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# Winter Park to start using weed killer Sonar in lakes

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OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — A powerful, long-lasting new weed killer will be used on city lakes beginning this fall, but city officials predict not everyone will be happy with it.

City commissioners approved the use of the herbicide Sonar last week as a less expensive, effective weapon against lake weeds. But they acknowledged that some lakefront residents may be upset with the chemical's effect on desirable plants such as cattails and pond lilies.

City staff recommended Sonar application for its potential cost savings and its effectiveness in controlling the weed hydril-

la. Sonar costs about \$180 an acre, compared with about \$250 an acre for chemicals now used, said Public Works Director Joe Compton. It is effective for 12 to 18 months, while other chemicals must be applied three times a year.

Other chemicals also can kill harmless weeds, Compton said. A resident on Lake Osceola complained two months ago after lily pads were killed in a weed treatment application, he said.

City environmental consultant Bill McClintock said Sonar's long-lasting weed-killing qualities recommend it. "When you weigh what you get over a year or year and a half, I think we can suffer the loss of the pond lily."

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## SONAR

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City officials began looking for a more effective herbicide because of the rising cost of chemicals. Compton predicted the city's lakes treatment budget could grow to \$500,000 in five years using the present procedures and chemicals.

The city spent \$174,000 for lakes treatment in 1983 and expects to spend a similar amount next year. Sonar eventually will reduce that cost because it only has to be reapplied every 18 months, Compton said. The city also will buy new equipment and upgrade job descriptions to hold costs down, he said.

Approved by state and federal agencies, Sonar is a slow-acting chemical that spreads over a much larger area than that treated. It is absorbed into the system of the plant, killing it down to the root and even to buds in the ground.

Because it takes several months to see its full effect, the city plans to apply it in October so that lakes are clear by spring.

City officials inspected Sonar-treated Lake Mann in Orlando and Lake Whipporwill in Orange County. Eight months after 400-acre Lake Mann was treated in a checkerboard pattern the

lake showed good water quality and excellent weed control, Compton said. Hydrilla, cattails and torpedo grass were gone from Lake Whipporwill two months after it was treated.

Compton said application in a checkerboard pattern will control the chemical's tendency to overkill, or to spread beyond the area which was treated.

On Lake Mann, no lakefront property, trees, shrubs or grass were affected, he said. Some plants, such as arrowhead, are unaffected by the herbicide. But most roots or branches touching the water will die.

The manufacturer of the chemical says it is safe for humans and fish, but as an additional precaution, the city will post warning flags after application to let residents know they should not use lake water for irrigation or swim in the lakes for seven days, McClintock said.

The city already has tested Sonar on two lakes. On Lake Francis on Gallo-way Drive, the herbicide killed hydrilla and other weeds in about six to eight weeks, Compton said. It was applied to a one-acre test area in the southeast corner of Lake Virginia about a month ago and has started to work on hydrilla, cattails and other weeds there, he said.

McClintock said the chemical is not harmful to fish or humans.

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