

Aquascaping

*Do it for
beauty,
improved
water
quality*

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TAMPA PALMS GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

Aside from benefits to the ecological welfare of the aquatic environments on the golf course, the planting of the shorelines of lakes and ponds can be done for purely aesthetic reasons. Relatively small plantings of these aquatic plants (*see table below*) in shallow bays and key focal points can relieve the monotonous and sterile look of a shoreline that has only turf growing down to the water's edge. These plantings can add spectacular color to the course at certain times of the year, as well as add dramatic accents and beauty.

Some problems are encountered with these plantings, but overall, less maintenance is required than with most common terrestrial landscapes such as annual flower beds. Aquatics do, from time to time, need to be pruned and weeded, but the need for fertilizer, irrigation and pesticides is non-existent.

Aquascaped areas need to be maintained and protected from invading species such as cattails and torpedograss or the invaders can overrun the aquatic plants. Hand pulling of these invaders seems to work best because herbicides, when sprayed, can damage the beneficial plants as well as the invaders.

Aquatic plants can also help to filter out nutrients from the water and eventually help to improve water quality. It is still uncertain whether mass plantings of aquatic species can filter out enough nu-

trients to prevent high rates of evapotranspiration

and therefore possible algae blooms.

One thing for certain has been accomplished at Tampa Palms and that is the elimination of herbicide spraying into the water bodies. We have not experienced any major weed outbreaks to date. Whether the plants have anything to do with this is still undetermined, but we are starting to believe that the plants defi-

nately help cleanse the lakes.

The use of aquatic plants on the golf course is something that superintendents should take a closer look at. "Aquascaping" can be aesthetically pleasing to the golfers as well as beneficial to the environment and can be accomplished with a small amount of time and capital. Select an area on your course and give it a try. You will be pleased with the results.

Aquatic Plants for Florida

SOFT RUSH (*Juncus effusus*) Seeds are eaten by various birds. Helps keep shoreline erosion in check. Reproduces by seeds and rhizomes. Can be found in wet meadows and along shorelines and provides good cover for wading birds.

GIANT BULRUSH (*Scirpus californicus*) Provides cover and nesting sites for ducks and various wading birds. Can be found along shorelines and in ditches.

YELLOW CANNA (*Canna flaccida*) Blooms in the spring and summer with showy yellow petals. Can be found in wet meadows and ditches.

BLUE FLAG IRIS (*Iris virginica*) Queen of Florida wetlands. Blooms in February and March and lets us know spring has arrived. Reproduces by seed or division.

ARROWHEAD (*Sagittaria lancifolia*) Produces tall white floral stalks in the spring and fall. Provides good cover for wading birds looking for small fish, insects or crustaceans near lake edges. Underground tubers are eaten by waterfowl, including ducks, swans, sandhill cranes and others.

PICKERELWEED (*Pontederia cordata*) Produces seeds which are eaten by some waterfowl. Also produces a showy purple floral stalk in the spring and fall. Can be found along lake shores and in wet meadows.

SOFT STEM BULRUSH (*Scirpus tabernaemontani*) Produces seeds which are a valuable food source for a wide variety of birds. Can control shoreline erosion and helps filter out nutrients and runoff. Provides a source of cover for birds.

CORDGRASS (*Spartina bakeri*) Provides good shoreline erosion control. Can be found in many locations ranging from sand dunes to fresh water lakes.



Above, Soft stem bulrush hosts food for white heron while Yellow canna, right, is a showy bloomer in the spring and summer at Tampa Palms G&CC.



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