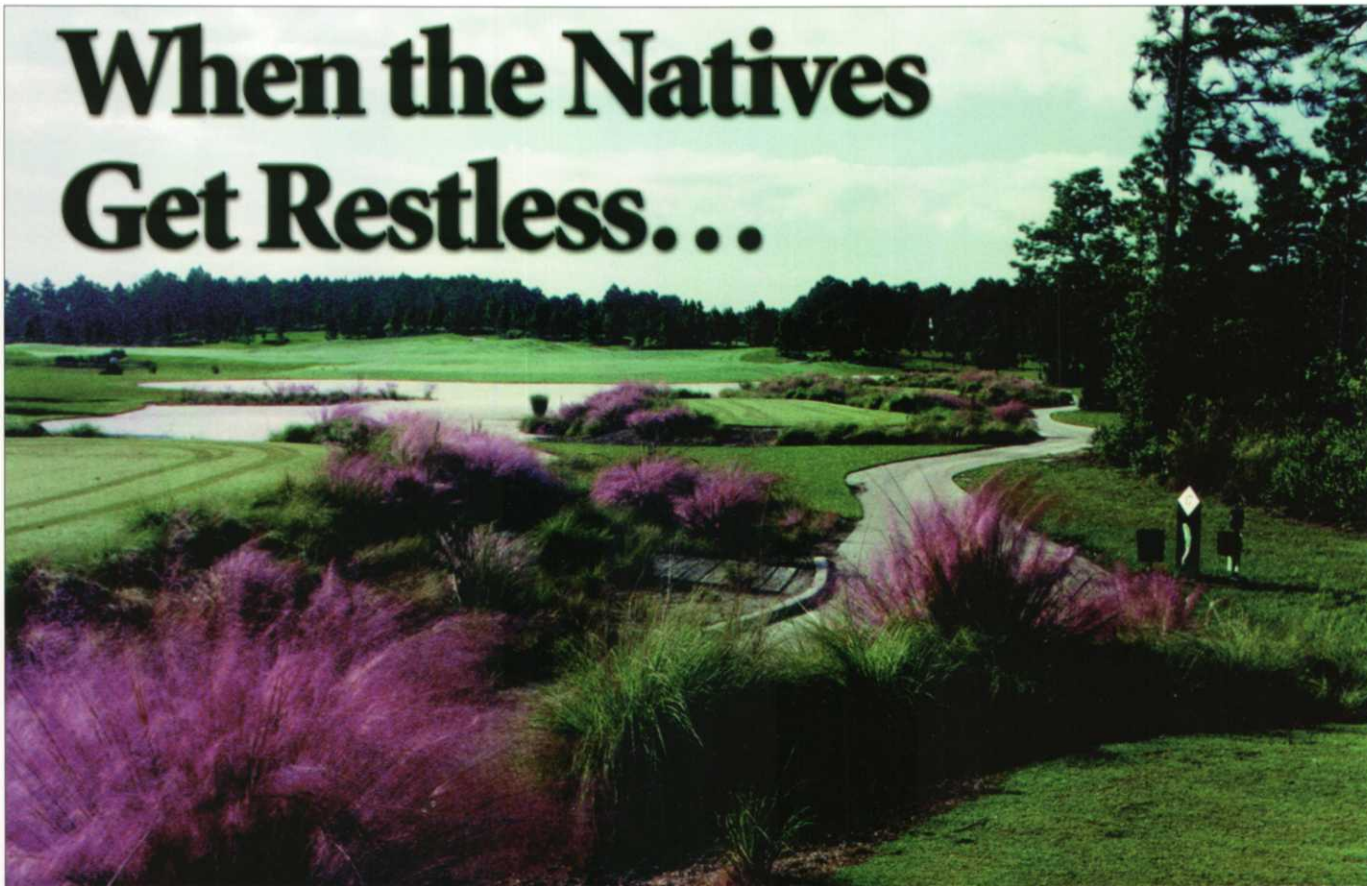




# When the Natives Get Restless...



*Native grass beds, sandy waste bunkers and natural areas may require less routine maintenance than traditional turf areas, nevertheless they do need attention or Mother Nature will take them over. Photo by Joel Jackson.*

BY JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

**T**he use of more natural areas or waste areas in modern golf course design makes sense and is the right thing to do in our environmentally sensitive times. These areas require fewer inputs of water, fertilizer and chemicals. More courses are also using native plants in the course landscaping plan for the same reasons.

