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Good landscaping need not be dramatic. Native plantings in non-play areas not only reduce maintenance costs but also create a natural setting for the residents.

Landscaping the course



14 professionals share their philosophies for 'painting with plants'

BY TOM BENEFIELD, CGCS

As the editorial focus for the winter issue of the *Florida Green*, we have chosen the subject of landscaping of the golf course. At first glance, many superintendents felt uneasy about writing on this subject. However, after thinking the subject through, superintendents realized that there are many facets of their varied programs which were really landscape-oriented.

Everyone who manages a golf course is a landscape architect to some extent. One of the basic golf course landscaping principles is that of tree removal and replacement.

Most golf courses rely on the expertise and knowledge of the superintendent to develop and imple-

ment long-range tree-planting program, not only in an effort to improve the health and vigor of the turf, but also to provide demanding shotmaking while protecting the integrity of the original course design.

The instituting of color in the golf-course environment is another aspect of landscape-design principles that superintendents are faced with. The use of flowering annuals and perennials is growing in popularity on golf courses.

The aspect of flowering trees and shrubs for the golf course environment has taken on a whole new meaning. From powder puffs to crepe myrtles we see a tremendous array of flowering trees appearing



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This change in people's initial reaction to the course has been tremendous... It is funny what a little landscaping can do to help change people's perception about a golf course from 'goat ranch' to 'country club.'

on the golf courses. Every golf course member speaks in reverence of the floral masterpieces like Augusta National.

Well, enough from me. Now let us hear from fellow superintendents around the state about their programs. I think you will be impressed with their knowledge and expertise. I know I was.

1. Landscaping, does it matter?

Fort Myers Country Club was built in 1916, in the southern outskirts of tiny Fort Myers. The road to the golf course was a one-lane dirt roadway known only as the Tamiami Trail. Just a few short years later — 75 to be exact — the course is on the northern edge of an expanding metropolis and the Tamiami Trail is a six-lane major highway.

"How does all this related to landscaping?" you ask. I am getting to that.

During the summer of 1991, the City

of Fort Myers renovated the old "Fort." These improvements included the installation of a new irrigation system, construction of USGA-spec greens, expansion of the tees, replacement of cart paths, and construction of a new maintenance facility.

In addition to these important improvements, we also decided to berm and landscape the roadways that surround the golf course. The cost of these landscape improvements was insignificant compared with the cost of the overall project.

Which improvement has had the most significant impact on the "Fort?" Is it the slick putting surfaces, improved tees, smoother cart paths? No!

The landscaping improvements have made the most significant difference.

Literally thousands of people drive by the "Fort" every day. I have spoken to



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many people who have never set a foot on the golf course who say, "Wow! The country club has really improved!"

This change in people's initial reaction to the course has been tremendous. When we reopened for play, the positive reaction by the general public was almost immediate.

It is funny what a little landscaping can do to help change people's perception about a golf course from "goat ranch" to "country club."

George Bowling is the golf course superintendent at Fort Myers Country Club and he started in February 1991.

*Michael K. Mongoven, CGCS
Assistant Director of Golf
City of Fort Myers*

Be sure to take into account the amount of sunlight the plants will be exposed to. Note below the careful planting of native trees creates a natural-looking buffer between the golf course and the homesites.



2. Practical Landscape Ideas

Landscaping is a very important part of the Golf Club at Marco, especially around our clubhouse. The selection of plant material is based on location, moisture requirements and labor involved in maintenance.

When selecting a location for ornamentals, take into consideration the amount of direct sun the plant will be receiving on the average day. Shady places need plants that require less light to grow and sunny places need plants that thrive in and tolerate full sun. Wind will also play a factor in the selection.

Tender, brittle plants should be placed away from direct wind blowing on them. Winter cold should also be considered before the north winds freeze what you have planted.

Understanding moisture requirements for different plant varieties is critical. Make sure irrigation will cover all plantings and can be adjusted to give the plants enough but not too much water. Group plants together with similar moisture requirements. Mulch plant beds to keep moisture in the soil on windy, sunny, dry days.

