



It Takes A Village...

...To Create Harmony With Nature

The final benefit of all human effort is to make the world a better place.

Dr. Robert Raborn

Chairman, Audubon Committee

Country Club of Florida

BY SHELLY FOY

USGA Green Section, Florida Region

Over the years, I have mailed many things to Jeff Klontz, superintendent at the Country Club of Florida. However, I never paid much attention to the Village of Golf, Florida address until conducting some research for this article.

Yes, there actually is a town called the Village of Golf. It was incorporated by a special act of the Florida Legislature in 1957. There were no minimum number of residents required for zoning laws in 1957, which is a good thing because the only residents at that time were the cows!*

Now, the Village of Golf is a self-sustaining community of 360 acres that has its own government. The first mayor, Carleton Blunt, was elected in 1957 and retired 30 years later. Blunt proved to be a visionary in many ways, but especially when he proposed development of a water and sewer facility. This facility now serves Delray Dunes, the Country Club of Florida, and Quail Ridge.

The Country Club of Florida golf course opened in 1957, and currently has approximately 300 members. The architect was Bruce Harris of Chicago. In 1986, an extensive course renovation project was conducted. In addition to addressing a variety of agronomic and drainage issues, Arthur Hills modified the course design. He also preserved the layout while improving the character and playability of the course.

The Country Club of Florida first joined the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses in 1991. Its Audubon Committee was formed in 1996. It became certified in Environmental Planning in April 1997, and in December 1997 became certified in Out-

reach & Education and Wildlife & Habitat Management. As you can see, since joining the Audubon program, the Country Club of Florida has been very busy.

I have spent a lot of time on golf courses in the past few years talking about the Audubon Program. To me, the Country Club of Florida stands out in several areas:

- They have a strong Audubon Committee that is dedicated to providing the time and finding the money for enhancement projects.
- They have a superintendent that is committed to doing the right thing.
- They have a membership that strongly supports the projects they are working on with funding as well as enthusiasm.

Membership Support

There are many groups that support enhancement projects at the Country Club of Florida: the Audubon Committee, Beautification Committee, Village of Golf, Green Committee, and Homeowners Association.

The Audubon Committee's eight-member team includes Jeff Klontz, superintendent, Buzz Jaskela, Landscape Designer, and six Country Club of Florida members.

Dr. Bob Raborn, chairman of the Audubon Committee, says "the amount

of time you can realistically spend on enhancement projects depends on your vision and your commitment. We are fortunate to have the financial support, team and time." He also stated that "consistency is very important for long-range planning."

Another committee that contributes significantly to the Audubon Program is the Beautification Committee. Bill Fay is the enthusiastic chairman whose visions and persuasive letters have raised between \$25,000 and \$30,000 yearly to support the Long Range Landscape plan and now the Audubon projects as well.

For more than 10 years, this committee has provided funds to the golf course for enhancement projects. Klontz recently completed a hole-by-hole list of contributions from this committee to emphasize the impact of this group's support.

"It seems as though we sometimes overlook just how important beautification funding is to the Country Club of Florida. We truly appreciate their support," he said.

The Village of Golf itself also contributes funding for enhancement and capital improvement projects, and the membership supports these efforts as well.

Jeff's outreach and education goals for the Country Club of Florida are to



The same wetland area after construction. The improved wetland is now home to 5,000 cordgrass plants, purple martins, mallard ducks, coots, gallinules and American widgeons. Photo by Jeff Klontz.



increase awareness and the importance of

- biological pest and turf management methods and to show that the golf course uses less toxic chemicals
- water conservation and effluent water usage
- the value of native plant material in landscaping
- benefits of attracting wildlife
- the Wildlife Corridor
- water quality management

The Country Club of Florida has a community and leadership committed to working together on programs to benefit the Village of Golf community.