While significant savings in labor, fuel, and equipment wear can be realized, going native or natural is not a free ride. They do require some maintenance or they can become a high profile weed patch.

The following articles contain information about native plant selection, impact on playing the game, and successful maintenance procedures to help you to manage your back to nature ventures.

CELEBRATION G.C.

## Managing 'Natural' Cordgrass Beds

**D**esigned with less turf and with the environment in mind, a lot of cordgrass beds are used on our course in out-of-play areas and as buffers around the lakes. We use a combination program of selective and nonselective herbicides to control the weeds that seem to love to inhabit these "natural" areas.

Our program is simple and fairly effective. We spray Round Up and Surflan along the edges of the beds to control volunteer weeds and creeping bermudagrass. By adding the Surflan we have prolonged the period between repeat applications. This tank mix is applied with a 25 gallon LESCO electric sprayer mounted in the bed of a

Jacobsen Hauler and runs off the Hauler's battery. The rate of 1 oz. of Round Up per gallon of water with 16 oz. of Surflan. Make sure you mix the Surflan either as a slurry or agitate with a hose when filling the tank since the tank does not have internal agitation.

When broadleaf weeds emerge deep in the bed interiors or in the native grass clumps an over-the-top application of 2,4-D will control most of the species. We like to use the large 200 gal. spray rig since we're covering more area and this avoids a lot of fill up trips to the shop. We use the label rate of 3 pints per 100 gal. rate for fence line and brush spraying. I don't use Surflan in this application since most of the plants are emerging from the grass clumps and not the soil. In both applications, surfactants are added or left out according to the label recommendations.

In the natural wetland areas the staff has to go in once a year and manually remove or prune back the primrose and wild willows that encroach into the aquatic plantings and overhang the bridges. The cordgrass beds were slow filling in this year due to the drought, but now that the rains have started, they have greened up spread out and helped to naturally prevent weed growth and encroachment.

JOHN DEMATTEO, CGCS

#### SHADOW WOOD CC

## All Waste Areas Are Not Created Equal

First, all native grass beds, natural areas and waste areas are, in fact, considered waste areas. Under the rules of golf, you are allowed to ground your club in a waste area whereas in a sand trap, you are not.

Second, each area is a separate subject and an authorized area to be established on a golf course, i.e. grass beds, natural areas and waste areas. I will discuss our maintenance ideas for each type of feature mentioned.

#### Native grass beds

These are areas that do require a minimum of maintenance. If you use our native grasses, *Spartina bakeri* (sand

cordgrass) or *Muhlenbergia capillaris* (muhly grass), you will require a minimal amount of maintenance. Water is only required through the initial grow-in. During our season of golf, we will also pick Mexican Petunias for color and *Viburnum obovatum* 'walters'. These grow slowly and don't require much maintenance or irrigation. Golfers are required to play from these areas or incur a penalty stroke.

#### Natural areas

These are similar to native grass beds but these areas are already existing on the land when the course is developed. Rarely do you add any material in these areas. They require little to no maintenance or irrigation. Like native grass beds you are required to play from these areas or incur a penalty stroke.

#### Waste areas

We use No.131 gravel screenings from the local rock quarry for our waste areas. We also have added plant material in some locations of the waste area to add color and aesthetics to the course. They require little maintenance and irrigation. Golfers are required to play from them just as a fairway bunker. However you are allowed to ground your club in the waste area, but are not allowed to do so in a fairway bunker.

From a management concept, these are wonderful areas to have on your golf course. They offer natural beauty to your golf course if managed properly. These areas versus turf are no brainers. Put them on the courses. They reduce the area of turf that you need to mow, fertilize and maintain. The less wear and tear that you can put on your mowers means longer life for that piece of equipment. We have approximately 4 to 5 acres of these areas on our golf course. Mowing and maintaining that much additional turf requires more man-hours, parts and service of the equipment.

In addition to less maintenance, these areas provide the homeowners with an natural ambiance and better habitat for wildlife in their community. Many of these areas are home to fox, rabbit, birds, squirrels and other wildlife. That's something you can't put a price tag on.

As far as the actual dollar savings, I can't

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