

Florida Homeowner's Journey to a Healthy Yard - Part 2

Another step in the journey to turning my yard into a healthy environment for our flora and fauna has been taken. As mentioned in my previous article I resubmitted the request to remove the invasive Chinese Tallow and Brazilian Pepper trees to our Homeowners Association. This time I attached articles about the trees and a brochure on the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council. This got a board member to stop by to see what trees I wanted to remove. He took a look around and said he would approve the request. Two weeks later I picked up the signed paperwork and contacted the city since I was told by the HOA I had to have a permit to cut down trees. The young lady that answered the phone told me I had to pay \$22 per tree for a permit and I had to submit the request for permits in person. I explained that I wanted to remove invasive trees. I didn't understand why I needed to pay to do what the city wanted done anyway. I asked to speak to her supervisor. I explained to the supervisor what I wanted and he said I didn't need permits to remove the invasive trees. Make sure you're talking with someone that understands about invasive species. So, finally I felt I had all my "ducks in a row" so that I didn't have to deal with a lot of drama when a huge truck drives through my yard.

And it went off without much drama, at least from the HOA. The contractor I chose did a great job and he was especially careful to protect my native trees. He understood exactly what I wanted and why. And as I mentioned previously his price was reasonable too. I struggled with the issue of killing a living organism up to the day the trees were removed and always came back to knowing that my native trees would become healthier without the competition.

My next-door neighbor was very kind in being there with the tree contractor so that I didn't have to miss work time. She was happy to have the trees removed because they caused a mess on her back patio area. I tried to explain the issue but I'm not sure it registered since when I arrived home and found that her boyfriend was cutting green fronds from my cabbage palm tree. I had told her that it was okay to take a few off but the tree contractor wouldn't touch it; he knew and understood how I felt. The boyfriend asked if I'd like more removed and all I could say was no thank you. The research I've done says that palm trees get their nutrients from the green fronds; removing the brown fronds is okay. He had already cut several of the green fronds. I think now my neighbor understands but I don't think her boyfriend got it.

Anyway, I will give my cabbage palm some extra care and hope for the best. It will have a lot more light and less competition for nutrients from the soil. I look forward to planting a new native tree, maybe a Southern Magnolia after I am sure my cabbage palm is healthy. I've planted a couple of beautyberry bushes and coontie. I'd like to create a native plant hedge between the community mail center and my home - wonder what would work best on the small ridge? And do I want to go through a whole process with the HOA again?

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