



Wednesday October 31, 2007

News Sections
Home
Local
Villages
Sports
Lifestyles
Obituaries
Advertising
Automotive
Classifieds
Service Directory
Rate Card
Links
The Villages
VNN
WVLG
Movie Times
thevillages.net
Yellow Pages
Daily Sun
About Us
Awards
Contact Us
Subscribe
Special Publications
Magazine Cover
Magazine Feature 1
Magazine Feature 2
Recreation News

Villages

Villages working to use less water

By CURT HILLS, DAILY SUN

THE VILLAGES — Not content to rest on its laurels as a water-conservation leader, The Villages and its residents are taking even more steps to reduce dependence on water resources.

As the community grows, so does its proficiency in solidifying its leadership role in water conservation.

For instance, The Villages is reducing turf or grass in areas currently under development — instead opting for an increase in landscape beds for both homes and commercial locations. The benefit? Landscaping requires less water than a yard full of grass.

And those landscaping options are not just decorative. The plant choices come from a list of botanicals that are classified as drought-tolerant by either the Southwest Florida Water Management District, the University of Florida Agriculture Service, or both.

“Plants that are drought-tolerant greatly reduce the need for watering,” said Trey Arnett, water resource engineer for The Villages.

The Villages has identified 15 trees that meet the experts’ drought-tolerance requirements, as well as 25 types of ground cover or grasses, as well as 28 varieties of shrubs and accent plants.

Arnett said one of the most noticeable changes for homeowners besides increased and enhanced landscaping is the type of turf that blankets the yard. The traditional St. Augustine grass is out, Empire Zoysia is in, he said.

“We’ve been very pleased with the Empire Zoysia grass as it requires less water than other grasses,” Arnett said. “Plus, it bounces back quickly after a dry period.”

Homes are being constructed with attention to detail when it comes to irrigation needs. For instance, the rotor that pops up to douse the lawn isn’t the same device that would water the needle-point holly or saw palmetto or other drought-resistant shrubs and plants.

“Instead of one size-fits-all watering systems, our community uses irrigation systems that give less water to landscaping beds that don’t require as much water as lawn areas,” Arnett said.

To help enforce the notions of sound water conservation, deed restrictions are being modified to encourage reductions in turf space in favor of more landscaping options. And unlike other areas in Central Florida, Villages residents aren’t allowed to create private irrigation wells.

“This means our water conservation can be carefully measured and monitored,” Arnett said.

The enhancements join an already comprehensive water conversation program in The Villages. The community uses reclaimed water to irrigate golf courses and some roadway corridors. When places such as The Villages use reclaimed water, it reduces the amount of groundwater that has to be withdrawn and provides a source other than rain to recharge or reload the aquifer.

But The Villages doesn’t stop there. The community employs an expansive and expensive series of lined water-retention ponds. Along with accompanying runoff areas, these ponds are designed to

Activities Schedules

Current Weather



Market Quote

Market Watch



Index	Last Trade	Change
NASDAQ	2838.84	22.13
SP 500	1535.64	4.62
Russ 2000	821.85	5.70
AMEX	2512.20	23.42
NYSE	10304.13	139.16
30 YR BOND	47.27	0.54

Oct 31, 2007 3:25 PM ET
20 min. delayed



collect and store rainfall that can be used eventually for irrigation when it is needed.

Found throughout a majority of The Villages, these stormwater retention ponds are connected by underground pipes, allowing water to be pumped to areas with the greatest irrigation needs. By using stormwater, The Villages is utilizing another source independent of groundwater to irrigate. And again, the irrigation process returns this water to the ground, where it filters into the aquifer to start the recycling process.

When necessary, a third alternative is available to The Villages. Deeper wells exist in The Villages that bypass the Upper Floridan aquifer water supply, digging deeper to extract water below that is of lower quality and would require additional treatment to make it suitable for human consumption. Instead, The Villages can use that water supply to help supply residential lawn sprinklers.

That's because homes constructed south of County Road 466 come with two incoming water lines. One that supplies the tap water for inside, and another that carries stormwater and the less potable Lower Floridan aquifer water. At 12,000 homes and growing, numerous Villages residents are watering their lawns without stressing Florida's underground water supply.

The Villages' current water use permit granted by the Governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District demands that only 31 percent come from the Upper Floridan aquifer, which is used for household consumption. The other 69 percent comes from the three alternative sources, which thrilled some members of the SWFWMD board when they discussed The Villages earlier in 2007.

"The great efforts The Villages are making goes above and beyond," board member Todd Pressman said in discussing The Villages system.

"They're certainly innovative and creative," colleague Neil Combee added.

Others besides SWFWMD have noticed, too. Audubon International has included golf courses throughout The Villages in its Silver Signature program. Audubon International studies and evaluates a multitude of criteria, such as preserved wildlife habitat and water and chemical use. During a previous inspection, Audubon's Miles "Bud" Smart said the wildlife and natural vegetation are easy to evaluate because they're visible, but the hidden elements, such as an underground series of pipelines providing reclaimed water for irrigation are just as impressive to Audubon evaluators.

An added benefit is the Rain Bird Cirrus Centralized Computer Control System, which uses the most advanced technology to prevent water waste, using only the minimum needed for proper irrigation. The system is capable of adjusting the amount of irrigation from golf course to golf course and even from hole to hole, based on each specific area's watering needs.

"This community has been, and will continue to be, a leader in water conservation efforts," Arnett said.

Curt Hills is an editor with the Daily Sun. He can be reached at 753-1119, ext. 9319, or curt.hills@thevillagesmedia.com.

[printable version](#)

[e-mail this story](#)

[search archives](#)