

# On Our Pond



Volume 19, No. 4  
Winter 2014

## 2013 Best Maintained Pond

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## Happy Birthday?

It may be someone's birthday, but this river isn't celebrating the "gift" it received. Too often, people release objects into the air, like these balloons, not realizing that what goes up, must come down.

Help protect local waters by celebrating in an environmentally friendly way. Here are just a few ideas. Instead of releasing balloons, give children ribbon streamers to wave in the air. For a similar look, blow bubbles instead. A kite can also provide enjoyment, time after time. There are many different, creative ways to celebrate that aren't harmful to our natural areas. Talk with your children about why you're using these items instead of balloons, so they'll know they're playing an important part in protecting the environment.



Photo By Bob Luce

## Freshwater Fish Feature: Mudfish

By Kyle Wright

The Mudfish, *Amia calva*, is a freshwater fish that populates many lakes and ponds in Florida. This native fish also goes by names such as grinnel, brindle, dogfish, cypress trout and bowfin.

Mudfish are the last remaining member of an ancient family of fishes, *Amiidae*. This family dates back to the Jurassic period. One unique feature of mudfish is their swim bladder. It can be filled with air at the surface, functioning like a lung. This adaptation allows them to survive in water that is very low in oxygen, which has promoted the success of this species over millions of years.

Mudfish are easily identified by their long bodies and dorsal fin that runs more than two-thirds of the length of their back. They have a spot near their tail and are usually a dark brown to green color. Their diet consists of everything from small insects and crustaceans to fish nearly half their size. Mudfish have numerous sharp teeth and are ferocious eaters.

Most mudfish caught in Florida are caught while anglers fish for other species, usually while using live bait for largemouth bass. While these fish have little appeal in terms of table fare, they are sporty fighters that rival some of the most popular freshwater game fish. These fish also reach a relatively large size, with the Florida state record being 19lbs. Any catch more than 30 inches (about 10lbs) is considered an above average catch. If you catch a mudfish, handle them with care, as they are strong, slippery and capable of delivering a powerful bite!



## 2013 Best Maintained Pond

Congratulations Lake Forest North Pond Group for having the Best Maintained Pond this year! Our six judges (all environmental professionals) thought the pond's planted shoreline and natural area looked great!

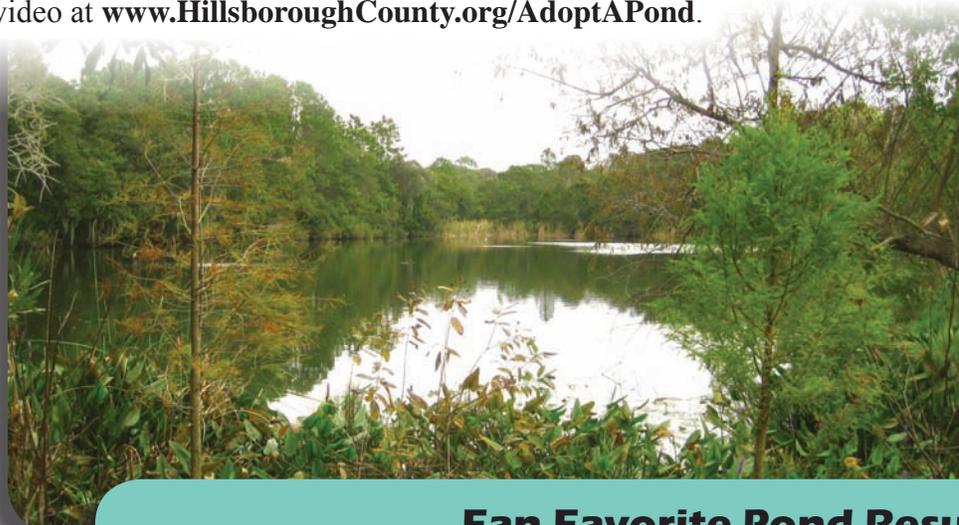
This group has been a part of the Adopt-A-Pond program since 2007. According to Jim Griffin, Lake Forest Lake Committee member, "We have created wetland areas, conducted shoreline plantings and maintenance, as well as removed trash from the water and shoreline. We consistently meet once a month...and since plants don't stop growing, we will keep meeting. We appreciate the support that Hillsborough County provides through the Adopt-A-Pond program and we are honored to be awarded the Adopt-A-Pond Best Maintained Pond award this year."



The Lake Forest Lake Committee works hard to keep their pond looking beautiful.

The entire shoreline of this pond is lined with a beautiful array of colorful flowers, including pickerelweed, duck potato and blue flag, to name a few. A bird nest box and walking trail also help connect members of this community with wildlife viewing. They've done a lot of work to beautify this pond and it shows!

