

Scenic Watch



News -
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"Residents Protest Clearwater's Plan To Cut Down
Hundreds Of Trees"



Photo: Denise Buttacavoli

"The Clearwater City Council put a hold on its city tree ordinance after 4,000 healthy trees were tagged for removal."

When Denise Buttacavoli left for work that morning, her front yard was fully shaded. When she returned home, she discovered that the city had cut down every tree in her front yard.

"Patricia Kirby, a 20-year resident of Clearwater, confessed that she broke into tears when she returned home from work and saw the condition of her neighbor's yard.

That morning, Denise Buttacavoli's front yard at 1660 Magnolia Ave. was filled with mature, healthy camphor trees that provided a canopy of shade and sheltered a host of wild critters.

When Kirby returned home that night, she said Buttacavoli's yard was a barren wasteland. Every shade tree in the yard had been cut down by city of Clearwater tree service contractors.

A former federal park ranger, federal forest ranger and an independent contractor for the Environmental Protection Agency for more than 20 years, Kirby said she's spent her career trying to protect the environment and the wildlife that call it home.

'This kind of thing hurts my heart,' she said.

Kirby displayed before and after photos of Buttacavoli's front yard on the overhead screen at the Clearwater City Council meeting Thursday night.

There was an audible gasp from the audience when Kirby showed the photo of Buttacavoli's yard after the trees had been cut down...

She said the problem with the city's tree ordinance, as outlined by Dan Mirabile, director of the city's public works department, at Tuesday's city council work session is that the ordinance doesn't take a tree's health into consideration.

Mirabile said the city is divided into five zones and each zone is inventoried every six years by an arborist at a cost of \$30,000 a year.

This year the arborist tagged 4,000 of the 20,000 trees in that zone for removal using a rating system from 0 to 6.

He said trees are rated based on their species, diameter, health, whether power lines are overhead and whether they're home to nesting birds and other wildlife.

Under that rating system, said Mirabile, if a tree is rated a 3 or below, it is subject to removal. As a result, he told council members, the city has needlessly cut down healthy trees.

'I lost 100 percent (of trees) — 100 percent of the natural beauty, 100 percent of the wildlife connection, 100 percent shade and comfort and 100 percent of the joy,' Buccavoli said.

She urged the city to amend its tree ordinance and 'model your new policy after a city who's doing the right thing.'

At the very least, said Kim Begay, vice president of the Clearwater Audubon Society, property owners should be notified in writing before the city cuts down a tree on right of way in front of their property so the residents can challenge the decision to cut it down...

Clearwater Mayor Frank Hibbard said the council already agreed following the work session to put a hold on enforcing the tree ordinance until it can be reviewed.

'We have completely stopped the program and are going to reexamine it,' he said."

-- D'Ann Lawrence White, Patch

[Read entire article](#)

Alternative Turf: "Longboat Island Chapel Using Clay Brick Pavers instead of Artificial Turf"



Photo: Longboat Island Chapel

"In August 2022, the Longboat Island Chapel's Board of Trustees approved the Grounds Committee's request to replace dead turf around Friendship Garden's gazebo with clay brick pavers in a decorative design installed by Seven Stars who maintains the Chapel's brick pavers.

Turf around the gazebo in the Friendship Garden has not done well because of 1) lack of enough sunlight even though the tree canopy above it was opened, and 2) chairs and people atop the grass for weddings and events damage the turf.

The University of Florida IFAS Extension Service does not recommend synthetic turf, because it is not Florida-Friendly. They published the following:

Protecting and preserving Florida's water resources through sustainable landscaping practices on living landscapes is the primary focus of the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program.

When considering the use of a synthetic turf system in the urban landscape, it is important to understand all the potential environmental impacts. Synthetic turf systems have not been shown to improve or create wildlife habitat, do not improve groundwater recharge, can heat excessively in the sun and, in more extensive installations, can cause a substantial heat island effect.

In addition, synthetic turf generates higher stormwater runoff than natural turf and has been shown to leach a variety of contaminants, including both organic compounds and heavy metals.

Finally, since synthetic turf is primarily plastic it has a finite lifespan and must eventually be disposed of in a landfill, a practice that is counter to the sustainability goals of the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program.

So as to better accommodate weddings and events, the Grounds Committee recommended replacing the turf with the same style of clay brick pavers within the Friendship Garden but installed in a decorative design.

Benefits of the brick pavers are:

- They are Florida-Friendly.
- These areas will have the same height as existing pavers, reducing risks of tripping on raised turf.
- The areas will be level to place chairs.

The brick pavers were installed the next month in time for a wedding ceremony and reception at our Chapel in September on Labor Day weekend!"



