

BRING PORN JOBS HERE

And tease words go right in here

CERABINO, 1B



Suncoast principal paid \$12,000 for teacher's funeral

IN LOCAL



MARY WILSON: STILL SUPREME

Motown legend isn't slowing down

IN ACCENT

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IN THE NEWS

Use of U.S. might in Syria pondered

Don't discount Assad's air defenses, chemical weapons, Pentagon tells senators. 3A

700,000-vehicle recall affects Tacoma, Camry

Toyota says it will fix problem areas including steering wheel cables and lamp switches. 2A

Shift to new technology for energy, Obama says

Calling oil the 'fuel of the past,' the president proposes grants for alternative sources. 2A



Obama

Israel, Iran both sound skeptical on nuke talks

Israeli officials say Tehran will try to use new talks as cover while it develops weapons. 3A

Afghanistan blast kills 6 U.K. troops on patrol

Their armored vehicle is hit in Helmand province; it's U.K. units' worst loss since '06. 3A

Bin Laden's final days spent in distrust of wife

Al-Qaeda's leader feared betrayal by his eldest wife, a younger wife told officials. 7A

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County OKs annexation for Wellington project

The village wants to build a medical hub near Wellington Regional Medical Center. 1B

Goodman jury selection trims prospects to 38

Those queried about media reports focus on the fate of crash victim Scott Wilson. 23. 1B



Goodman

Jupiter pursues upgrade for Fullerton Island

A conservation plan would restore the beauty of the 11.7-acre Intracoastal tract. 1B

Public-assistance-fraud charges leveled at 22

The State Attorney's Office says the system was cheated

BUSINESS

Public radio WLRN-FM pushes to expand here

With WXEL's sale, the Miami-based station beefs up local content to draw listeners. 6B

New toy: Apple unveils a new iPad with an HD screen and faster wireless connection. 6B

AARP data: Prices of drugs most used by older patients rise at twice inflation rate. 7B

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Will Peyton join Ozzie, LeBron in S. Florida?

The Colts' released QB would be a temporary fix for the 'Fins, but imagine the fun. 1C

Bold word: And a short tez to another story goes here and another line right here. 1C

Doral event begins: With their history, Phil Mickelson stays Tiger Woods' fiercest rival. 1C

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POST COVERAGE GOP presidential race

Romney: 6 wins, no victory lap

Super Tuesday results add to his lead, but don't discourage rivals.

By GEORGE BENNETT Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

He won six out of 10 Super Tuesday primaries, including a come-from-behind victory in the Rust Belt battleground of Ohio, but Republican presidential front-runner Mitt Romney didn't get to take much of a victory lap Wednesday.

Instead, Romney and his Republican

rivals were girding for a prolonged nomination battle that the Romney campaign said would only help President Obama's re-election prospects.

After Tuesday's contests, Romney had 415 of the 1,144 delegates needed to clinch the Republican nomination, according to an Associated Press tally. Rick Santorum was a distant second with 176, while Newt Gingrich had 105

See GOP, 4A

Current delegate count

Table showing delegate counts for Romney (415), Santorum (176), Gingrich (105), and Paul (47). Total delegates needed to win GOP nomination: 1,144.

POST EXCLUSIVE Median beautification

THE COST OF BEAUTIFUL MEDIANS: What you don't see



BILL INGRAM/Staff Photographer

Irrigation systems swell the tab for creating lush road dividers.

By MITRA MALEK Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Local governments pay more for watering systems that most people never see than for the actual plants that add beauty and color to dreary roadways, a Palm Beach Post survey of six local median beautification projects shows.

And despite recent droughts that have raised awareness of the importance of conservation, a majority of the plants in five of the six projects are not native to Florida. In all, plants for the six projects cost \$1.3 million but irrigation cost \$1.5 million, a necessary expense, landscaper managers said, in Florida's fickle environment.

Only Jupiter relied mostly on native plants. Its Alternate A1A beautification from Toney Penna Drive to Donald Ross Road calls for 63 percent of the trees, palms and shrubs to be native.

Wellington, in contrast, used only 7 percent natives on its beautification of Forest Hill Boulevard from Wellington Trace to State Road 7.

But native plants are not the only way to avoid heavy dependence on scarce water sources.

Landscapers from all the municipalities pride themselves on selecting drought-tolerant plants with low or very low water needs. The Post found that all six projects

See MEDIANS, 6A

PRETTY CARRIES A PRICE:

Wellington

3.4 miles: Forest Hill Boulevard from State Road 7 to Wellington Trace

Landscaping: \$410,502

Irrigation: \$326,060

Annual maintenance: \$26,928

Status:

More median projects, 6A

Money trees

How much does it cost to buy a stately royal palm for a median? Prices vary. 6A

POST IN TALLAHASSEE GOP disunity

Bipartisan coalitions block bills

Infighting keeps GOP leaders from maintaining allegiances.