If you'd like to see more of this pond and the competition, check out our *2013 Best Maintained Pond Competition* video at [www.HillsboroughCounty.org/AdoptAPond](http://www.HillsboroughCounty.org/AdoptAPond).



### Best Maintained Pond Competition Scores

Lake Forest North	170 pts
Eaglebrook Phase II	150 pts
Dewey Rose	149 pts
Tarawood	134 pts
Country Grove	129 pts
Osprey Place	122 pts
Reynoldswood	113 pts
North Lake	108 pts

### Fan Favorite Pond Results

Eaglebrook Phase II	115 votes
Lake Forest North	99 votes
Osprey Place	30 votes
Dewey Rose	23 votes
Tarawood	22 votes
North Lake	5 votes
Reynoldswood	4 votes
Country Grove	3 votes



Facebook and Adopt-A-Pond followers voted Eaglebrook Phase II their favorite Best Maintained Pond. Congratulations!

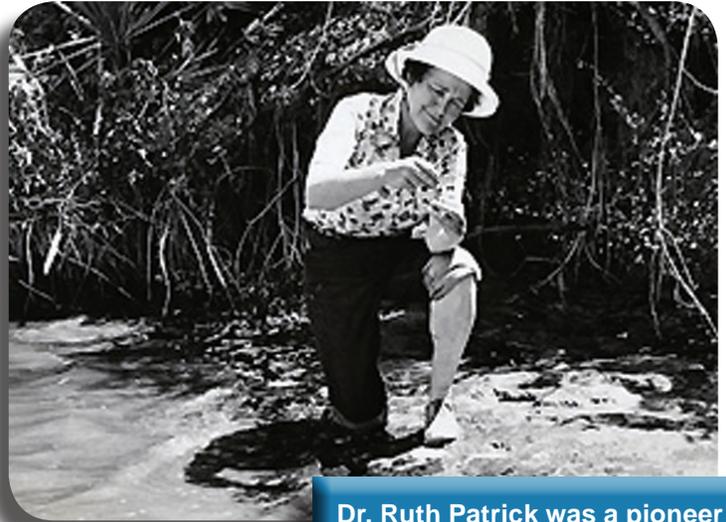
## Dr. Ruth Patrick - Famed Ecologist

Back before the importance of environmental protection was widely known, Ruth Patrick, Ph.D., was studying the effects of pollution on the environment. Born in the early 1900s in Topeka, Kansas, she realized her passion for the natural environment early on. She always enjoyed following her father and sister on excursions to collect plants, animals, and rocks from the nearby woods.

After receiving a degree in biology and further advanced degrees in the late 1920s and early 1930s, she focused her work on diatoms, which are microscopic algae. Through her work, she made the link between the presence of diatoms in streams and the streams' environmental health. She also used information on stream biodiversity, which includes the presence/absence of certain aquatic plants, animals, and microscopic organisms, to provide an indication of water quality.

We still use this technique today. In the Adopt-A-Pond and Lake and Stream Management programs, we evaluate the conditions of the body of water by looking at the variety of plants, animals, and available habitat in and around the water.

Ruth Patrick, Ph.D., died Sept. 23, 2013 at 105 years old. She was a pioneer in studies about aquatic ecology and her research and triumphs live on.



Dr. Ruth Patrick was a pioneer in aquatic ecology.

## Pond Plant Spotlight: Blue Flag Iris

By Kyle Wright

Blue flag, or *Iris virginica*, is a native plant that can be found from the panhandle to central Florida. It's rare to see blue flag in the southern regions of Florida due to the warmer temperatures. It lives in swamps, marshes, lakes and ponds, typically where the roots can stay submerged.

Blue flag is an emersed plant, which means its roots are found underwater, but the plant extends beyond the surface. This plant grows from stout underground rhizomes, which helps keep them stationary in soft, muddy soil. These medium sized plants can grow to four feet tall, however they typically average 2 to 3 feet in height.

There are seven different species of iris that grow in Florida. Blue flag is easy to recognize. The plant's most distinguishable feature is its large pale blue to deep purple flowers. The colorful, fragrant



flowers grow up to 3 ½ inches across and they bloom from late spring to early summer. The leaves are sword like and narrow, growing up to 2 ½ feet long. These pointed and flattened leaves arise from a single base in a fan-like fashion. Blue flag is also the only large iris growing wild in Florida.

Planting blue flag is a great way to add vibrant color to your pond, while at the same time filtering the water, providing habitat and preventing erosion of the shoreline. Blue flag grows best in wet, boggy soil, such as that found around the edges of lakes and ponds. When planted correctly, this plant spreads by its rhizomes, forming large, luscious colonies.

