

# Retention Pond Plantings Hold Hope for Quieter Community

When the West Gate was installed, the county required several actions. Among them, the berm had to be lowered for a specified distance south of the West Gate—which is why you see the Ficus planted at a lower level on the south side of the Gate, as compared to the higher-level long-standing Ficus on the north side of the Gate. Per requirement, a water retention area was created on the inside, immediately to the south of the West Gate. The county mandated plantings for that retention area. This prompted the West Gate Committee to plant Buttonwood and Gumbo Limbo trees in a line to the east of the Ficus bordering the retention pond. That gave us a chance to see how those trees would thrive before investing more on additional native plants.

The Buttonwood Trees have definitely thrived—negatively affected only by the winds of Hurricane Irma, however the Gumbo Limbo Trees died out. The area is challenging, as plants must live with “wet feet” for much of the year, and the salinity of the preserve may prove too difficult for many plants as well.

To meet the county requirement, the Preserve Committee has been experimenting with a number of plants in that area. Two have been particularly successful. With the help of Woods and Wetlands, (our preserve maintenance company), the Preserve Committee has planted Wax Myrtle shrubs and Pond Apple trees over the past year.

The Wax Myrtle was selected in part because they grow thick and high—an opportunity to buffer the sight and sound of Veterans Parkway, which continues to disturb our neighborhood. The more dense foliage we can plant between Veterans Parkway and our community, the quieter the community will be. This includes both the houses adjacent to Veterans Parkway and the inner-court homes as well, as the sound travels down the lakes.

The Preserve Committee will continue to monitor these plants and install others that have a high chance of survival—making the most of a county mandate by reducing the sound and sight of vehicles, and creating a visually pleasing barrier between our community and the highway.



West Gate Retention Area



Pond Apple example growing wild



Wax Myrtle example Birds love these berries

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## West Berm Extension Plants Buffer Sight and Sound

As Woods and Wetlands continues to eradicate the invasive species of plants in our preserve, the result can resemble a war zone in some areas! Dead plant material abounds with nothing to take its place. One such area is where the west berm ends, south of our West Gate. This area eventually gives way to the Cape Royal Preserve, where the thick mangroves grow—helping to protect us from a tidal surge. But on the berm itself, the eradication plan left a totally open area, exposing the entire section of nearby homes with an unencumbered view of vehicles flashing by and the accompanying road noise.



The Preserve Committee worked with a local landscaper to plant several species of native preserve plants and palms to continue the line of Ficus to block the view and sound of Veterans Parkway. The Landscape Committee also donated two of the largest palms to this effort.

Many thanks to Gregg Forsberg, Lin Willett, Jay French, and Elaine Chapman-Moore for clearing the area and preparing it for planting. Also, special thanks go to the newest “Swamp-Rat,” Tom McVaugh, for watering the new plants with his home well system during this dry season.