

BENHAM'S BEAT

Hunting for This Year's Column in Last Year's Magazine Doesn't Work!

By Don Benham

I called Joel to ask why my beautifully written column wasn't in the Winter issue of *Florida Green*. Joel said, "What are you talking about. It's on page 40!" I called him back a couple of days later and said I couldn't find it. Joel wanted to know what issue I was reading, and I responded Winter 2001. He then suggested that I read Winter 2002.

Joel is still laughing.

I was back-reading several publications as I find that, on second reading, I discover articles that I need to be refreshed on. Old Hickory Golf and Country Club in Ft. Myers with superintendent John Stach was



the featured club in the Winter 2001 issue with great photos and featured article that covered their environmental practices. In the same issue was an article about restoring bluebirds to the Everglades. Eight golf courses had volunteered their courses to participate in this program.

In the February 2002 issue of *Golf Course Management*, four Florida superintendents received the 2001 ELGA awards for their environmental efforts: Bill Davidson, Jr., Colliers Reserve Golf Club, Everglades GCSA; John Scott Kopack at the Legacy Club of Alauqua Lakes, Central Florida GCSA; Jeffery Allen Klontz at the Country Club of Florida, Palm Beach GCSA; and Kyle D. Sweet the Sanctuary Golf Club, Everglades GCSA.

Now why am I writing about golf course superintendents' environmental efforts in my FTGA column? Because as the public relations director for the FTGA, I attend many meetings and read a lot of media reporting where golf is made to be the bad guy of the environment. From Paul Harvey to environmental staff writers at newspapers, it is popular to blame golf for every problem with wildlife.

A recent column in a Manatee newspaper blames a fish kill on fertilizer runoff from the fairways of a golf course. I am not saying that is impossible, but it was only a theory of a spokesman for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

I recently attended a Central Florida GCSA fundraiser at the Interlachen Golf Club (Stuart Leventhal superintendent) with state Sen. Darryl Jones (D-40, Monroe and Dade counties) as the featured speaker. Sen. Jones stated he knew we were under the gun with chemical runoff at golf courses. I jokingly

PLANTS OF THE YEAR



Common name: Simpson's Stopper (compact form)
Botanical name: *Myrcianthes fragrans* 'Compacta'
Hardiness: Zones 8 - 11
Mature height and spread: 5' - 10' tall
Classification: Evergreen shrub
Landscape use: Low hedge or specimen plant
Characteristics: An evergreen Florida native shrub with small glossy leaves that bears small white fragrant flowers in late spring followed by reddish-orange berries. Birds are attracted to the berry-like fruit.



Common name: Orange Plum
Botanical name: *Justicia spicigera*
Hardiness: Zones 8B - 11
Mature height and spread: 4' - 6' tall, 2' - 4' wide
Classification: Perennial shrub
Landscape use: Accent plant or massive perennial color
Characteristics: A shrub that bears bright orange tubular flowers during the warm months. Evergreen but possibly cold-damaged in the upper half of the state. This accent plant needs full sun or part shade to exhibit maximum growth habits.



Common name: Bismarck Palm
Botanical name: *Bismarckia nobilis*
Hardiness: Zones 9B - 11
Mature height and spread: 30' - 50' tall, 10' - 15' wide
Classification: Palm Tree
Landscape use: Specimen plant
Characteristics: A massive robust palm with large silver-blue fronds. A pure green form exists, but it is less cold hardy.

Editor's Note: This program sponsored by the Woody Division of the FNGA introduces purchasers to under-utilized, but proven Florida plant material. Selected each year by a panel of horticulturists, nurserymen, educators, landscape architects and other professional members of the horticulture industry, these plants have attributes which attract wildlife or have minimal maintenance impact on the environment.

responded that he was obviously being influenced by misinformed environmentalist and media writers. He responded by saying that might be true and that we need to put together a pamphlet and arrange to come to Tallahassee and speak with the legislators by calling on certain committee chairmen including himself. Sen. Jones is running for governor so he has some influence with the legislature.

I asked him what his reaction would be if we had 25,000 registered voters, who were golf club members, donating \$5.00 a year to do research at the University of Florida. Would we get the attention and support of his committee?

His response was, "if you have 25,000 people doing this then you can probably have anything you want."

Twenty-five thousand people would comprise only about 50 clubs joining the \$5 a

member program.

I know I sound like a broken record on this subject, but I really believe in it. Golf course superintendents are the best environmentalists in Florida. "Golf is good for the Environment" and that is the name of the \$5-a-member program.



USGA UPDATE
Winter Overseeding Blues

By John Foy

Editor's Note: If establishing your overseeding this year was a problem, John Foy explains why in this

USGA Regional Update. The good news is that spring transition shouldn't be a problem. If you have been on the hot seat over your winter greens share this information with your critics.

In our last regional web update, agronomist Todd Lowe discussed the fact that warm to even hot temperatures had been experienced through the fall in Florida. The Green Section Southwest Region also posted an update discussing the difficulties associated with the unseasonably warm fall and early winter temperatures. For a lot of the country, it seems that an abnormal weather pattern has been in place. When was the last time Atlanta had more snow by mid-January than Chicago?

For Florida golf courses, the warm fall temperatures resulted in the base bermudagrass continuing to grow actively and compete against the establishment of winter overseeding covers. While there has been some variation in results, overall this has not been a good overseeding year. For Central and North Florida, the hard frost that occurred resulted in the bermudagrass losing color rapidly and entering into a semi- to fully dormant stage. This condition highlighted inconsistencies and lack of density of overseeding covers.

Winter overseeding is a standard practice at most Florida courses. Yet it needs to be remembered that this is done to provide a temporary cover of the base bermudagrass for three to five months.

If a successful establishment is not achieved in the fall, as is the case at most courses this year, reseeding and continued attempts to establish a cool-season turf cover after the first of January is generally discouraged. This greatly increases the potential for disease outbreaks and problems during the transition back to the base bermudagrass in the late spring to early summer.

While we have the possibility of more cold weather occurring over the next four to eight weeks, it is recommended to focus on managing the base bermudagrass and not the overseeding material. As soon as weather conditions are favorable for the resumption of bermudagrass growth, management efforts should be geared to accomplish a gradual yet complete transition out of the remaining overseeding material.

On a positive note, not being able to establish a dense overseeding cover this past fall greatly diminishes the potential for spring transition problems. This is almost a total reverse situation from the previous fall and winter, when very good overseeding results occurred, but then a lot of courses had a case of the "transition blues" in the early summer. For golf courses in South Florida where overseeding is not conducted, the warm fall and winter have been favorable to providing very good quality conditions.

This regional news update, and others written by the USGA Green Section staff, can be found on the USGA web site at:
www.usga.org/green/news/new.html

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