

LAKE SHORE RESIDENT HANDBOOK



Published by:
Natural Resources Division
City of Winter Haven, FL

Published Dec 2021

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Lake & Shoreline Plants Management, Clearing, and Identification

Lakeshore Clearing

Property owners have the ability and responsibility to clear and maintain their shorelines - with some regulations. FWC requires a permit for any herbicide clearing or manual removal that exceeds 50% of the property owners' shoreline or 50 ft (whichever is less). Permits are free and available online at : <https://myfwc.com/license/aquatic-plants/>

Invasive or nuisance?

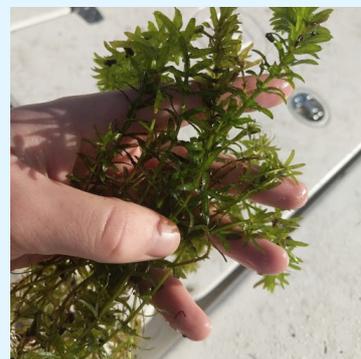
Submerged plants aren't for everybody but having a good diversity of underwater plants helps boost fish populations and improve water quality. However, some plants (mostly brought in from the aquarium trade) have become invasive species. A very common example of this is hydrilla (pictured below). **These plants are regularly monitored by City staff and treated by FWC or the County on publicly accessible lakes.** However,

other plants are native but can become nuisances during the growing season. Illinois pondweed is a local example of this - but it dies back in colder weather, and does not take over aquatic systems.

As a native these species are usually not treated by government staff but can be cleared for navigational needs, when allowed by FWC permits. However, the City recommends limiting clearing of aquatic vegetation where possible to preserve lake health.

Good to know

Submerged and shoreline plants improve water quality and prevent blooms and shoreline erosion. When clearing nuisance vegetation consider replanting some native species!



Hydrilla (invasive)



Illinois Pondweed (native)

Lake & Shoreline Plants Management, Clearing, and Identification

What's in my lake?

The City of Winter Haven monitors 39 of the publicly accessible lakes in the City area once a year. This information is published in our Annual Lakes Report available online or print. You can lookup the vegetation species and overall health of your lake by using the interactive site linked below or find it on our website! <https://arcg.is/00q1ru>



Eel grass (*Vallisneria americana*) (left) and Coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*) (right) are two common submerged species found in our lakes. Both are native and make excellent fish habitat. Eel grass is particularly good at absorbing nutrient pollutants.



The Natural Resources Division has published a separate booklet on common aquatic plants to help you ID, or staff can come out and help you identify what is on your shore. Access the booklet on our website or contact us!

Planting Shoreline Plants

There are many beautiful & beneficial plants that can be planted along shorelines that will prevent erosion, and attract the birds and water fowl unique to our area. Some common examples that grow well here are shown to the right. For sourcing these plants, **PlantAnt.com** is an excellent resource to find local nurseries that stock these plants - just search the name of the plant you are looking for!



Left: Pickerelweed Right: Golden canna



Left: Duck Potato Right: Saw-grass



Wildlife on Your Lake: Common Sightings & Tips

Living with alligators

Alligators are a fact of life in Florida, and can be an impressive sight to admire from afar. In any body of water, including smaller retention ponds, there is a possibility that an alligator or alligators could be present. However, **the majority of alligators are averse to humans and will not approach you, much less attack.** Learning about alligator behavior can help avoid conflict with this amazing reptile. The facts below review the key circumstances when an alligator could be dangerous.

- In some cases alligators are fed by humans, and lose their natural fear. This can lead to dangerous behavior where the alligator associates humans with food and will approach humans. If you see an alligator exhibiting this behavior call the **FWC Nuisance Gator Line** at **(866) 392-4286**
- Alligators **feed between dusk and dawn**, so it is best to avoid walking or letting pets out near lake shores during these times
- **Alligators' mating season primarily ranges from April-June.** During this season alligators may travel to seek mates and be seen in unusual places. In addition, females will form nests in secluded, heavily vegetated areas and defend them aggressively. It is best to avoid these areas, particularly during nesting season.

Good to know

Alligators are a "keystone species" due to their role as an apex predator as well as the "gator holes" they dig in the bottom of wetlands that hold water (and fish) during dry seasons



Young alligator perches on a log

Wildlife on Your Lake: Common Sightings & Tips

Other Wildlife

The Chain of Lakes City plays host to an amazing range of birds, mammals, and reptiles which can be seen on your lakeshore. Just some of these are identified to the right.

When viewing wildlife it is always best to remember that they are wild animals and admire them from a distance.

A full brochure on common animals is also available on our website, or contact us for a copy!