By DARA KAM Palm Beach Post Capital Bureau

TALLAHASSEE — With just two days left in the legislative session, at least two high-priority — and contentious — measures remain unresolved and at least one poses a potentially embarrassing loss for Senate President Mike Haridopolos.

Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, and other Senate GOP leaders — including Rules Chairman John Thrasher and Majority Leader Andy Gardiner — are backing a controversial "parent trigger" school choice measure (SB 1718) that will come up for debate today and get a vote on Friday.

Despite it being a priority for the GOP leaders as well as former Gov. Jeb Bush,

See JUMPWORD, 10A

Tease from here to LEGE story from here, please, XXA

Tease from here to another LEGE story from here, XXA

POST COVERAGE Foreclosure crisis

Cash for courts' foreclosure load

The state budgets \$4 million to hire more judges to clear Fla.'s backlog.

By KIMBERLY MILLER Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Florida's courts are slated for a \$4 million budget boost to tackle the state's daunting foreclosure backlog with additional judges and case managers.

The one-time stipend, which is in the 2012-2013 budget, would be available to Florida's 20 circuit courts July 1 if it passes final legislative muster this week.

Although each circuit's share is unknown, Palm Beach County Chief Judge Peter Blanc said the statewide amount is "meaningful."

"It will give us an opportunity to bring down some of the backlog," Blanc said. "A lot of the debate these days is why are the cases still there, and we do have some difficulty getting timely hearings sometimes."

See COURTS, 5A

SOLAR STORM

As solar storm hits Earth, outages, GPS troubles feared

Far-reaching disruptions possible, hard to pinpoint.

By SETH BORENSTEIN The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The largest solar storm in five years is racing toward Earth, threatening to unleash a torrent of charged particles that could disrupt power grids, GPS and airline flights.

The sun erupted Tuesday evening, and the effects were expected to start smacking Earth between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. today, according to forecasters at the federal government's Space Weather Prediction Center. They say the storm, which started with a massive solar flare, is growing as it speeds outward from the sun.

"It's hitting us right in the nose," said Joe Kunches, a scientist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He called it the sun's version of "Super Tuesday."

Scientists say the sun has been relatively quiet for some time. And this storm, while strong, may seem fiercer

See FLARE, 8A

Some solar storm facts

What is it? A disruption in the sun's atmosphere that can result in concentrations of charged particles being flung millions of miles into space.

When will it hit? It was expected to start hitting Earth early today.

How will it affect me? Electronic devices may experience disruptions.

Interesting fact: The charged particles will be hitting the Earth at 4 million mph.

Medians matter to municipalities

► MEDIANS from LA

use a majority of drought-tolerant plants. In Jupiter, 97 percent of the plants are drought-tolerant, and Wellington, despite its largely non-native palette, has 88 percent drought-tolerant seedlings and saplings.

The sole plant with high water needs in any of the projects — and it's in five of the six — is the majestic royal palm, a towering fixture in Palm Beach and a native plant, but one that thrives near swamps.

Although experts often disagree, many landscape managers contend that even if medians went all native, they still would need irrigation systems because weather can vary so much in Palm Beach County.

"I have never seen a locale that has as many micro-climates as we do," said Allen Sistrunk, director of Mounts Botanical Garden in West Palm Beach. "One place gets rain, another no rain for three months. Then combine that with the heat and hostility of a roadway environment."

Once established in the right place, natives will never need watering, said Richard Moyroud, owner of Mesozoic Landscaping west of Lantana and a member of the Florida Native Plant Society.

"Native plants have been in Florida since before the first human ever walked," Moyroud said. "They went through droughts. They went through fires. The median is no worse."

Before a controversial decision to cut back, Palm Beach County had planned a nearly \$1 million project to beautify a 4-mile stretch of medians on Okeechobee Boulevard west of Florida's Turnpike. About 75 percent of that bill would have been for irrigation.

After community outrage over a county commission decision to kill the project, the county scaled it back to \$640,000, with half the money from the state and \$100,000 from West Palm Beach. Irrigation, including wells and pumps to tap underground water sources, still makes up 68 percent of the cost, at \$439,000.

The bill includes a \$23,000 state-of-the-art remote control watering system that detects power failures and breaks in water lines by measuring water flow, a better way to manage water consumption, officials say.

"It tells you where the problems are as opposed to sending someone out to look," said Andrew Hertel, the county's streetscape manager.

The *Post* analyzed the costs of that project and five median jobs recently completed or about to get under way: Seacrest Boulevard in Boynton Beach; Alternate A1A in Jupiter; Forest Hill Boulevard in Wellington; and Okeechobee Boulevard and Royal Palm Beach Boulevard in Royal Palm Beach.

In all, the municipalities lived the medians and, in some cases, adjacent roadside strips with 89,440 plants. All six projects use non-native grasses, but *The Post's* analysis didn't take sod into consideration.

Local and state coffers didn't pay for all the work. Projects in Boynton Beach, Wellington and Royal Palm Beach relied on federal stimulus money that helped pay for larger road improvement projects. Were it not for the Obama administration's 2009 stimulus package, aimed at shovel-ready projects, some of the median sprucing wouldn't have happened.



