



FTGA Launches Grass-Roots Fund-Raising Campaign

The FTGA and the University of Florida have joined forces for a turf research fund-raising program dubbed, "Golfers For A Better Environment." The idea stems from FTGA Public Relations Director Don Benham's experience with a similar successful program instituted by the Michigan Turf Foundation and Michigan State University.

After a couple of dress rehearsal presentations to the board of directors of the Gainesville Country Club and the Florida Turfgrass Association, Benham and Nell debuted the program to representatives of 15 country clubs in the Boca Raton area Feb. 8. David Court, CGCS and Mark Jarrell, CGCS helped the FTGA office with contact names and David's club, Boca Lago, served as the host for this inaugural presentation of the program.

The Golfers For A Better Environment program is designed to encourage grass roots golfers to participate in turf research to accomplish several goals:

- (1) Provide a means for golfers to help preserve and protect their club's most important asset, the golf course.
- (2) Provide independent public funding to study environmental impacts of turf management products and practices.
- (3) Provide a consistent base of support for turf research rather than depending only on annual event sponsorship and attendance.
- (4) Provide factual evidence to rebut sensational, negative and misleading media accounts about golf courses.
- (5) Develop a significant golf constituency that can have political influence when regulations affecting golf courses are under discussion.

The premise of the program is very simple. Each club's board of directors is being asked to consider a convenience billing to their membership of an annual \$5.00 donation to the Florida Turfgrass Research Foundation.. The goal of hav-

2000 Florida Plants of the Year - Part 2

Editor's Note: The Florida Plants of the Year program was launched in 1998 and has been beneficial to both consumers and growers. Purchasers are introduced to under-utilized but proven Florida plant material. The plants are chosen each year by a committee of horticulturists, nurserymen, educators, landscape architects and other members of the horticulture industry representing Central, North and South Florida.

Common Name: Red Buckeye

Botanical Name: *Aesculus pavia*

Hardiness: Zones 4-8

Mature Height X Spread: 15-20' tall and 10-12' wide

Classification: Landscape shrub or small tree

Landscape Use: Specimen or grouped in light shade

Characteristics: Deep red flowers in April-May contrast with dark green leaves, and produce shiny brown fruit that contain three orange seeds. A deciduous large shrub or small tree, palmate foliage blooms in early spring with showy red terminal flowers that attract hummingbirds. A native that thrives in light shade and moist soils, this shrub makes brown shiny nuts, like a chestnut, which split to reveal three orange seeds that germinate fairly easily.



Common Name: Sweetspire

Botanical Name: *Itea virginica* 'Henry's Garnet'

Hardiness: Zones 5-9

Mature Height X Spread: 4-5' tall and 6' wide

Classification: Landscape shrub for massing

Landscape Use: Mass plantings in sun or shade, adaptable to wet or dry conditions

Characteristics: Drooping fragrant inflorescences of white flowers make a show in mid spring. The fall color is a brilliant reddish purple. Semi-deciduous Florida native that has arching branches to 4 feet with brilliant red fall color. The shrub has white terminal flowers on weeping spikes in the spring. Spreads underground by runners. It grows well in full sun or partial shade and thrives in wet areas.



Common Name: Ficus Alii

Botanical Name: *Ficus binnendijkii* 'Alii'

Hardiness: Thrives in medium to high light

Mature Height X Spread: Height ranges from 2-20', average being 6-8'

Classification: Ornamental foliage plant

Landscape Use: Plant gives a northern look to interiors

Characteristics: Similar to sister plant, "Amstel King" the 'Alii' has narrower leaves and a broader fuller look.

The word 'Alii' is Hawaiian, meaning "Chief" for the broad top of the plant. the 'Alii' formerly known as *Ficus maclellandii* 'Alii' thrives in medium to high light. The slender dark leaves make this plant appealing both to interior plantscape and home market. There are three types: the bush, the standard tree and the braids.



ing hundreds of thousands of people involved by giving individually is much more powerful than just a club writing a check from a budget line item.

The current format of the computer-generated presentations has Benham introducing the program with a little background on the FTGA and then he introduces Dr. Nell who talks about the UF/IFAS Florida First role, mission, accomplishments and current programs. Then Benham brings it home with accounts of his experience as a former club president and green chairman and the success of Michigan's program and why it was so important and effective.

At the conclusion of the presentation and question and answer period everyone is given a folder with a hard copy of the basic information and how to participate.

The clubs that do participate will be sent an update twice a year to post on the club's bulletin board or include in their newsletters to keep the contributors ad-

vised of the various projects under way.

Three very positive things happened at Boca Lago that day. First Benham and Nell were invited to make their presentation to the monthly meeting of Palm Beach Green Chairmen the following month. Second, one club official gave Benham three names of people he thought would be interested in hearing the program. Third, we finally began to take our message to the people instead of holding another choir practice.

It may be too soon for hearty congratulations, but we did get some great news that raises our hopes for the program. While everyone was in New Orleans for the GCSAA Conference and Show, Cheryl Stocklin of the FTGA Office sent Don Benham a two line fax. The general manager of the Boca Lago CC called to say that 1100 members of the club had pledged to the Golfers For A Better Environment Program. Since returning home, Don has written follow-up letters to the other attending clubs

and has had several follow up calls inviting him to meet with clubs' boards of directors.

This is just the first step in a journey of a thousand miles, but it is definitely a good beginning. Congratulations and thanks to Don Benham and Dr. Nell for their time and energy devoted to this fund raising project that may soon become a vital sustaining part of our industry.

FTGA Seminars

At last count FTGA's Regional Seminar Series held in January and February reached out to 1,264 attendees around the state, a 2 percent increase over last year's figures. This year also saw FTGA Vice President Erica Santella inviting members of the Nitrate Remediation Working Group to attend to hear Dr. John Cisar's presentation on nitrate leaching results from the IFAS Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program.

JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

FGCSA Director of Communications

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