



Royal Ascot
Landscaping Report

The Good,
the Bad &
the Ugly

May 2024



It's been a while since the last report, for which I apologise. Sometimes work and life combine forces to take you well away from the time needed to do these things!

As we feel the mornings getting darker and the sun setting earlier... a chill creeps into the afternoon air, welcoming the change in seasons. Our precinct now fills with yellows, oranges and purples as the temperature drops. The last berries are falling from our Waterberry trees and the retention ponds are being prepped for the rainy season ahead.

The past month has seen some new replanting done up at the corner of Koeberg and Bridle Way on the stable side. The Atlantic team have cleared beds at the park on Parade Ring Road and along Grand National Boulevard, opposite La Camargue, ready to plant this months allocation of new plants. There have also been clean ups done at the beds outside Equini and Arena North at the entrance to Milnerton Ridge. Along with our delivery of fertilizer, we have also received a pile of wood chips, which we will use to neaten all the pathways around the precinct.

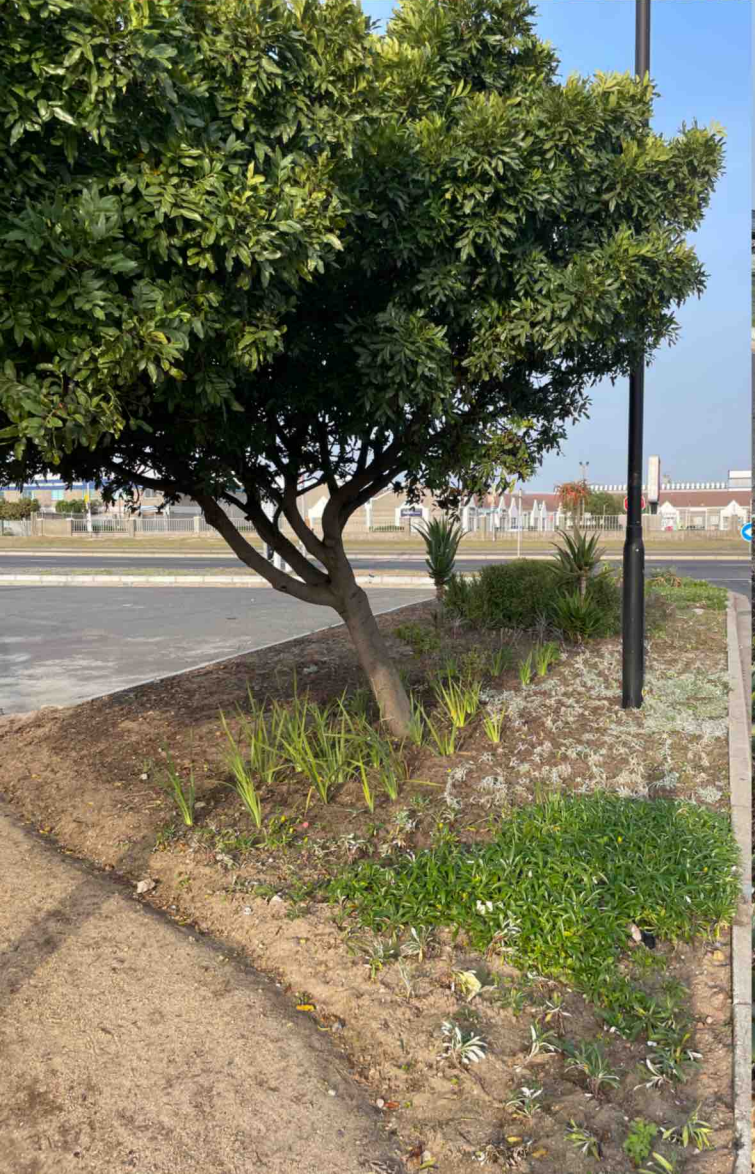
The water meter readings this month are as follows:

Borehole 36023 m³

Second Circle 60978 m³

Third Circle 84488 m³





Other planting that took place in February, was the beds on the Racecourse side of the second traffic circle. These are starting to settle quite nicely and should look a picture of splendour in Spring.

Rampoa have recently accepted a quote and paid the deposit for work to commence on the upgrade of the main irrigation line in Parade Ring Road. This line has been giving many issues over the last calendar year, and was one of the areas that was not upgraded after the drought.

As such, it's been in need of some TLC for a while. We have been waiting for the change in season to do this work, as it would require digging up existing vegetation to replace the pipe work. This work will start in the month ahead. Also in Parade Ring Road, we will be doing a branch cut back and general thinning of the avenue of Syzigiums that runs between Coral Grove and Chestnut Ridge.

