



Preventing Algae Blooms: A Checklist for Associations

#1 Good Coordination, Communication, and Monitoring

- Write [governing documents](#) that protect water resources and incorporate [Florida Friendly Landscaping™ \(FFL\) principles](#).
- Properly maintain the community's [private stormwater management system](#).
 - If you need a copy of the site development plan, contact the Growth Management Records Room at 239-252-5730.
 - You can obtain a copy of your South Florida Water Management District environmental resource permits [online](#).
- Only [rainwater should enter the storm drains](#). Street inlets are often directly connected to the neighborhood ponds.
 - Create community car wash stations or allow residents wash in their lawn. Notify residents that [vehicle wash water](#) is not allowed to enter the street, ponds, or stormdrains.
 - Best management practices are required during construction and maintenance activities like pressure washing.
 - Pay attention to common area and single-family home landscaping practices. Ensure that no leaf litter, grass clippings, or excess irrigation enters a storm drain.
- Encourage the Landscape and Lake Committees to work together to protect the community from [nutrient pollution](#).
- Educate everyone on how to protect the ponds from pollution.
 - Board members and residents should actively monitor for water quality violations, such as grass clippings, pet waste, or construction related pollution.
 - Use community newsletters and meetings as an opportunity to teach everyone about the importance of water quality.
 - When resident violations cannot be remedied, [report pollution](#). Dial 311 within Collier County or contact Pollution Control directly 239-252-2502.
 - Educate the community. Pollution Control provides free, on-site, or virtual presentation to your community. Call us at 239-252-2502.



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#2 Good Landscape Management

- Homeowners' associations (HOAs) may provide guidance on how a homeowner may implement FFL but they [may not prohibit FFL](#).
- Write [good landscape contracts](#). Tell the landscape contractor exactly what you expect of them, then put it in writing. Make sure the landscape contractor knows that water quality is a priority for the community.
- Use only [zero - phosphorus fertilizer in Collier County](#). It is banned because sufficient phosphorus is typically present in southwest Florida soils. Excess phosphorus will run off into the water and cause algae blooms.
- Have the landscape contractor [test the soil](#) before any fertilizer is applied. Fertilizer is often not needed for mature, native plants.
- If the landscape contractor needs to apply fertilizer, use the University of Florida's recommended formula of 8-0-12 plus micronutrients. [Research](#) has shown that this is a good choice for the entire landscape.
- If soil tests show that nitrogen is needed, verify that it is at least 50% slow-release nitrogen fertilizer, as required by [Collier County Ordinance No. 2019-18](#).
- Do not apply excessive fertilizer in the Spring. There is no wet season ban on nitrogen fertilizer in unincorporated Collier County. There is no need to pile on excess fertilizer to "beat" the ban. Landscape contractors should apply fertilizer when plants are actively growing and will use the nutrients applied.
- Read and understand the [Collier County Fertilizer Ordinance](#). Incorporate local ordinances into community governing documents.
- Verify that the landscape contractor is not exceeding the amount of nitrogen allowed per season or year. Ask them to show you how they calculated the amount of nitrogen needed. Check that they aren't exceeding the [lawful amount](#) per turf type.
 - If your community uses reclaimed water, don't forget those nutrients must be included in annual nutrient calculations, learn more at Collier County [Reclaimed Water website](#).
- Don't install plants that need a lot of fertilizer, like fruit trees and some palms, near hard surfaces such as driveways or sidewalks.
- Verify that the landscape contractor is [mowing turfgrass](#) to the proper height by turf type. This keeps the turfgrass healthy so it can absorb nutrients.
- [Reduce grassed areas](#). You can replace St. Augustine grass with groundcovers that require less fertilizer and irrigation.
- Hire [Green Industry](#) certified landscape professionals.



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- Per state law, hire only licensed commercial fertilizer applicators. Use this [link](#) to search for your fertilizer applicator(s) by name.
- Always keep grass clippings on the landscape, don't leave it on hard surfaces. Blow them from the street or sidewalk back onto the lawn.
- [Recycle fallen leaves](#) and use as mulch or compost.
- Use [woody mulch to hold in moisture](#). Three inches of wood-based mulch or pine straw will reduce weed growth and lower irrigation needs. Avoid shell and stone mulch under plants. Shell and stone mulches do not retain moisture or benefit soil fertility, and often leads to higher heat under plants.

#2 Good Irrigation Practices

- Follow [local water restrictions](#) and [Collier County Ordinance No. 2015-27](#).
 - Water restrictions apply even when you are using a stormwater pond or reclaimed water to irrigate.
 - Adhere to all [consumptive use permit](#) requirements issued by the South Florida Water Management District.
- [Water efficiently](#), don't over irrigate,
- Keep irrigation water on the landscape. Never allow irrigation water to fall on hard surfaces like roads or directly into ponds/canals.
- Have the [sprinkler heads checked regularly](#). Verify that the landscape contractor is doing this at each visit. Write that into your contract.
- Ensure that the community's [rain moisture sensors](#) are working properly. Annual inspection and maintenance are often needed.
- Have the landscape contractor turn off the irrigation when rainfall is sufficient, such as during the summer. Write that into the contract. Overwatering kills plants and leads to an increase in pests and fungus.



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#3 Good General Practices

- Schedule for regular inspection of community stormwater structures such as culverts, pipes, inlets, and flood control structures. Verify that they are not crushed or obstructed. They should be clear of leaves and debris.
- Have property managers or maintenance professionals correct any [erosion](#) on common grounds. Dirt has nutrients too!
- Make pet waste removal a priority and convenient. It's the law. [Pet waste](#) is nutrient pollution.
- Don't allow anyone in the community to feed the wildlife, especially [nonnative ducks](#).
- Keep stormwater on the property longer. Use [rain gardens](#), [bioswales](#) or landscape buffers to slow the flow of stormwater.
- Plant [Florida Friendly!](#) You can even get your community recognized as a [Florida Friendly Community](#).

#4 Good Lake/Pond Management

- Hire [Green Industry](#) certified lake management professionals.
- Write good lake management contracts. Put in writing exactly what you expect of your contractor. Make sure they know that water quality is a priority for the community.
- Allow for some algae growth. Algae is the foundation of an [aquatic food web](#) and not always harmful. [Most algae are beneficial](#).
- [Physically/mechanically](#) remove unwanted vegetation or algae from your ponds, instead of using chemicals. This method will remove the excess nutrients. Using chemicals only adds to the nutrient problem by providing a food source for the next algae bloom.
- Allow for a [low-maintenance buffer](#) around waterbodies to collect nutrients from runoff.
- Install more plants on [littoral banks](#) around ponds. Plants stabilize the shoreline, capture runoff, and provide habitat for species that can use the excess nutrients.