Wildlife Corridor

One of the most visible enhancement projects at the Country Club of Florida, and one I am sure they are most proud of, is the Wildlife Corridor. Consisting of four acres, this area does not affect play of the course, but certainly makes the golf course appealing for wildlife.

The intent of the corridor is to connect two large bodies of water that are out of play, and give wildlife room to migrate from one water source to the other. Within this corridor is a wetland, an island with purple martin houses and duck boxes, brush piles, bird feeders, and hundreds of native plants that provide food sources for wildlife.

There is a mulched path throughout the corridor for golfers/members interested in enjoying the natural area that has been created. Some of the plants used in this corridor include beauty berry, wild coffee, firebush, porterweed, coco plum, and necklace pod.

Dr. Raborn says, "For an established golf course, it is a little harder to plan wildlife enhancement projects than perhaps a new development. In some ways, we are playing catch up".

They have certainly made a valiant effort with this corridor.

The Wildlife Corridor can be seen from holes No. 6 through No. 10. To get the project started, Buzz Jaskela was asked to draw a five-year plan, including a list of plant material.

This plan was shared with the Country Club of Florida membership. The



Country Club of Florida wetland area before renovation in 1997. Photo by Jeff Klontz.

Audubon Committee made presentations to the Beautification Committee, the Green Committee, as well as to the Village Council and Homeowners Association. Once the plans were approved, the project was under way.

A 1995 report from Arthur Hills suggested updates and improvements to the 9th tee by altering the elevation of the ladies and seniors tees by 3.5 feet. This would improve the view of the dogleg bunkers and the entire hole.

In 1997, in a joint project among the Audubon Committee, the Beautification Committee, and capital improvement funds, the 9th tee was indeed raised 3.5 feet. Sixteen thousand cubic yards of soil was removed from the proposed wetland preserve area and used to elevate the tee.

The 9th Gold Tee and part of the cart path was also relocated. In addition, 5000 cordgrass plants, 1000 spike rush plants, and 250 native shade growing plants were installed in the 4-acre wetland preserve.

This Wildlife Corridor area reduces mowing/labor costs, and is not irrigated. So in addition to improving the playability of the golf course, this project completed the connection of the wetland area to an already existing oak grove corridor, which increased the habitat area by 200 percent, and is saving money on manpower and irrigation requirements.

Wildlife now has the ability to travel from a native grassy area to a wooded oak area with brush piles providing safe cover.

Jeff felt many of the available food sources had been removed over the years with the intensive grooming practices. That is definitely not the case anymore, as all plants are now chosen for their value to wildlife.

Dr. Raborn reports that they are already seeing more birds than ever, including some species that were never there before.

In addition to the Wildlife Corridor, the Country Club of Florida has a very expansive nestbox program. They have reported having good luck with purple martin boxes for the past five years. To date, they have over 40 purple martin boxes around the golf course. Bill Lugar, a member of the Audubon Committee, monitors the purple martin houses. Due to predator problems last year, they are in the process of installing crow guards on the purple martin boxes.

This year, they have added nestboxes for red-bellied woodpeckers, bluebirds, yellow crested flycatchers, carolina wrens, downy woodpeckers, bats and screech owls.

They have at least two nestboxes per hole, (not including the purple martin houses) and all boxes are constantly monitored for nesting activity. There are also

at least five bird feeders on the course, and they use approximately 50 pounds of bird feed each month.

Gladys Walsh, Jeff's office assistant has a schedule of filling the feeders three days a week, year round, and she also keeps a calendar on wildlife activity on the golf course.

Using native plants has not only paid off in more wildlife being attracted to the course, but in actual dollar savings as well. Each year, the Country Club of Florida was spending \$1,500 for annuals to be planted near the tee boxes. In 1992, they replaced these annuals with native plants that require little attention other than occasional mulch, and they have saved more than \$10,000 to date. This does not include the savings in irrigation reductions.

