Wasp + Weed - Cricket = Good Grass

By Joel Jackson

Research by Dr. H. J. Frank and Andrei Sourakov at the University of Florida and an article by Dan Culbert, Okeechobee County Extension Agent, has given us an opportunity to combine mole-cricket control and water conservation.

Dr. Frank has been researching various biocontrol agents from parasitic nematodes, red-eyed flies and the Larra bicolor "digger wasp." Each has had its successes and setbacks. The wasp seems to be able to spread and set up new populations. Success, of course, depends on a reliable food source.

It seems that a wildflower known as the false shrubby buttonweed, *Spermacoce verticillata*, may give the wasp a year-round nectar source. Since concerns over water conservation have suggested converting out-of-play areas unirrigated, Florida-friendly native vegetation, perhaps planting native areas with this plant could create a real win-win situation.

The Larra wasp has been sighted in 41 counties so far. How about giving the little buggers a helping hand by planting this nectar source on your course?

Some have suggested a name change to Southern Larraflower for the wasp's



Larra wasp on Larraflower. Photo by Dr. Lyle Buss.

preference for its size and its shape ideally fits the wasp's feeding habits. By the way the male does most of the nectar feeding while the female is searching for mole crickets.

Southern Larraflower planting stock can be found at:

Lake Brantley Nursery, (407) 496-0771 in Center Hill and

Lake Brantley Plant Corporation (407-869-6545) in Longwood.



Florida Audubon International Stewards

As I said in my President's Message in the front of the magazine, the time for accountable documented environmental stewardship is upon us. Just consider the state and local fertilizer ordinances that are coming forward and general concern over state and local water quality issues. Please contact any of these

tewards who are ready and willing to help you with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. This is a recognized and respected program that will help you and your golf course secure a successful future.

Matt Taylor, CGCS

Garth Boline, Superintendent Chi Chi Rodriguez Golf Course

FGCSA President

3030 McMullen Booth Road Clearwater, FL 33761 727-723-0516 Garthalbert@aol.com

Shelly Foy, Office Coordinator USGA – Florida Region PO Box 1087 Hobe Sound, FL 33475 772-546-2620 sfoy@usga.org

Monica Higgins, Horticulturist Bay Colony Golf Course Maintenance 10495 Goodlette Rd. No. Naples, FL 34109 (239) 598-1600 monicahiggins@yahoo.com

Bob Karnes, Superintendent Osprey Ridge Golf Course 3451 Golf View Drive Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830 407-824-2886 robert.karnes@disney.com

Jeff Klontz, Superintendent

Country Club of Florida 54 Country Road S. Village of Golf, FL 33436 561-732-8317 suptklontz@aol.com Larry Livingston, CGCS Camp Creek Golf Club 438 Fazio Drive

Panama City Beach, FL 32413 850-231-7610 llivingston@troongolf.com

Todd Lowe, USGA Agronomist USGA - Florida Region 58 Annapolis Lane Rotonda West, FL 33947 941-828-2625 tlowe@usga.org

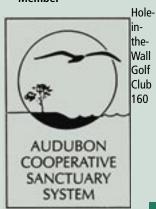
Donald L. Merritt, Principal Jensen Beach Elementary School 2525 NE Savanna Rd. Jensen Beach, FL 34957 772-219-1555 merritd@martin.k12.fl.us

Kyle Sweet, Superintendent The Sanctuary Golf Club

2250 Wulfert Road Sanibel, FL 33957 239-472-8612 ksweet@sanctuarygc.net

Matt Taylor, Superintendent Royal Poinciana Golf Club P.O. Box 7039 Naples, FL 34101 239-261-4987 ext. 101 mattt@rpgolfclub.com

Fred Yarrington, Golf Club Member



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