## Changes To The Lake And Stream Program

This summer we told you that the Southwest Florida Water Management District was proposing to discontinue funding our programs. Unfortunately, this was approved and starting April 1, 2014, there will be significant changes to what we currently offer.

To start, **Stream Waterwatch** will be discontinued. Since other agencies cover stream monitoring in our area, and our program was small, this was a logical choice for saving. We certainly appreciate all the faithful stream volunteers who have submitted samples over the years. Your data will continue to be a valuable tool for our management.

The **Hillsborough County Water Atlas** will also be phased out. We will be constructing a more minimal site that will provide the critical functions of our programs, including providing program information and presenting data on waterbodies. This will take place during 2014.

Fortunately, we were able to keep our **Lakewatch** volunteers, but the services Lakewatch provides as part of that contract will be significantly reduced. Volunteers shouldn't notice any changes, since those impacts will be absorbed internally. But this makes it more critical than ever to keep those samples coming in every month.

While change is always difficult, we're viewing it as an opportunity to restructure and focus more on making our waters cleaner. We'll keep you posted as we continue moving in that direction.

## East Lake's New Aquatic Harvester!

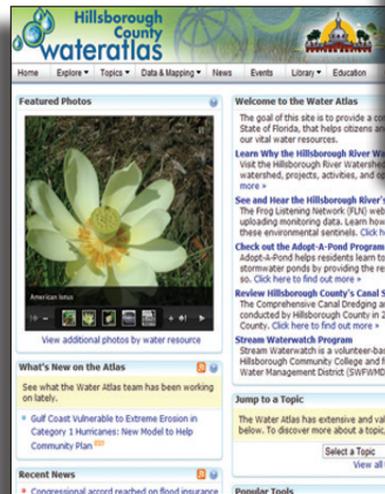
By Hal Hart, East Lake Park resident

For many lakefront owners in Hillsborough County, trying to stay ahead of non-native and "pest" aquatic plants can be a tough job. For instance, the residents at East Lake Park have invested thousands of volunteer hours removing these nuisance plants by hand, only to have them return a few months later.



The solution? Residents at East Lake Park purchased an aquatic harvester last fall and have already put it to good use removing water hyacinth, torpedograss and hydrilla from their canals. Their plan is to spend less time on removal and more time installing beneficial aquatic plants.

To see East Lake Park's harvester in action, go to [www.EastLakeWatershed.org](http://www.EastLakeWatershed.org) and click on the "Aquatic Harvester" tab. Congratulations to East Lake Park for taking another step toward the restoration of East Lake!



## Ask Stormwater Ecologist



**Dear Stormwater Ecologist,**

We recently had a sewer spill in my neighborhood. Ten thousand gallons of sewage washed into Wet Lake. Is my lake now contaminated?

Sincerely, Contamination Conundrum

**Dear Contamination Conundrum,**

Sewer spills are certainly nothing to ignore. They can have a cumulative impact and that's why Hillsborough County takes extra precautions to reduce, minimize and clean up spills.

That said, it's important to keep perspective. In this case, the report shows the Utilities Department responded immediately and sanitized the area. The 10 thousand gallons reported was what was released before they stopped it. Wet Lake is approximately 51 acres and holds about 257.6 million gallons of water. Ten thousand gallons is only 0.0038 percent of the lake volume. Obviously, it will be more concentrated in the area where it washed into the lake...but in all likelihood, you'll never notice an impact from a spill of this size. Obviously we want to prevent these spills, but accidents happen. That's why it's important to keep your lake healthy. Just like the human body, a healthy system has better resistance and bounces back faster.

Sincerely, Stormwater Ecologist

While all sewage spills should be reported to the proper authorities, they aren't all a cause for panic.



## Your Personal Water Number, "Go Figure"

By Julia Palaschak, Water-Use Program Coordinator, Hillsborough County Extension Office

I'll bet you've never heard anyone speak of a "personal water number." Yeah, I just made it up. My job is to talk to people about water, specifically, the reclaimed and/or potable water delivered to your home by your local utility. I decided to use a number to start my conservation conversation.

We pay attention to a lot of numbers in our lives: calories, prices, salary, etc. These numbers can help form our life's goals and how we reach them. A personal water number is how much water each person uses in a typical day at home. I hope you'll use it to set your water conservation goal.

A personal water number reveals important information about our lives and our behaviors. Knowing how much water we use helps us understand when we should choose to use less. The funny part about using less water is that it can be pretty easy and very gratifying!

