



Green Team Survey Response #2 (June 14, 2019)

First, we want to thank those of you for the positive comments and replies to our first response to your SWCA survey. We appreciate your feedback so please send us your comments. The goal of the Landscape Team and Committee is to continue to preserve our natural habitat while offering pops of color and delight throughout the year!

This second newsletter responds to your survey comments regarding annuals, the plant bed at the intersection of Oakwilde and Knollview, and bridge and entry pots. Additionally, we will discuss the homeowners' landscaping modification process since we have many new homeowners. We hope this will offer some useful information for those of you who enjoy your personal gardening experience here in the subtropics.

Since we are a community with a Declaration of Covenants and review procedure by the Architectural Modifications Review Committee (AMRC), there are restrictions on how and when we can make changes to our perennial landscape. If you reside in an HOA, your Board oversees the landscaping design of your neighborhood. If you want to make permanent improvements to your landscape, you need to get approval from your Neighborhood Board prior to filing an application with the SWCA AMRC. If you reside in a non-HOA neighborhood, then permanent improvement requests are filed directly with the SWCA AMRC. This includes removing aged-out bushes and trees that may need replacing. It does not include annual flowers. Yes, it can be somewhat of a burden to need approval for your landscape; however it ensures that our community continues to preserve our natural beauty.

Annual Flowers: One of the most frequent questions was, "Why are the annual flower beds changed just as they seem so full and lush?" The team struggles-and-juggles with this often! The usual rotation is to change the common area flowers every four months due to seasonal weather tolerance (temperature and rain fluctuations). This is a typical practice in many other communities. However, this presents a challenge. The SWCA plants over 7,000 flowers at each rotation, so close coordination with local wholesale growers well in advance is a must (lest we be the last community to order!).

Typically, each crop of annual flowers is given a 4-month window to grow and flourish, which is the average life span for most flowers in this area. If they are lush and fully in bloom, we often leave them in place a while longer. However, if a holiday such as Easter is coming upon us, we try to order the plants and rotate the beds in time for the plants to have some growth before many family and friends visit. When SW is bustling with guests, we want our beds to look beautiful. As you can see below, this can become a scheduling challenge.

Factors that influence our decision of when to change out the beds include:

- How long can we expect the current bed to stay lush? (all of the sudden they 'flop!)

- What have been the weather conditions been the past months? (rain, cold, hot, dry)
- When do we schedule our staff to trim the vegetation, inspect and adjust irrigation, reshape the turf edges and turn over the soil? (over 75 flower beds takes approximately 3 weeks)
- When can our suppliers deliver the next batch of annuals? (They guide us on what flowers are healthy and thriving as well)
- When can we schedule the company to plant the annual flowers? (they need several 5-6 weeks in advance of delivery/install)

The annual flower beds at the Oakwilde/Knollview intersection is a continuous project. There are different levels of sunlight and shade in that area. For many years it was bland and the plants had grown over the beautiful rock formations. It was decided that this should be a focal point, so the project began! The bromeliads (*Aechma Blanchetiana*) add height and texture, a pop of color, and thrive in full sun. They have been the hot trend for the past few years with landscape designers because they are colorful, drought tolerant (aka xeriscape) and are easy to maintain. Plants that have reached the end of their life expectancy, or have had the growing conditions change with more or less shade, continue to be removed and new plants are added. That area has also been expanded to increase the focal point. We have even seen that area being used as a backdrop for family photos! It is a large area and requires constant review and consultation with the Landscape Committee to continue to improve the appearance while considering cost of replanting and staff time.

Flower Pots: In conjunction with the Landscape Committee, the Landscape Department has continued to work to improve the flower pots at the two gatehouses and on the bridge. These were previously labor-intensive (as those of you who have your own flower pots understand). We purchased self-watering pots for the gatehouse entrances and this has eased the labor of watering by staff. And as you have seen, they are simply breath-taking this year.

We thought we would close with a testimonial from Bob Buckley. Bob owns Earth Planter, the company where we purchased the self-watering pots. Here is the verbatim email – says it all!

George Pittman wrote: Hi Bob – I thought you might enjoy seeing how our planters are doing. The attached photo was taken this morning. The thriller is white African iris, the filler is mixed geraniums and the spiller is trailing mezoo. We couldn't be happier with them!

Bob Buckley of Earth Planter replied: Hi George, what an amazing photo, one of the best I've seen in 7 years. Congrats on the beautiful arrangement and results. We would love to post this on our site and social sites along with your quote, would that be okay? Let us know and thank you again for sharing this.



Maybe we will go viral! Thank you for your time and have a healthy summer,
George Pittman and the Landscape Operations Team and the Landscape Committee