A green by any name...

By Bob Spiewak

Washington sewage design and construction company, together with a couple who run a bed and breakfast, have combined engineering know-how and innovative hospitality into a new dimension in land use.

Call it a "B&B pitch and putt."

 Guests at Brown's Farm, a hospitality run by Jeff and Alicia Brown in Mazona, Wash., will find a putter and bucket of golf balls in each housing unit.

Outdoors, the visitors will be able to use balls and putter on a special golf green. Built with the same care and similar sub-strata as a USGA putting green, the green lies atop a "sewage mound" — a system found where normal drain fields cannot be utilized.

When the Ice Age retreated from the valley 8,000 years ago, it left a hardscrabble layer of thin topsoil in most places. Beneath this highly permeable surface was a giant aquifer.

Now, as more people have moved into the area, the natural topography has made groundwater contamination a problem. Traditional drain fields, where sewage is run through the base. The outline of the green was staked, and the same cable as that in the mound was laid for the putting surface.

A burrow dug adjacent to the site for the mound's rough material also provided base material for the green.

Atop this, 15 yards of pea gravel were spread over the surface of the larger rock. Sandy Tager, who had built several other area home greens, operated the bulldozer.

Next, 10 inches of sand were spread over the gravel, then compacted according to a rough grade of the green profile and shape of the putting surface.

At this point, the early snows of the North Cascades began falling, leaving time only to finish grade the burrow pit into a lake, and cut two bunkers to guard the green. The putting surface will comprise about 2,500 square feet of the 4,000-square-foot mound/green complex.

Winter snows in this area average three to five feet, and the Browns and Monetta decided to let the weight of the snow and subsequent spring runoff compact the surface before final grading next spring.

Penncross bentgrass will be used on the putting surface, with a bluegrass-ryegrass fescue mix for the rough and fairway.

The hole will play a maximum of 120 yards, and Brown plans to add an interim tee or two. Integrating the mound system with the green should keep irrigation and fertilization to a minimum.

Traditional mounds, planted with alfalfa and other coarse grasses, have thrived as they are fed and watered by the liquid effluent.

If the Monetta-Brown brainstorm catches on elsewhere, sewage may become a blessing, not an abomination.

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