

Owners' Outlook

Supers as General Managers Make Perfect Sense

By Bill Stine

While talking to a group of course owners at an industry meeting, the subject of property managers - or the lack thereof - came up. It is true that there is a shortage of qualified course managers out there. This led to a search of possible training grounds and where to look for qualified managers. There are college programs with internships. There's growing them through the ranks and or training done by the larger golf corporations. The conversation eventually led to the superintendent.

As a board member of the National Golf Course Owners Association, I am proud to say that several members of our board are course owners who started in the business as a superintendent. And why not? It makes perfect sense. Superintendents have their own business units to run.

Their area of management in the course operation is a complete business within a business. Their employee pool includes various departments such as mechanics, spray techs, irrigation techs, assistant

supers and laborers. This department comes complete with all the human resource responsibilities, such as the proper hiring and firing process, employee motivation and retention, workman's comp rules, etc.

Their fiscal responsibilities run the gamut of line items, as they do with any business. They must



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be concerned about payroll cost, cost of products and equipment, the effects of weather on their products, environmental and other government agencies, producing and monitoring budgets and just about everything else other businesses have to deal with.

Let's not forget capital expenditures.

When does repairing a piece of equipment begin costing more than buying a new piece? Will the increased productivity of a new piece of equipment outweigh the expense?

I for one believe superintendents have income within their P&Ls. As any owner will tell you, if the super is saving money in his operation that is incremental income that helps the bottom line. Any superintendent worth his salt is concerned about getting

as many players as possible off the first tee and trying his hardest to keep the course open during inclement weather.

Public relations is another area in which supers often must get involved. Dealing with greens committees, golfers questioning why the cut is the way it is, the local paper wanting to know if he is harming the environment, or writing an article for the club's newsletter. Let's not forget that real pain in the rear they have to deal with is the owner.

Being a manager is not for everyone. In many cases, the super is paid more than the GM. Many supers are not comfortable dealing with customers all day every day and prefer working more with their hands. It seems most are happier being the super as opposed to being the general manager. However, if they have the desire and entrepreneurial spirit, the maintenance department can be a great training ground for becoming a general manager... or even an owner.

*Editor's Note: Bill Stine is a director of the National Golf Course Owners Association and of the Florida Chapter of the NCGOA. This is the first article in a recurring series we will call "Owners' Outlook." In return I am writing a column for their bimonthly newsletter on superintendent and maintenance issues.*

2004 Plants of the Year Part 1

In an ongoing effort to promote the production, sale and use of superior Florida-grown plants, the Florida Nurserymen & Growers Association is pleased to announce the 2004 selections of the Florida Plants of the Year. This program was launched to promote under-utilized, but proven Florida plant material. These proven ornamentals are selected on an annual basis by a group of growers, horticulturists, retailers, landscape professionals and University of Florida faculty.

For a plant to be considered a Plant of the Year, set criteria must be met. Selected plants have good pest resistance, require reasonable care and be fairly easy to propagate and grow. The award-winning plants must also exhibit some superior quality, improved performance or unique characteristic that sets it apart from others in its class. Here are two 2004 selections for your consideration:

Common Name: 'Hurricane Louise' Coleus

**BOTANICAL NAME:** *Solenostemon scutellarioides* 'Hurricane Louise'  
**HARDINESS:** Zones 9b-11 (an annual outside this area)  
**MATURE HEIGHT AND SPREAD:** 5' x 5'; more commonly 3' x 3'  
**CLASSIFICATION:** Annual  
**LANDSCAPE USE:** Warm season, full sun, color (from last to first frost), mixed containers, potted plant, bedding plant  
**CHARACTERISTICS:** Upright growth habit, somewhat mounding, good strong branching habit, late season (minimal) flowering. Foliage color is white pink and bright green with frilled leaf edges. Heat and sun tolerant.



Hurricane Louise Coleus. Photo: Dr. Rick Schoellhorn, U.F.

Common Name: Lion's Ear

**BOTANICAL NAME:** *Leonotis leonurus*  
**HARDINESS:** Zones 8-11  
**MATURE HEIGHT AND SPREAD:** 2-1/2 - 7' Tall x 3-5' Wide  
**CLASSIFICATION:** Flowering perennial or shrub  
**LANDSCAPE USE:** Mixed border, specimen/accnt, cuttable flowers, container, foundation, massing  
**CHARACTERISTICS:** A strong-growing perennial that may last for years and become woody. Their bright orange flowers are butterfly attractants and may be cut and used in fresh or dried arrangements. Upright square stems with aromatic foliage display fuzzy orange flower-balls stacked one just above the other on a central stalk.



Lion's Ear. Photo: Leu Gardens, Orlando