

**Q: What can I do as a Palmer Ranch resident to minimize red tide?**

A: Although we still don't know what causes red tide, you can help by keeping our watershed healthy.

Red tides in Florida develop 10-40 miles offshore, away from man-made nutrient sources. Once red tide moves inshore, however, it can be fueled by nutrient pollution from urban and agricultural runoff.

Our stormwater ponds are designed to help remove nutrients and other pollutants from stormwater runoff before it empties into Little Sarasota Bay and the Gulf. But their effectiveness depends on us.

So be mindful of what you put into our watershed. The two biggest things you can do to reduce nutrient poisoning and avoid feeding red tide are:

- Don't fertilize if rain is forecast in the next 48 hours
- If you irrigate your lawn with reclaimed water, reduce the amount of nitrogen in your fertilizer by the amount of nitrogen in your reclaimed water (ask your community manager)

You can also help minimize red tide by:

- Using pesticides sparingly, and considering non-chemical treatments
- Planting native vegetation, which requires less water and produces less runoff
- Properly disposing hazardous materials such as gas, oil, paint, and unused pool chemicals.

If you live on a stormwater pond, consider creating a low-maintenance zone at the pond's shoreline, including:

- A fertilizer-free zone at least 10 feet, and ideally 20 feet, from the shore.
- A vegetation zone two to six or more feet from the shore, with turf grass or native aquatic plants, grasses and rushes, groundcovers, wildflowers, shrubs, or trees, all allowed to grow to their optimum height. For turf grass, that's 12 inches of blade height.

Low-maintenance vegetation zones can reduce nutrients by as much as 50%. Consult with your community association's property manager before making any changes to your stormwater pond shoreline.

Shoreline without low-maintenance zone



Shoreline with low-maintenance zone



For more on how to properly maintain your stormwater pond shoreline, including a list of appropriate native plants, visit

<https://www.sarasota.wateratlas.usf.edu/upload/documents/LivingontheWatersEdgeFreshwater.pdf>.

And for more information on red tide in Sarasota County, visit the Official Water Quality Summit report at <https://www.scgov.net/home/showdocument?id=42805> and scroll to page 67. Or visit <https://myfwc.com/research/redtide/faq/>.

*Written by the Palmer Ranch Watershed / Natural Assets Committee, a group dedicated to maintaining and improving our water, preserves, and common areas.*