

Buffer Strips Protect And Enhance Water Hazards

Heritage Palms Golf And Country Club
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Issue

Water hazards create strategic and aesthetic interest and they enhance the environmental value of golf courses. They also can hold and filter stormwater runoff from the course and surrounding community. Filtering runoff before it reaches a water hazard is important because runoff can contain sediments, turf clippings and chemicals that could adversely affect water quality. Heritage Palms wanted to do more to filter runoff and improve water quality at their facility.

Action

Heritage Palms Golf and Country Club uses a variety of techniques to filter runoff entering the water hazards on the course. The perimeter of each water hazard has vegetated littoral zones – areas of shallow water planted with aquatic vegetation that provide habitat, filter runoff and reduce erosion. Director of Golf Course Operations Greg Kriesch decided to add buffer strips



Buffer strips around bodies of water filter runoff and provide valuable habitat for wildlife.

around the water hazards as well. A buffer strip is an area of taller grass and vegetation that filters runoff before it can enter a body of water.

The buffer strips at Heritage Palms are maintained at a height of 4 inches and they are mowed every two to four weeks, depending on the time of year. A mower that is normally used for other rough areas is adjusted to mow the buffers, then it is returned to its normal mowing height once buffer maintenance is complete.

Results

Creating buffer strips around the water hazards at Heritage Palms has provided a number of benefits. First and foremost, they help to protect and enhance the environmental quality of the water hazards. In addition, golfers have commented positively that the buffer strips help keep wayward shots from trickling into the water. There is also a small labor savings associated with mowing these areas less frequently than the normal rough. Lastly, buffer strips provide more cover for wading birds as they forage for food.

One challenge with creating buffer strips was educating the staff responsible for rough mowing to stop mowing to the water's edge. Getting the staff accustomed to the new system took some reminding, but once the height and density of the buffers was established it was easy to see which areas should be mown during normal rough maintenance.