After almost 20 years since development, many of our trees are reaching their mature heights, requiring pruning specialists to undertake the work higher up. Such work requires contractors with correct rope access qualifications and liability insurance to handle these cut backs. All the smaller tree work is handled by Atlantic Scapes.

Atlantic Scapes has welcomed a new member to their company. Tendai, has joined them from another landscaping company in sunset Beach, since February, and now heads the team, managing our precinct.





On the subject of tree pruning: 2 years ago, the Ficus Nataliensis outside Willow Ridge was interfering with the surrounding dwellings, so we got a 10K haircut done. A few months ago, we got further complaints from the surrounding neighbours that this tree was again causing damage to the their houses.

As such, the landscaping team, with input from Rampoa, made the decision to arrange a more severe cut back on this tree. After waiting for the Spring nesting season to finish, work was undertaken. The severity of the cut raised the ire of many residents on local social media groups.

The decision to impose such a severe cut back is not made without input from all parties involved. It is also not something we wish to consider for any of the other trees, any time soon. This was done in the interests of future tree maintenance, with the consideration of its proximity to the surrounding houses.

The Ficus is a seriously fast growing tree, so the decision to do this cut back was made knowing that the foliage will fully return, but in a more manageable way. The EMC (Environmental Management Committee) is monitoring the monthly return growth, and are learning from this too. This is the first time that one of our large trees has been cut back so severely, and hopefully we don't need to be this drastic in future.

Rampoa has its own tree pruning policy, which is in line with the City of Cape Towns tree policy. This is overseen by the EMC.

Normally, between March and May, the EMC get multiple requests, from within complexes, from residents, asking to remove Syzgium (Waterberry) trees, because of the mess caused during berry season. Our tree policy specifically states that mess caused from leaves, flowering or berries, is not a consideration for removal.



On that note, it is important for all HOA's and Body Corporates to ensure that they adequately financially plan for the maintenance of trees within the common areas of their precincts. This fund should cover pruning, root barriers, branch removal, paving repairs, and occasionally tar work repairs. As chairman of LaCamargue, I initiated a tree fund as part of our Levy four years ago. This amounts to around 12K annually for 58 units, each with Common area trees.

This amount allows us to do canopy thinning every 3- years and brick paving repairs every 4-5 years. With our last brick paving repairs, we removed roots that were damaging paving, and dug aluminium flashing down along the borders, to a depth of 50cm, to stop future root damage, then re compacted and replaced the brickwork.

As with all tree requests, the process starts with filling in a tree request form that gets submitted to the EMC. If your managing agent does not have the most up to date version of this, it can be obtained through Zulfa, at RPM (Rabie Property Management). Once submitted, the EMC undertake an on site visit and offers advise accordingly.



Moving on from trees to ponds.

As you may or may not know; Royal Ascot has four stormwater retention ponds. One at the Arena North park, one between Birkdale Village and Ascot Terraces, and 2 in the open areas below the Paddocks and at the entrance to Milnerton Ridge.

These were designed as catchment areas for rainwater that flows from our roadways, and then moves from these, down to the Diepriver Vlei catchment area.

There are various kinds of retention ponds. Ours are wet/dry ponds.

