

Lakes Are Not Swimming Pools

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Lakes in each region of the state and the world differ based on the climate, geology, land use, soil types and watershed.

Some are so acidic that stepping in them would be fatal.

Some are so salty the hardly anything grows in them.

Some lakes are constantly frozen.

Some lakes are so clear, you can see 80 feet down into the water. Visibility in other lakes is only a few inches.

Some people want the stormwater pond in their back yard to be crystal clear and free of plants. This isn't going to happen without regular applications of chemicals that will kill almost everything in the pond.

Algae is the most common plant in Florida lakes and it provides the food directly or indirectly for most other aquatic organisms. It is an incredibly valuable layer at the bottom of the food pyramid.

Lakes, especially in Florida tend toward two states. One state is algae dominant; that is the most prevalent plant in the lake is algae. The algae is both microscopic (making the lake pea green) or filamentous (leaving floating mats of green, yellow or brown). While most people find this unattractive, it is not necessarily a sign of an unhealthy lake. Significant quantities of algae is a sign of a nutrient rich lake. See the article [Blue Ponds, green lawns](#) for information about how you can help keep your lake more attractive and environmentally healthier.

Macrophyte dominant lakes are lakes that have that 30-50% coverage of flowering plants. These lakes usually have clearer water.

Here are some characteristics of typical lakes in southwest coastal Florida.

Healthy lakes in Florida are 30-50% covered with native plants. Some of these plants are easily seen. Other plants are hidden below the surface.

Southwest Florida coastal lakes are usually warm, shallow and brown (like tea). The brown color is often from tannic acid from pine and oak leaves.

Water visibility is usually less than three feet. Microscopic algae grow particularly well in our fertile phosphate rich water. While you cannot see the algae with the naked eye, you can notice the result of millions of these plants reducing visibility.

The bottom line is that lakes, even stormwater ponds are living, breathing ecosystems. In our region of southwest Florida, they should never look plant-free and clear; that look is reserved for swimming pools.