

LANDSCAPE PROJECT TO REMOVE INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

The Pine Run Landscaping Committee is working on a proposal for matching grant funding from the Sarasota County to eliminate exotic and invasive species of plants and trees that are beginning to choke out our lovely landscape.

Why eliminate exotic and invasive plants?

Exotic plants are those that are not native to Florida, that were brought in from other parts of the world. Many of these exotic plants have become invasive. A lack of natural controlling factors, such as seasonal weather, diseases and/or insects, give them the advantage to outgrow and overwhelm Florida's native species. They overtake and strangle healthy vegetation, robbing them of sunlight and ground-based nutrients; they even drop chemicals into the soil which prevent other species from growing. They not only destroy native species, but also disrupt wildlife because Florida animals rely on native plants for survival. Because of their rampant growth, they require excessive amounts of landscaping and expense to keep them under control.

Here in Pine Run, we have many of what's considered "category 1" invasive species. . Brazilian Pepper trees, for example, are literally drowning out the pines, not to mention palmettos and other native plants that are in the pepper trees' rampant growth path. As these trees grow and displace natives ones, they develop such a large biomass that they become a fire hazard for our buildings. Invasive vines are strangling pines and other trees; we find ourselves cutting down diseased trees more and more often. They cost as much as \$1200 per tree to remove.

In this complex natural environment of Pine Run, we actually have more to take care of than we can afford. Landscapers can't keep up for what we can afford to pay. For example, they can either cut down vines all over the place OR do the regular maintenance. We can't afford to have them do both. The idea is to eliminate invasives and exotics which will allow native species to flourish and grow. Natives species can withstand the Florida climate, soil, water variances and have defenses against local pests. A native plant community here is the most economical way to maintain the health of our beautiful environment.

What is the Project?

Because invasive species are such a problem state and county wide, Sarasota County has set aside money to help communities such as ours to get rid of these dangerous and unhealthy plants. The County requires that we eliminate all of category 1 and 2 invasives with their grant funds; we cannot pick and choose which ones we keep and which ones we let go. Because it is so difficult and costly to remove these plants, we are planning to accomplish this area by area in different phases.

The project will begin at the entryways to Pine Run:

- From the main entrance left onto Pine Run Drive along both sides; on the right ending at the beginning of the 300's, on the left ending at the exit.
- From the main entrance straight on Woodland Drive, along both sides; on the right, ending at Woodland Pl. and on the left ending at Woodland Place.

Clearing up and beautifying the entryways to Pine Run benefits the whole community by enhancing property values and ensuring the health and safety of our natural environment. Other areas will be addressed during other grant cycles over a period of a couple of years.

When will this happen?

The grant proposal is due on November 4 2015 and awards will be made in February 2016. The actual work will start when the habitat professional recommends is the optimum time.

If you have questions, please call:

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