



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **VOLUNTEERS INVITED TO REMOVE INVASIVE PLANTS AT NORTH WATER TOWER PARK FEB. 7**

Sarasota, FL: The City of Sarasota will partner with the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program and community residents to host an Air Potato Roundup Saturday, February 7 from 9 a.m. – noon at North Water Tower Park, 4700 Rilma Avenue. Volunteers interested in cleaning up the community park, home to one of the most popular disc golf courses in Florida, are encouraged to participate in a morning of camaraderie as air potato plants, an invasive vine, are removed.

The Air Potato Roundup will officially kick off a three year improvement project at North Water Tower Park which will focus on restoration, stormwater and environmental public education. The project will be managed by SBEP, the City of Sarasota and Sarasota County.

The Air Potato Roundup is suitable for all ages. **Participants must wear closed-toed shoes** and preferably long-sleeved shirts and pants. Please wear a hat, sunscreen, clothes that can get dirty, and work gloves. Also, bring a reusable water bottle, if you have one, to reduce our plastic pollution, and carpool if you can.

Sarasota Bay Guardians shirts will be available for all volunteers. If you already have one, please wear your shirt to the event.

**Lunch will be provided for all volunteers after the air potatoes are removed.**

**For lunch and t-shirt, registration is required.**



The air potato vine is an invasive species.

[Click here to register.](#)

SBEP recently was awarded a \$300,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency Gulf of Mexico Program for water quality improvements and invasive species removal at North Water Tower Park, with a diverse group of stakeholders participating in the application process: the Bayou Oaks Neighborhood Association, Indian Beach Sapphire Shores Neighborhood Association, North Trail Redevelopment Partnership and the Sarasota Sky Pilots Disc Golf Club.

The planned improvements are part of a proposed North Water Tower Park area Master Plan initiative within the City Commission's adopted Fiscal Year 2014-2016 Strategic Plan. One of the goals is to improve park access for residents in the nearby Bayou Oaks Neighborhood, plus heighten natural surveillance within the park using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

The City's Urban Design Studio recently conducted a comprehensive review of the neighborhoods that surround North Water Tower Park and identified them as a catalyst area which could experience zoning code changes using a new form-based code, prior to implementation in other areas of the City. Proposed form-based code concepts will be on display during the Air Potato Roundup and staff will be available to respond to questions.

The Air Potato Roundup is an excellent way to remove unwanted plants in North Water Tower Park while sparking community interest in the park and ultimately reducing undesirable activities.

The inaugural Air Potato Roundup, hosted by SBEP and the City of Sarasota in October 2013, was very successful with over 100 residents participating. More than 2,500 pounds of air potatoes were collected in four hours.



Tim Litchet, Neighborhood & Development Services Director, removing air potato vines during the Air Potato Roundup in 2013.

For more information about the Air Potato Roundup call 941-955-8085 or email [info@sarasotabay.org](mailto:info@sarasotabay.org).

To learn more about the catalyst plan proposed for the area, contact [Briana Dobbs](#), Planning Tech: 941:365-2200 ext. 3650.

**Attached:** Three photos from the 2013 Air Potato Roundup