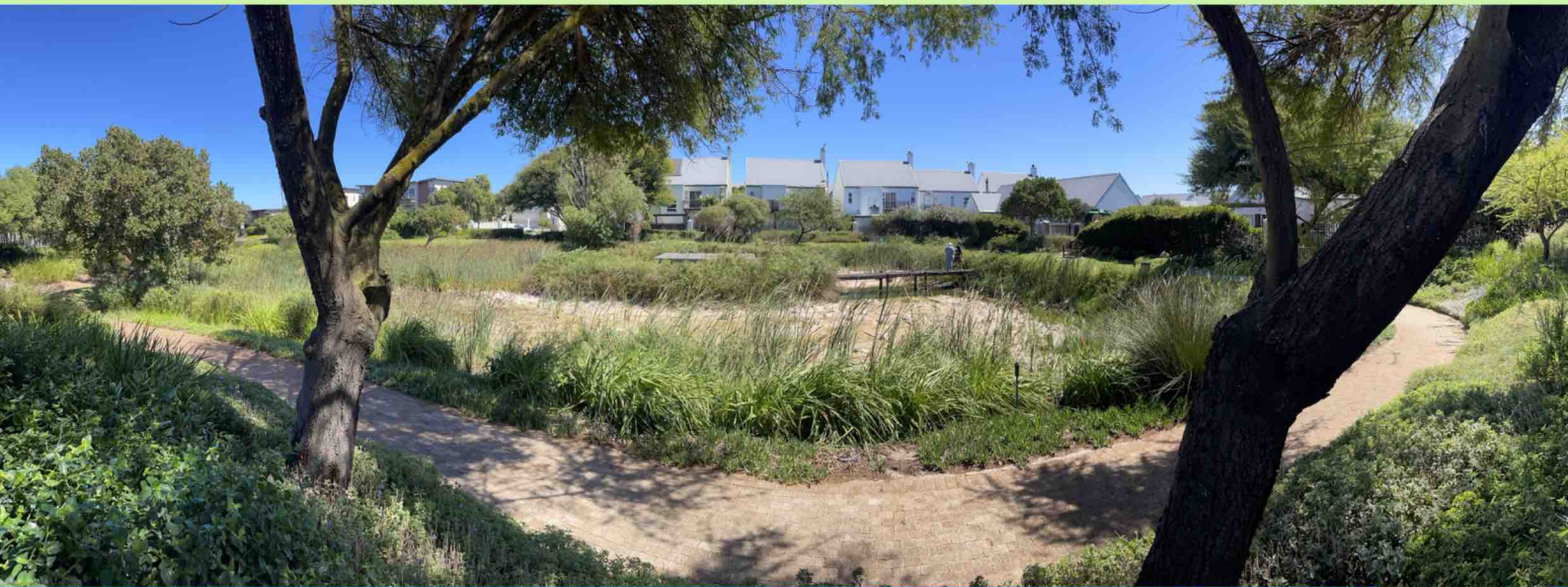
Designed to be wet in winter and dry in summer. 20 years ago, when designed, they were at least a meter deeper than today, due to multiple years of silt washing into them. That allowed them to stay fuller for longer. Over the past few years, we have noted that they dry up sooner than prior years. We often get letters of concern when they dry up, but apart from reed management, we are not able to do much else regarding filling them, unless it rains.

Royal Ascot has 3 OEMPs (Operational Environmental Management Plans), that lay out the process of managing the Landscaping within our precinct and also our Nature Reserves. Volume 1 deals with the residential and business precinct. Annexure F deals with Stormwater.

As prescribed in this, our Landscapers have cleared all entrance ways to these ponds in preparation for the winter season ahead. Similarly, they have managed reed growth accordingly.

The management plan prescribes the needs for reeds as a method of water filtration, so it's about maintaining the balance to not have too much either.

Our hope is to get COCT to assist us in the next year or 2, to clear out the silted up layers to regain the original depth of these areas, as at inception, to hopefully keep them fuller for longer. As for the algae, this too is part of the natural annual cycle.





As much as we may find the algae ugly, it is a natural, seasonal occurrence. The same algae also appears within the bodies of water in our nature reserve, which don't have any contamination from roadways or sewer overflows.

Somehow when our ponds do fill up, we occasionally have residents (or visitors to our ponds), that throw fish in them. A few years back we had common carp and tilapia. Last year someone threw in goldfish. As nice as it may be to take your kids there to feed these fish, they are all invasive species, that could, during the rainy season, be washed into the Vlei area downstream. When this happens, it can lead to prolific breeding and may even cause ecological disasters, where these invasive species then feed on indigenous fish thus decimating local populations entirely. That's why the EMC advocates that any fish in the ponds, when they dry up, die... as they were never meant to be there in the first place.

Then, for those of you that like to use our outdoor gym area next to Sandown Crescent. You would have noticed that it has weathered rather badly since being installed, 8 years ago. Back then, outdoor gyms weren't common, and there was only one company doing such installations. Against recommendation of galvanising, they installed painted mild steel pieces, which have subsequently only lasted less than a decade.

Anyway, Rampoa are now looking to replace the compliment of current equipment with new pieces, and we have been presented with multiple catalogues of new stuff. It would be wonderful to get some input from those that use this space, or some gym professionals, as to what pieces you'd like to see here. If you have any suggestions, please feel free to pop the in a mail to zulfa@rpaonline.co.za

We look forward to hearing from you soon. Our intent is to get new pieces installed before the end of the year. If no advice is forthcoming, I'll have to do a thumbsuck, which I don't want to do, so please get the word out.

Lastly, I'd once again like to extend my sincere thanks to Anthony, Rylan and the landscaping team for their continued efforts in keeping our precinct looking great. It's always such a pleasure to drive through our area and admire the visual splendour and planted diversity.