

Subject: Spring Update: Managing Our Neighborhood Swales & Stormwater

Dear Neighbors,

As we head into spring following February's blizzard, the HOA Board would like to share updated guidance from the Sussex Conservation District (received March 16, 2026) regarding the bioretention swales in the Reserve at Pilottown. Our goal is to keep our drainage system working perfectly while offering homeowners clear, low-maintenance options for their properties.

Who Owns the Swale?

While the land within a bioretention swale is **privately owned by the homeowner**, the HOA holds an easement to ensure these areas function correctly for neighborhood flood prevention (per Sections 2.03, 2.04, and 3.03 ii of the Declaration of Restrictions).

The HOA's Role:

- **Weed Control:** Spraying herbicide 3x yearly to mitigate invasive plants.
- **Annual Mulching:** Spreading fresh mulch to filter pollutants, prevent erosion, and regulate soil temperature.
- **System Checks:** Inspecting observation ports and basins annually for sediment or drainage failures.

Updated Policy: Shrub Replacement

We recognize that many original shrubs are over 20 years old and were damaged by the recent heavy snow.

- **Replacement is NOT required:** If a shrub in your swale dies, you are not required to replace it, provided the area continues to drain properly.
- **The Low-Maintenance Option:** You may choose to leave the area mulched only. This maintains drainage without the need for new plantings.
- **If You Choose to Plant:** We recommend native species with shallow roots, such as
 - **Blue Flag Iris**
 - **Joe Pye Weed**
 - **Obedient Plant**

A full list of approved species is available at www.reserveatpilottown.com on the Stormwater Management page.

Essential "Do's and Don'ts"

To prevent localized flooding and protect our "engineered soil," please follow these guidelines:

1. **Keep it Clear:** Do not place fences, rocks, boats or landscape objects in the swale, as they obstruct water flow and can potentially damage the buried pipe.
2. **No Mowers:** Please do not drive mowers inside the swale. The weight compacts the soil and causes standing water.
3. **No Deep Roots:** Avoid planting trees in the swale; stick to approved herbaceous plants or shrubs.
4. **Remove "Volunteers":** Please pull any "volunteer" trees or weeds to keep the system clear.
5. **Smart Pruning:** For existing shrubs, "hard pruning" between late November and February encourages the healthiest regrowth.

Thank you for helping keep the Reserve at Pilottown beautiful and flood-free!

Best regards,

The HOA Board