

# LakeRidge Falls

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4200 LakeRidge Blvd.  
Sarasota, FL 34243

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Here are the more important stories we had this past and upcoming weeks:

**Landscape** – Lots and lots of landscaping work took place this past week. Here is a recap of all the work and a detailed explanation of what is being done:

**Dollar weeds** - As some of you may have noticed, we are seeing an increase in the number of seasonal dollar weeds. A dollar weed, for those who may wonder, is a perennial weed that is commonly growing in the grass this time of the year. Its shape resembles the look of the lily pad in the ponds but on a much smaller scale. The good news is that the warmer temperatures and the lawn fertilization program, West Bay just launched, put us into the growing season. As a result, the turf is greening up and growing more rapidly. The bad news is that dollar weeds thrive in these conditions mainly in areas that are overly moist. Therefore, West Bay was on site in the last couple of weeks to treat the grass for dollar weeds throughout the community. In addition, they adjusted the irrigation system, mainly around Mackay Falls Circle and Cascade Falls Drive. Therefore, please don't be alarmed if you see the irrigation system does not go off during the time you were used to. We hope these two actions will help in getting this situation under control.

**Enchantment** – If you go around the clubhouse, you probably notice the new landscape. If you recall, we reported in the last few weeks that West Bay was working on removing the dying and overgrown plant material around the clubhouse. Also as reported, West Bay crews were on site this week installing all the new plant material as suggested by the Long-Term Landscape Group and approved by the Board of Directors. Some folks have asked me, and I guess this will be a great time, to explain what the goal of this Group is. In order to explain it, we should start with let's start with... the beginning.

A few years back, the Association was losing palm trees at an increased rate at the main entrance to the community (i.e. right off Tuttle Ave). The landscape company at the time advised that the soil in this location was infected with Ganoderma, a fungus that contaminates the bottom of palm trees which eventually leads to their decline. Because it was such a major focal point with lots of palm trees, the Board of Directors had no other choice but to redesign the landscaping beds at that location. With the help of the landscape vendor, a quick plan was composed by the Landscape Committee and approved by the Board of Directors. The cost was around \$34,000 with funds coming from the appropriate operating accounts. Because this project was an unexpected project, the funds for paying for it came at the expense of other day-to-day landscape maintenance work.

At that point, the Association realized three important things:

1. It was being reactive rather than proactive in tackling the enhancement of landscape beds in common areas.
2. There was no real theme guiding the various Landscape Committees over the years. Yes, the general community-wide standard and design were followed, but each year a different Landscape Committee had a different interpretation of what plant material should be used.
3. There was neither an action plan nor a financial planning tool for large scale landscape projects.

It took about a year or so before this idea, i.e. being proactive rather than being reactive, started to formulate into what is now the Long Term Landscape Group. In general terms, the Long Term Landscape Group was established to create a

ten-year landscape plan by breaking down the common landscape grounds into sections or phases. The Group was to then tag each phase based on its priority and location. That is, areas that need immediate attention and are in high traffic locations would be addressed first. Finally, the Group was asked to develop a financial plan of how much funds are needed each year to execute this plan thus avoiding having “\$34k surprises” as with the example above.

With this in mind and over the past year, the Group was working on such plan. Their first task was to develop guidelines in order to carry a constant theme throughout the community. The following are guidelines the Group developed:

- Use Florida Friendly and Tropical Plants;
- Utilize easy to maintain plant material;
- Create a Park Like Setting;
- Avoid Queen Palms while using more Foxtail and Pygmy Palms;
- Acknowledge that Oak Trees are here to stay;
- Follow the notion that Less is Better;
- Ensure the Tier Effect continues throughout.

After this was concluded, they start working on the first phase and are ready to start working on the upcoming phases to be implemented in 2020 and years to come. The first part of this phase was implemented this week around the clubhouse. Many residents advised that they are very pleased with the outcome of the new landscape around the clubhouse. So based on the feedback received, there is no doubt that both the Long Term Landscape Group and West Bay did an outstanding job. Let me offer this last note as some food for thoughts. This week’s implementation of a long term plan is a great testimony of how detailed and careful planning can be financially rewarding. Without going into too much detail, we can say that part one of the first landscape enhancement phase cost significantly less than the cost of the enhancement work performed in a hurry a few years back. Same scale projects, two different prices.

I wish to take this moment to recognize and thank the Long Term Landscape Group, Mrs. Barbara Weintraub, Mrs. Irene Wolfe, Ms. Sandy Hasenjager, and Mrs. Nancy Blair as well as West Bay’s team. I am sure many would join me once they will see the new landscape around the clubhouse.