Currently, over 75 percent of landscape plants at the Country Club of Florida are native. The Village of Golf even has an ordinance that prohibits removal of native trees with more than a 2-inch diameter, or saw palmettos, without a permit.

Shoreline vegetation has also been a priority at the Country Club of Florida. Several ponds are visible from the golf course that belong to homeowners. The golf course does not have any control over these areas, but hopes to encourage shoreline vegetation plantings through examples they have set.

Several homeowners have already spent their own money

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Gladys Walsh, Jeff's office assistant, fills the bird feeders three times a week and keeps a calendar on wildlife activity on the course. Photo by Jeff Klontz.

to enhance water features between their homes and the golf course. The golf course staff has willingly cooperated with these homeowners to help with planting and maintaining these areas.

The Village Lake, north of the first hole, was enhanced this summer by donations from the city. Arrow head, pickerel weed and pond apples were planted in the lake edge. Above the water line, oaks, simpson stopper, dwarf firebush, wild coffee, and geiger trees were planted.

In addition to providing food sources and habitat area for wildlife, this lake enhancement has improved the view from the road, as well as from the golf course.

Water Conservation Efforts

In 1986, more than 75 percent of the pipe work was replaced when they redesigned the golf course. In 1990, the Country Club of Florida installed a computerized Rain Bird Maxi 5 irrigation system. This new system has:

- Reduced irrigation usage by 40%
- Reduced power usage by approximately 30%
- Improved dependability of existing irrigation system

A weather station was installed with this computerized irrigation system that determines evapotranspiration rates, which helps determine how much water will be applied daily. The irrigation technician/assistant, Leonardo Flores, monitors the irrigation system on a daily basis, and is quick to make adjustments or repairs when needed.

Automatic decoders on the east and west side of the course will shut down the irrigation system if it rains.

From 1990-1995, supplemental irrigation with individual head control was added around all green complexes.

The system has been on "time of use" since 1990 with FPL off-peak power use.

In 1998, a new VFD Flowtronix station will be added. The utility plant is in the final stages of installing the transmission line that will connect them with the city wastewater utility plant.

Starting in April 1998, CC of Florida will begin paying for their water at 20

cents per 1000 gallons and store this water on the course in a lake on No. 5. This storage lake also has the capacity to collect 60% of drainage runoff from the golf course. During unusual rainy periods, Jeff has the option to use surface drainage water from the course before having to supply effluent into this storage area.

In the past, water has been available at no cost through deep wells, so keeping a sharp eye on water costs has become important. However, the club's future water supply is assured.

Audubon School Program

Jeff also heads up a group of Palm Beach Chapter superintendents who are working with Kidstown Learning Center in Boynton Beach. With the help of Buzz Jaskela, plans were drawn for a butterfly garden, aviary, caterpillar and a vegetable garden. They have

also created habitat for some burrowing owls, hoping to entice them onto the school property from an adjacent empty lot.

As past president of the Palm Beach GCSA, Klontz organizes a Saturday work day every other month, including getting all materials donated from local businesses, and works on a part of the plan for Kidstown. They encourage the children and teachers to participate in all projects.

Conclusion

The Country Club of Florida has a lot going for them. The membership, the Village of Golf, as well as the Audubon, Beautification and Green Committees that all have contributed to the success of environmental enhancement projects on the course and in their community.

Klontz, whom the Green Committee

calls "our superintendent extraordinaire," is confident that in time, all of the members of the Country Club of Florida will be proud of the efforts under way to enhance the golf course for wildlife.

"Most importantly," he says, "we believe in the Audubon Program. We do not want to become certified for the sake of prestige. We want to become certified because we qualify and we are making the best effort to up-hold Audubon standards and enhance the Village environment".

** Some of the information for this article was taken from the book, "A Brief History of the Country Club of Florida", written by Patricia Blunt Koldyke. Patricia is the daughter of Carleton Blunt, who originally purchased the property in 1955. Jeff Klontz, GCS also contributed to this article.*

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