

# The Gator Growls



## Tempting Targets

By: Sandra P. Carmouche

Doughnuts on the greens; sunken golf carts in the lake behind the clubhouse; serpentine flagpoles wrapped around tree limbs.

Golf courses are tempting targets for vandals and the responsibility of dealing with them and the havoc they create usually falls to the superintendent.

Because the culprits generally strike at night on weekends and holidays, catching them is not easy. There aren't many people around and, even when witnesses are present, visibility is poor and identification is difficult.

Taking steps to reduce the chances of being vandalized is therefore the best solution to the problem and will result in fewer property losses.

According to Captain John McDougall, Director of Crime Prevention for the Lee County Sheriff's Department, most vandals are boys between the ages of 14 and 19. But Captain McDougall adds that disgruntled employees and dissatisfied members also make good vandals.

He further made the following suggestions as deterrents to vandalism.

- **Adequate Lighting**  
Vandals don't like being seen and areas of particular concern, such as the clubhouse and maintenance buildings, should be well lit. Entrances, exits and service roads that allow access to the golf course should also have good lighting.
- **Reinforce Problem Areas**  
If, for instance, there is a section of fence where vandals are getting through, string barbed wire at the top and bottom of the fence and if possible, light it.
- **Secure Items Left Outside**  
Golf carts and equipment that must be left outside should be placed in areas that provide good lighting. Chain them if possible and make certain that the keys are removed.
- **Neighborhood Watches**  
Make homeowners on the golf course aware of any problems with regard to vandalism and have them report anyone who looks suspicious.

- **Security Patrols**

Security guards are the most effective means of preventing vandalism. Hire an agency or an off-duty deputy; or, depending on the golf course, find out if homeowners and members would be willing to patrol the area. Also, local law enforcement agencies are very cooperative in providing area patrols when requested.

As a final suggestion, Captain McDougall cautions that vandals are frequently under the influence of alcohol or drugs and care should be used in dealing with them. He adds that prosecution is good once the vandals are caught and offenders may be made to pay for damages either with money or by working on the golf course.

Unfortunately though, by the time they are caught the damage has been done. Through prevention, a golf course superintendent can avert costly property damage. ■

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