Check your next water bill to learn how much water you use every day. If you have children, let them help you do the math. Share the number with everyone in your household. Both City and County billings provide the total monthly gallons used. Divide your total gallons used by the days in the month, then by the number of people in your home. Now you know your personal water number!

Schedule a free "in-yard" consultation to learn ways you can lower your personal water number by contacting Julia Palaschak at **813-744-5519 x54142** or by email at **PalaschakJ@HillsboroughCounty.org**

CUSTOMER NAME		ACCOUNT NUMBER		
BILL SAMPLE		9922482399		
Service Address: 1234 TEST DR				
PREVIOUS DATE	PREVIOUS READ	PRESENT DATE	PRESENT READ	CONSUMPTION (IN GALLONS)
07/23/2013	644	08/23/2013	644	
07/23/2013	9539	08/23/2013	9543	400
Press Charges			Summary of Account Charge	
Water Charge		\$3.99	Previous Balance	
Water Pass-Thru Charge		\$1.17	Net Payments - Thank You	
Impaction Charge		\$8.29	Past Due Amount	
		\$0.27	Total Account Charges	

Calculate your personal water number using the number of gallons reported on your monthly water bill.

## Yard Care That Makes A Difference! - Weed Control

Whether you are trying to control a weed in your yard, pond, or lake, proper pest management is key. As pond and lake specialists, we typically deal with concerns about controlling aquatic pest plants, like torpedograss, water hyacinth and alligatorweed, but these principles can be carried over into your yard as well.

Whether you've hired a company to control weeds, or you're doing it on your own, it's important to take a mixed approach. For some weeds, herbicides alone are the best management tool. But for many others, herbicides aren't the only option. Sometimes, problems can occur when using the same herbicide every time you spray a particular weed. Over time, the plant can build up resistance to the herbicide, making it no longer effective. Using herbicides when it's not needed also adds chemicals to the environment unnecessarily.

By following the steps below, you can help prevent these weed control issues.

**Determine when pest control is necessary.** Just because you see one or two of the pest plants popping up, doesn't always mean you need to get rid of them immediately. Know at what time of year and amount the plant will be a problem. For some weeds you'll want to get rid of them as soon as you see them, for others, wait until the pest plant prevents use of the area.

**Properly identify the plant.** Just because you didn't put the plant there, doesn't mean it's a weed. There are a lot of Florida native wildflowers that grow naturally around bodies of water and in yards. There are several identification books available on the Internet. You can also contact your Adopt-A-Pond or Lake Management Program coordinators at 813-744-5671 with your aquatic plant questions. The Hillsborough County Extension Office staff can also answer plant questions at 813-744-5519.

**Control Methods.** Once weed control is needed, it's important to know which technique(s) are best to use. There are several ways to control pest plants, including:

- Physically, by hand-pulling, raking or skimming
- Mechanically, using an aquatic plant harvester, excavator or by mowing
- Biologically, using permitted fish or insects that are known to eat that particular pest plant
- Chemically, using an herbicide(s)
- A combination of these control methods

Before - covered in water hyacinth



During clean-up



One year later - still water hyacinth free!



Instead of herbiciding the water hyacinth covering their pond, Windsor Oaks Adopt-A-Pond group skimmed it out!



Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners  
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## Test Your Environmental Knowledge!

1. True/False? Plants help prevent shoreline erosion.

1. True. Their roots hold dirt in place and the plant slows water as it flows off the land. Larger, deeply rooted plants are better than low lying, shallow rooted turf grass.

2. True/False? It's illegal to leave your dog's waste on the ground in Hillsborough County.

2. True. Hillsborough County Ordinance No. 00-26 requires dog, cat, and pet pig owners to pick up their pet's waste from the ground.

3. True/False? Dirt is a natural substance that is all right to wash into waterways.

3. False. Although dirt is natural, when it washes into waterways, it can block light and smother beneficial underwater plants and animals, it can clog fish gills, and reduce available water storage area.

4. True/False? Feeding ducks that live in a pond is beneficial to the pond environment.

4. False. Feeding ducks encourages them to gather in large groups around the pond. Duck waste is a source of nutrients and bacteria that can be harmful and cause algae blooms. They also eat plants.

5. True/False? Duckweed is an invasive plant that should always be removed from ponds.

5. False. Duckweed is native to Florida. It filters the water by absorbing nutrients to help keep algae down and it provides food and shelter for wildlife. However, when completely covering a pond, it blocks light to beneficial plants below. It's also a sign of a high nutrient pond. Watch our *Duckweed Removal Techniques* video at [www.HillsboroughCounty.org/AdoptAPond](http://www.HillsboroughCounty.org/AdoptAPond) to learn ways to minimize the presence of this plant.