Photo: Longboat Island Chapel

-- Ingrid McClellan, Scenic Florida

[Read about Longboat Island Chapel Weddings](#)

Alternative Turf: "Growing a Tapestry Lawn Will Transform Your Turf Into a Living Masterpiece—No Fertilizer, Aeration, or Water Needed"

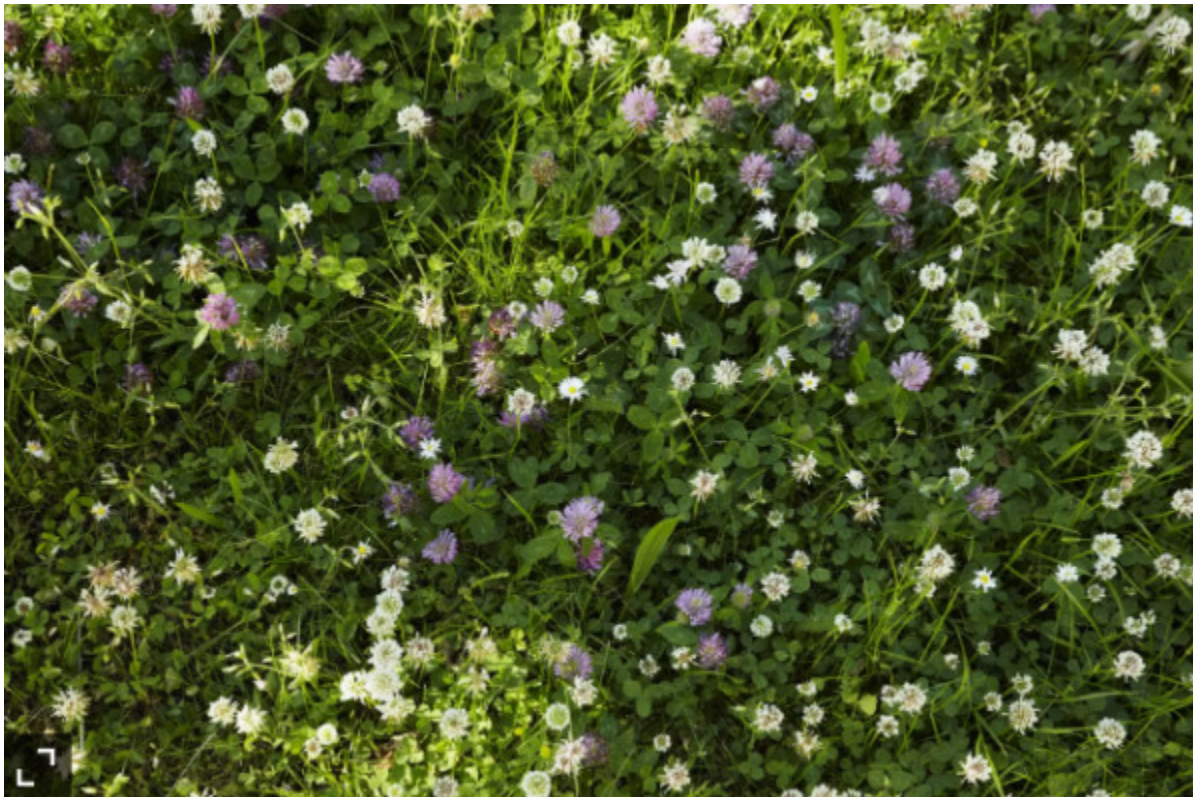


Photo: Johner Images, Getty Images on Martha Stewart

"Also called meadow lawns, this landscaping technique requires little to no maintenance or resources to thrive.

What Is a Tapestry Lawn? Best Plants How to Plant Mowing and Maintenance Zones and Regions Pros and Cons

A tapestry lawn is just one term for this natural landscape trend: Sometimes called a matrix garden, meadow lawn, prairie lawn, or patchwork lawn, this turf technique involves removing traditional grass and replacing it with a mix of native plants and flowers of varying heights, sizes, and textures for both aesthetic and ecological benefits.

As its name implies, a tapestry lawn consists of a mix of colorful plants that create a living piece of art in your yard. 'They are alternatives to traditional grass lawns and are more colorful, visually intriguing, eco-friendly, and low-maintenance,' says

Jeremy Yamaguchi, the CEO of Lawn Love. 'These lawns are essentially an interlaced spread of low-lying plants and flowers.'