If you encounter an injured or in-distress animal, within the City, it is best to call Natural Resources staff at **(863) 291-5881** so we can determine the best course of action



We love seeing what you see everyday on your lake! Tag your wildlife shots with **@whnaturalresources** to share!



Left: moorhen or common gallinule. Right: Aninga



Left: River otter Right: Great White Heron



Left: Limpkin Right: Blue Heron



Left: Marsh rabbit Right: Brown water snake

Good to know

Our lakes have many kinds of water snakes. Non-venomous water snakes are often confused for cottonmouths. For all snakes, a good tip is to spray them with a hose to get them to leave. This reduces your risk and doesn't harm the animal

Lakeshore Resident Stewardship: Keeping your lake & shoreline healthy

Winter Haven's lakes are a fantastic resource to enjoy from the comfort of your home, sunrise to sunset. Many new residents aren't familiar with the unique characteristics of our lakes, and how they best function to keep on being beautiful and healthy. This section covers a few tips to ensure your lake and shoreline stays in the best condition for you - and the ecosystem that thrives around it.

Avoid Runoff into the Lake

- When washing boats or equipment on or near your lakeshore, **be sure to use an environmentally-safe soap** to avoid runoff affecting the water and fish.
- **Avoid over-fertilizing lawns and gardens.** Many lakeshore lawns in Florida are naturally nutrient-rich. However, where fertilizer is needed be sure not to apply before rain or sprinklers turn on. **Our lakes are very affected by nutrients**, and excess nutrient runoff from fertilizer can cause water to turn green from algae blooms and in severe cases cause fish kills.



Sandy was a hurricane, not a lakeshore

While a small area of beach is useful to have for launching kayaks and other recreation, **Florida lakes are not naturally beachy**. Sand fill brought in from other areas can erode into the lake and pollute it. Moreover, DEP now requires a dredge & fill permit to do this. Use Florida-Friendly ground-covers and shoreline plants interspersed in your shoreline.

Important Links & Contacts: Resources for Lakeshore Residents

Plants & Water Quality

- **Buy Aquatic/Shoreline Plants:** PlantAnt.com
- **Permit for Shore Clearing:** FWC - apply online at <https://myfwc.com/license/aquatic-plants/> or call 863-534-7074
- **Plant Identification/Report Invasive:** Call/Contact us at 863-291-5881 or naturalresources@mywinterhaven.com
- **Lookup Plant/Water Quality Information for your lake:** Natural Resources' Annual Lakes Report: <https://arcg.is/00q1ru>
OR : Polk Water Atlas at <https://polk.wateratlas.usf.edu/>
- **Invasive/Herbicide Treatment Information:** FWC's What's Happening on My Lake:
<https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/habitat/invasive-plants/lakes/>

Wildlife

- **Report a Nuisance Gator:** FWC Nuisance Gator Line at (866) 392-4286 or 866-FWC-GATOR (**Reminder:** Nuisance Gators are defined as an alligator that approaches and poses a threat to humans or pets or is in an unwanted place like a pool or lawn)
- **Injured or Distressed Wildlife:**
 - Call us at (862) 291-5881
 - OR list of local Wildlife Rehab agencies is available at:
<https://myfwc.com/media/5423/licensedwildliferehabilitatorsbyregion.pdf>

Important Links & Contacts: Resources for Lakeshore Residents

Other

- **Canal, Lock & Public Boat Ramp Inquiries:** Lakes Region Lakes Management at <http://www.lakesmgmtdist.com/> or (863) 293-1441
- **Report Illicit Dumping/Runoff:** Call Natural Resources at 863-291-5881 or email us at naturalresources@mywinterhaven.com

Important Links & Contacts: Resources for Lakeshore Residents

**The Natural Resources Team
is always here to help!**



Dustin Everitt:
Natural
Resources
Manager



Devon Moore:
Environmental
Scientist



Mary Thornhill:
Natural
Resources
Specialist



**Savannah
Winstanley:**
Ecosystem &
Asset Analyst

Our staff is available M-F, 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM to answer any detailed questions you may have regarding our lakes or your lakeshore. Choose a way to get in touch below!

City of Winter Haven | Natural Resources Division

(863) 291-5881

naturalresources@mywinterhaven.com

Message us on Facebook

[facebook.com/whnaturalresources](https://www.facebook.com/whnaturalresources)

[instagram.com/whnaturalresources](https://www.instagram.com/whnaturalresources)

Visit our Website at:

<https://www.mywinterhaven.com/government/city-departments/public-works/natural-resources/>

WINTER HAVEN
The Chain of Lakes City

Published by the **Natural Resources Division**
500 3rd St NW Winter Haven, FL 33881
(863) 291-5881

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