**Annuals** – This brings me to the story about the annuals I promised to share with all of you. During my first weeks on the job at LakeRidge Falls, I was shadowing the President of the Association, who at the time was also serving as the Landscape Committee liaison. During one of the walks with the landscape provider at the time, he got really upset with their district manager over their lack of performance. In order to make things right, the district manager offered the Landscape Committee during their next meeting 200 extra annuals for each change-out at no cost to the Association. Later on, I learned that each time that vendor “dropped the ball,” the district manager handled it by offering the Association some plant material at no cost. Regardless and back to our ancient history story, the Committee agreed without hesitation.

Fast forwarding to our current times, the Association has switched landscape vendors a couple of times since this story took place. With each transition, the Association also kept most of its practices and counts from years past. As you can guess by now, the Association carried the practice of installing annuals three times a year using 1,600 on each change out. However, and as reported, one of LakeRidge Falls’ longtime residents challenged this notion recently. Taking on this challenge, the Landscape Committee looked into this matter. In the process, two realizations were reached.

First, the Association created new beds for the extra annuals it got at no cost. In simple terms, the Association was trying to fit them somewhere. As a result, the visual impact they were supposed to provide got lost. Here is an example; not

many were aware we had annuals in the dwarf oleander bed on the corner of Victoria Falls Circle and LakeRidge Blvd. This was mainly due to the fact that the dwarf oleanders simply overpowered them. Second and somewhere along the way, the Association forgot it was getting 1,600 annuals, but paying probably only for a half. Therefore, the Committee agreed with the residents' comment that the use of fewer annuals would probably be a wise move in the utilization of landscape funds.

Following the above, the Committee decided on launching a pilot program. As part of the pilot, West Bay was directed to consolidate the spread of annuals to specific focal points. In addition, the Landscape Committee cut in half the use of annuals from 1,600 to 800. This week, West Bay installed a variety of 800 red, pink, and white begonias at the main entrance to the community and around the clubhouse. In the next few weeks, the Landscape Committee will evaluate this pilot program. Based on the result, the Landscape Committee will consider adopting, altering, or dropping this program.

**Landscape service requests** – With all the work that has taken place on site this past week, please note that all service requests will be delay by a week. We wish to apologize in advance, but please understand that most of this week's effort went into executing all the tasks above.

**Magnificent Oak Tree** – Staying on the same topic, Aquatic Consulting Tree Care Division was here the entire week performing the yearly oak tree pruning maintenance. They are scheduled to finish their work next week. As reported, they were and are trimming all oak trees along Victoria Falls Neighborhood and Lockwood Ridge Rd. While on site, they had to remove the somewhat large and old oak tree along the sidewalk path contacting Kariba Lake Terrace. Although it was not considered a heritage oak, this oak was magnificent and many would agree was an asset of nature owned by the Association. Here is why it had to be removed.

A few weeks ago, a resident reported that a branch from the tree fell on the sidewalk below it. Upon inspection, it was really noticeable to my unprofessional eye that the tree limb that fell was rotten. Of course, the limb was removed. However, both the Board of Directors and residents who use the path during their daily walks were uneasy regarding this incident. Therefore, the Association sought the advice of a professional company. And indeed, a representative from Aquatic Consulting Tree Care Division was on site a couple of weeks ago. After examining it, he advised that it is very apparent the tree is decaying internally. The causes for it can vary, he advised, but the bottom line was that the tree must be removed. If an action will not be taken soon, he concluded, the decay progress would continue causing more branches to fall and making the task of removing the tree more dangerous and difficult.

Of course, both the Landscape Committee and Board of Directors were informed and the consensus was that action must be taken sooner rather than later. For this reason, the oak tree trimming project started this week rather than in May, as scheduled every year. Below are a few pictures that emphasize the damage the internal decay caused to the tree. However, there is no bad news without some good news. Speaking with the Aquatic Consulting project manager, he agreed to take down this tree at no cost to the Association. With this in mind, planning will start soon on locating an appropriate replacement. We will keep you posted as decisions will be made.



**Pressure Wash** – Not so simple, we were advised that H2O Cleaning Systems will NOT be done this week as reported last week. Reason why is because H2O Cleaning Systems agreed on cleaning the clubhouse sidewalks as part of the current contract. Therefore, they will be done next week.

**Pool** – A quick note, as many pool users are aware, there are a couple of ducks who decided the pool is their new home. In order to find a solution, the Pool Committee suggested, based on some suggestion provided to it, to place an inflatable alligator in the pool. The sole purpose of this inflatable alligator is to scare the ducks away. Will it work? Time will tell. But for the meantime, please do not turn it into a play object especially when there are so many kids around the pool during this time of the year. Thank you in advance for your cooperation over this matter.

**Renovation Project** –Mr. Tamas Pataki, the painting subcontractor, continues painting the inside of the clubhouse. We had mechanical and electric inspections take place this week. Also this week, the kitchen upper cabinets were installed. Finally, the foggy glass on one of the storefront windows was replaced yesterday by the manufacturer. What is left to do are many small finishing touches. As always, we will keep you posted on a weekly basis.

Have a great and safe weekend.

Sincerely,

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