While most homeowners opt for low landscapes, a tapestry lawn can vary in height; low-lying options clock in between 6 to 10 inches, but your site can be scaled to up to 48 inches depending on your turf and goals, says Benjamin Vogt, the owner of Monarch Gardens LLC. 'In general, such a landscape will include plants that move about, fill gaps, and generally show a new arrangement season to season and year to year—just as they would in wilder nature,' he says, adding that the main difference between your lawn and the wild is that the plants are purposefully selected to work on this site for aesthetic, practical, and environmental reasons.

The Best Plants for Tapestry Lawns

Tapestry lawns aren't one size (or zone) fits all. Ultimately, the plants you choose when working within this landscape trend should be native to your area, non-invasive, and low-water. 'You also want your selection of plants to all have similar water, light, [and] humidity requirements,' Yamaguchi says...

Tapestry Lawn Regions and Zones

All the experts we spoke to agree that the secret to creating a successful tapestry lawn is to always choose plants native to your region. 'The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map has universal codes that will help you pick the right ground cover plants for your [region],' Bucur says, noting that native plants are easier to care for and have a low likelihood of wilting or dying.

Pro: Environmental Impact

Tapestry lawns are far more eco-friendly than grass lawns, says Vogt. 'Just the increase in flowers alone is a boon to adult pollinators, while the diversity of plant species provides more food for their young (think caterpillars that eat foliage and become butterflies and moths),' he says. 'The increased density and diversity also is much better for healing soils, capturing and storing carbon, cleaning and cooling the air, reducing stormwater runoff, and generally providing habitat (and an aesthetic show) all year round—yes, even in winter.'

Con: Foot Traffic

While there are certainly perks to this low-maintenance approach to lawn care, Yamaguchi notes that there's a pretty obvious con to surrendering turf for tapestry: 'The only major downside to this lawn type is that it is not well built for much foot traffic,' he says."

-- Lauren Wellbank, Freelance Writer for Martha Stewart

[Read entire article](#)

Legal: "Town Tells Donut Shop That Mural Painted By Local High Schoolers Is Illegal, Threatens Fines"



Photo: Institute for Justice

"High school students worked for weeks on an art project for a beloved local bakery in Conway, New Hampshire. When their mural of a sun rising over a mountainscape of assorted pastries was unveiled, it was reported by the local newspaper and widely praised. But there was someone in town who saw things differently: the local code enforcer.

What he saw was an 'illegal' sign that needed to be torn down or painted over. That's because, according to the town, if a mural depicts anything related to what a business does, it is a sign and subject to strict regulations. For instance, if the exact same mural were painted on a tire shop across town, or even at the farm stand thirty feet away from the bakery, it would be legal.

Leavitt's Country Bakery is an institution in Conway. For 45 years it has been

admired for its baked treats, even being named the “Best Doughnuts in New Hampshire” by a state television station last year. Sean Young had been a loyal customer for years. When the original owners decided to sell, most potential buyers had a different vision for the property. But Sean wanted to keep the bakery’s legacy going and purchased it in 2021...

The code enforcer’s warning came as a complete shock and Sean first thought that the town might grant an exemption. Despite overwhelming support for the students’ artwork, the town refused to grant an exemption and said that daily fines of \$275 would start in February. The town also reiterated that the mural would be completely legal if Sean moved it from the bakery to a nearby farmstand...

Fortunately for Sean, there is relatively recent support in the federal courts for his new lawsuit. The Lonesome Dove saloon in Mandan, North Dakota, was ordered to remove a mural because it included the name of the business in the art work. After the owners sued with Institute for Justice, a judge issued a temporary restraining order against the city, finding that a ban on commercial murals was “unlikely to survive constitutional muster.”

As Conway’s zoning board was considering whether to find the mural illegal, one of the members opined that it would be a great civics lesson for the students to have to seek permission from the government for their art. Now Sean intends to teach the town a civics lesson about freedom of expression. Speaking at a press conference announcing the new lawsuit he said, 'I’m here to stand up for artists everywhere ... The First Amendment is the cornerstone of American democracy.'...

Sean received some good news shortly after announcing the suit. Conway agreed not to try to fine him while the lawsuit is going on. It’s a small victory, preserving the students’ art in place for at least a little longer."

- Andrew Wimer, Forbes

[Read entire article](#)

Tech: McDonald's Sweden Digital Mobile Billboards Are Food Ordering Devices



Video: via musebycl.io

"McDonald's Sweden's launched its new fried chicken burger with a nod to street food culture. Wheels were added to digital billboards in Stockholm and Västerås—near actual McDonald's restaurants..."

Here's how it worked: Passersby would scan a QR code... customer would complete the order and pick up their food at one of the two nearby McDonald's. Watch a billboard in action below:"

-- Amy Corr, musebycl.io

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