



SOUTH FLORIDA GCSA

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Photo by Joe Dougherty

Meet John Hutton, Legendary Florida Horticulturalist

John Hutton has been somewhat of a mystery to his peers. A very humble and gentle Scotsman looking a score younger than his 80 years, John Hutton has made legendary contributions to the landscape of Florida, including golf courses.

Hutton was born in Oyster Bay, NY in August of 1919 in the same neighborhood as Teddy Roosevelt. A third-generation horticulturalist, he had his formal education at Cornell University Agricultural Extension in New York. His grandfather was put on loan from Kew Gardens, London and commissioned by Queen Victoria to landscape the Sultan of India's palace in Jahore, Malaysia, where his father was born in 1881. By special invitation, Hutton got to see his grandfather's work in 1981 with his grandfather's original field notes in hand.

Hutton came to Florida in 1946 after World War II to do the landscape architecture on some very exclusive Palm Beach and Miami Beach homes. His work was much admired, which led to some big contracts during the hotel development era in Miami Beach and Fort Lauderdale in the 1950s and 1960s. He had landscape contracts at

the Fountainbleu, Eden Roc, Seville, Pier 66, Doral and many other hotels and resorts.

Hutton's first golf course project was at the Diplomat Hotel and Country Club. Across the Intracoastal Waterway from the hotel was swamp land in 1956. A million and one half yards of fill was required for the Diplomat project, which was the second-largest landfilled area of its kind in Florida surpassed only by the Jacksonville Air Force Base.

Red Lawrence was the course architect, and Hutton still cares for the property to this day. In 1962, Hutton replanted nearly 1,100 oak trees for the Diplomat Presidential Course designed by Mark Mahannah, and only lost 50 trees. The rest are still standing today and can be seen on the east side of Interstate 95 near Ives Dairy Road.

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by Al Kaskel, developer of the Doral complex where he was helping golf course architects Joe Lee and Dick Wilson develop the courses.

Hutton is currently working with his old friend Joe Lee on the grow-in of the redesigned Diplomat with Nugent Golf Course Construction. During my visit to the course July 19, golf course superintendent Damian Loughran had assembled his new crew to begin the fine mowing on the project which began in October 1998 which included tear down, redesign, irrigation, etc. It's estimated that the course will be ready by December 1999, well ahead of completion of the hotel's renovation. A tour of the course with Loughran indicated that it will be challenging to all levels of golfers. The clubhouse construction is underway and will contain a spa. It's seems larger and just as majestic as the Taj Mahal!

We greatly appreciate John Hutton's accomplishments and contributions to the horticulture industry of Florida. Hutton will be formally honored at a future South Florida Chapter meeting.

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