. We also have turbidity tubes for checking the water clarity.

To request the give-away, send an email to Jennifer Aragon at AragonJ@HillsboroughCounty.org explaining how you or your class would benefit from receiving a test kit. Include the type of test kit(s) you would like, your name and contact information, and the school (if applicable). If we select your request from the pool of applicants, you will receive notification by email and will need to arrange pick-up from our office, near Brandon. We must receive all requests by **August 31, 2014.**

We have a limited supply of kits and we will not be ordering any more once they are gone. Take this opportunity to re-stock your supply or to get a new kit to test the water near you. Monthly reporting of the test results is not required.

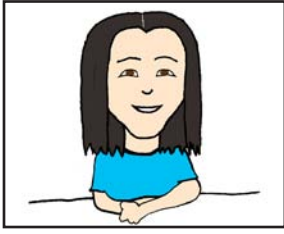


Turbidity tubes are used to check water clarity.



Water sample test kits.

Ask Stormwater Ecologist



Dear Stormwater Ecologist,

We have duckweed and vegetation all around our pond. Will clearing out the vegetation help water flow through our pond and get rid of the duckweed? I read online that duckweed does not grow in flowing water.

Sincerely, Donald Duckweed

Dear Donald,

You are correct that usually you do not see duckweed growing in flowing water. Unfortunately, water does not flow through ponds quickly enough to prevent duckweed from growing. Even on the edges of flowing rivers, you will see duckweed in the still pockets. Removing the vegetation around the pond can actually lead to more duckweed growth. Duckweed is a small floating leaf plant that grows with excess nutrients in the water. Removing all the other vegetation will leave more nutrients available for the duckweed to grow even more.



There are other techniques for removing duckweed from ponds. We made a YouTube video on this very topic. You can view it from our Adopt-A-Pond website at www.HillsboroughCounty.org/AdoptAPond. In addition to removing the duckweed, it is important to reduce or remove additional sources of nutrients to the pond that are washed in with the rain, including fertilizer, leaves, lawn clippings, and pet waste. Then, plant more native vegetation in the pond to take up excess nutrients, leaving less available for the duckweed to grow. If the shoreline is covered in plants, consider adding floating islands of plants. Our video on how to make one of these can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=P28PNf2JjF0.

Sincerely, Stormwater Ecologist

If you have a question for Stormwater Ecologist, email AragonJ@HillsboroughCounty.org or McGeeJ@HillsboroughCounty.org.

Calendar Photo Submission Time!



Budding photographers, we are looking for photos to include in our 2015 Stormwater Environmental Programs Calendar. Each year, we produce a calendar featuring photos of lakes, ponds, streams and rivers in Hillsborough County.

If you would like to submit a photo for consideration, email your high-resolution photo to Jennifer Aragon at AragonJ@HillsboroughCounty.org. Include the photographer's name, the waterbody, and a catchy title for the picture. We may also use photos in future publications. The photo submission deadline is **August 21, 2014**.

We will send out an announcement once the 2015 calendars are available for ordering.

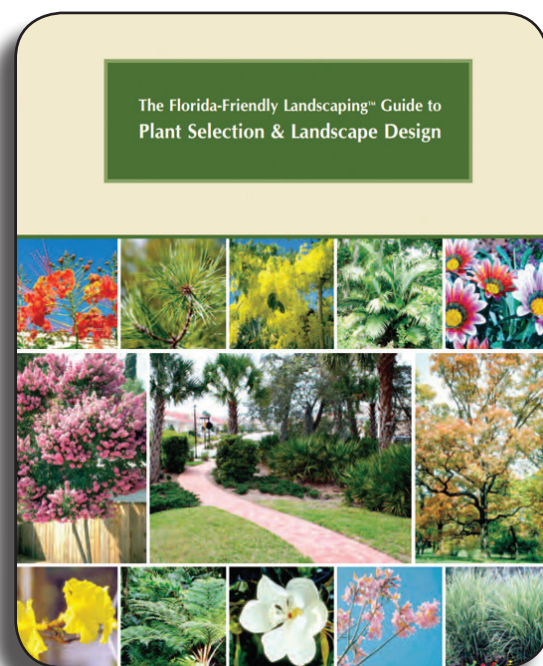
Yard Care That Makes a Difference! - Plants

Plants are an important part of any landscape. The plants you choose and where you put them can make a difference in the environment and in the appearance and maintenance of your yard. Curb appeal is one the first things people notice when they pull up to your house. Make it a good experience by inviting them with a dazzling array of color, texture, and beauty.

Getting started does not have to be a chore, just pick an area and take small steps to expand an existing plant bed. Even widening it by just a few feet can make a difference. Not only will you have less area to mow each week, you will also provide more areas for wildlife and reduce stormwater runoff. Planting the right vegetation can also be very low maintenance and require little to no water once established.

In just a weekend, you can upgrade your landscape by taking out a corner of turf grass and adding a butterfly garden. Keeping the plant bed lines curved will provide good visual appeal. Plants do not naturally take form in squares or rectangles, and neither should your plant beds. To see a variety of butterfly-friendly plants, use The Florida-Friendly Landscaping Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design found at http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN_Plant_Selection_Guide_v090110.pdf. Some examples include tickseed, canna lily, purple coneflower, and blanket flower. Find the ones that are best suited for the light and water needs for that section of your yard and then contact your local nursery for availability.

Once you get the plants, make sure you space them apart according to their full-grown size, not the size they are when you bought them. The plant bed is not going to look full at first, but just give it a few months and you will be pleasantly surprised by how nice it looks. Grouping plants in clumps of odd numbers (one, three, five, or large mass plantings) provides a bold look. It is also good to limit the plant color pallet to just a few colors. It keeps the plant bed from looking too busy.



Taking a non-functional grassy area and converting it into a curved plant bed can provide great curb appeal.

After all the plants are in the ground, add two to three inches of mulch around them and you are set. The mulch will help prevent weed growth, erosion, keeps moisture in the soil, regulates soil temperature, and provides nutrients to the ground.

Set a goal for yourself this year to upgrade a section of your yard. In just a short amount of time, you will have a landscape worth bragging about. You will also be amazed at how quickly butterflies, birds, and hummingbirds start frequenting your plants. With these tools and tips, you are well on your way to achieving a healthy, beautiful landscape.

For more landscaping tips, visit the Florida-Friendly Landscaping website at www.FloridaYards.org.

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Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners
 An Affirmative Action-Equal Opportunity Employer

Spot The Differences - Solution

Below are the nine differences spotted in last edition's Florida-Friendly yard game. Did you find all of them?



Word Scramble

Unscramble these words to form a new one! Each scrambled word came from this newsletter. Once you've unscrambled them, use the circled letters to form a new phrase at the bottom of the page. That will need to be unscrambled too!

BOACAP
 O O

HANCI CLERKPIE
 O O O

GIVNIL SNORELIEH
 O O O O

CITYVITA
 O O

O O O O O O O O O O O O