ALLEN EYESTONE/Staff Photographer

HOW MUCH FOR A MEDIAN?

West Palm Beach

3.96 miles: Okeechobee Boulevard, from Florida's Turnpike to State Road 7

Landscape: \$201,607 **Irrigation:** \$438,990

Annual maintenance: \$50,000 **Status:** In progress

Other median projects in Palm Beach County

BOYNTON BEACH

.8 miles: Seacrest Boulevard, from Ocean Avenue to just north of Ponciana Elementary School

Landscaping: \$46,762

Irrigation system: \$90,331

Annual maintenance: \$13,272

Status: Complete

JUPITER

2.9 miles: Alternate A1A, from Donald Ross Road to Toney Penna Drive

Landscaping: \$218,066

Irrigation system: \$256,125

Annual maintenance: \$37,800

Status: Expected to start this year

ROYAL PALM BEACH

2 miles: Royal Palm Beach Boulevard, from Okeechobee Boulevard to 40th Street North

Landscaping: \$291,250

Irrigation system: \$296,760

Annual maintenance: Declined to provide

Status: Complete

ROYAL PALM BEACH

.72 miles: Okeechobee Boulevard, 3,800 feet along Portosol community

Landscaping: \$102,071

Irrigation system: \$70,000

Annual maintenance: Declined to provide

Status: Complete

Tree prices branch out in all directions

Tree prices vary among the projects because of height, caliper, clear trunk space and canopy, among other features. Terrain and access also factor into prices.

LIVE OAK	PER TREE COST	QUANTITY
Boynton Beach - Seacrest Boulevard	\$187	4*
Jupiter - Alternate A1A	\$486	92
Royal Palm Beach - Okeechobee Boulevard		none
Royal Palm Beach - Royal Palm Beach Boulevard	\$360	18
Wellington - Forest Hill Boulevard	\$448	49**
West Palm Beach/Palm Beach County - Okeechobee Blvd.		None

FLORIDA ROYAL PALM

Boynton Beach - Seacrest Boulevard		None
Jupiter - Alternate A1A	\$378	100
Royal Palm Beach - Okeechobee Boulevard	\$600	70
Royal Palm Beach - Royal Palm Beach Boulevard	\$225	5***
Royal Palm Beach - Royal Palm Beach Boulevard	\$350	36
Wellington - Forest Hill Boulevard	\$325	23**
West Palm Beach/Palm Beach County - Okeechobee Blvd.	\$400	7

FUN FACT: Royal Palm Beach's Royal Palm Beach Boulevard has the most expensive, and least expensive, palms. Most expensive: caranday palm, 24, \$695 each. Least expensive: cardboard palm: 105 at \$19 each.

* Boynton Beach paid a lump sum for all trees in the project. Per-tree cost was derived from that.

** Wellington had an additional 13 live oaks and eight royal palms, but individual tree prices weren't available for that phase of the project. The oak price is an average based on two contracts and a work order.

*** Royal Palm Beach Boulevard was improved in two phases.

And attractive medians matter, many insist, especially if they line a municipality's main drag.

That's the case for Wellington's Forest Hill Boulevard, a \$5.5 million "Main Street" revamp the village launched in 2009 to handle major road repairs. Several contractor-related hiccups stymied work before all the median landscaping was done.

The nearly bald medians triggered plenty of complaints last year. "It's looking pretty cruddy," resident Joseph Manning said. A couple of council members were frustrated, too. "It's the worst-looking median ... and it's supposed to be the apple of our eye," Councilman Howard Coates said.

Nearly 93 percent of the 33,398 plants and trees drivers cruise by from Wellington Trace to

State Road 7 aren't native. More than half are jasmine minima — 18,288 seedlings of the dense and sturdy plant.

Wellington chose jasmine as an alternative to sod in some areas because it's low-maintenance, endures lots of heat and snuffs out weeds, said Jim Barnes, the village's director of operations.

But jasmine is a climbing vine, not a ground cover, Moyroud said.

That's less troubling, though, than the fact that the plant, like all non-natives, doesn't fit into Florida's eco-system, said Moyroud, who sits on the county's Natural Areas Management Advisory Committee.

Native insects and butterflies likely won't visit, and birds might not eat the seeds, he said.

"It should be, what else

is living there?" he said. "Butterflies flying around a tree are, to me, more interesting than flowers. Plants that are used to beautify, that's a judgment call. Who's to say that the scrub I'm looking at right now is not the most beautiful?"

Natives, planted correctly, are the best choice, Moyroud said. They don't spread farther than intended and don't need excess fertilizers, fungicides or pesticides.

"If it works already, how could you possibly improve it?" he said.

Instead, the public often wants pops of color from plants that don't belong here, Moyroud said, something "the planet can't afford."

Staff writer Joel Engelhardt contributed to this story.

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