At the Golf Club at Marco, we try to select plant materials that are native to our location. Native plants have good survival rates and tend to be lower maintenance. Also, less fertilizer and insecticides are needed, meaning less labor and less overall maintenance costs for the year. Watering is minimal because natives are better suited for their environment.

Plants that flower at different times of the year are mixed to produce color all year along with placing annual flowers on borders and around trees. Native flowering plants also attract butterflies and birds to give your beds a feeling of natural beauty for everyone to watch and enjoy.

*Tad Altman, Director of Grounds
The Golf Club at Marco
Marco Island*

3. Blend course to community

The Grey Oaks Community is a heavily landscaped upper-income community. The major theme of our landscape design is geared towards colorful flowering shrubs. We use annuals only in a few

Landscape areas should not intrude on the playing of the game. Using plantings as backdrops or to emphasize certain areas is fine as long as they aren't in play. Too many times I see ornamental plantings and flower beds placed where they are too close to a green, in the direct path of the playing of the hole, or even in areas marked off as hazards.

places to accent the shrubbery beds. The golf course was left fairly natural with the plan of slowly enhancing the landscaping to make it blend with the rest of the community.

One of my major winter projects every year is to try and utilize my landscape budget to add to the golf course landscaping.

We have found at Grey Oaks that we can have dramatically colorful areas without the use of annuals. We use combinations of plants like bougainvillea, thryallis, allemande, pentas, hibiscus, oleander, copper leaf, roses, crepe myrtle, lantana, blue daze or any plant we can find that flowers.

In the few annual beds we do have, we will use several different kinds of annuals in each bed to try and take advantage of as many colors as possible. We also use many different types of ornamental grasses to help hide man-made obstructions like irrigation boxes, well pumps and cart paths.

You would be amazed at the color you can add and the response you will get by taking a can of Rustoleum to pampas grass plumes.

We are very fortunate in South Florida that we have such a large selection of

beautiful flowering plants. By using the right combination of plants, you can create a landscape bed that is beautiful, cheap to install and requires less maintenance than any annual bed.

*Mike Hamilton, CGCS
Grey Oaks CC, Naples*

4. Flowers, flowers, flowers everywhere!

You know when November rolls around each year in Southwest Florida by the spectacular arrays of colors which seem to suddenly appear everywhere like magic.

Our Audubon entrance is adorned with white petunias along the Tamiami Trail, bringing focus to our community which normally blends in with the evergreen appearance of this part of the state.

Planning for the type and amount of foliage begins in July when a grower is contacted and cost estimates are obtained for evaluation. After all is said and done with the nursery, we then begin our bed preparation in late September or early October.

We drench our ornamental areas with Vydate L for nematode control two weeks before planting. These same areas are again drenched a week later with Ferrazole

for root and stem diseases caused by Pythium and Phytophthora.

When it comes time to start designing and planting, I was very fortunate to be able to hire Ted Green. At 68, I don't know of anyone that is in such great physical shape. Ted was a nurseryman in the Mt. Kisco area of Westchester County, N.Y. for more than 30 years when he retired to the Naples area.

It is his knowledge of the plant world that makes our club look as beautiful as it does.

During the planting process, we incorporate a 3-9-9 fertilizer along with a 5-2-4 100% natural organic fertilizer.

The entire floral display takes about a month to complete as Ted works only 20 hours a week as a part-timer.

Throughout the remainder of the growing season, which for us runs through the middle of June, applications of fungicides and insecticides are applied only as needed.

The members of Audubon are very appreciative of the beautiful vistas created by Ted around the clubhouse, common grounds, and golf course areas.

At 43, I feel like a son of Ted's and I'm learning something new every day and, the good Lord willing, I'm looking forward to a long and valued friendship.

*Walter J. Owsiany, CGCS
Audubon Country Club, Naples*

5. Landscaping on the golf course

My outlook on what impact landscaping should have on the game of golf itself is twofold.

The most important factor being the beautification aspect, and the introduction of color to the predominantly green of the golf course. Number two being that the playing of the game itself should not be affected by the landscaping.

Beautification: the use of ornamental plants and flowers certainly adds greatly to the esthetics and overall appearance of the grounds in general, and that in itself helps golfers to relax and, as the adage states, "take time to smell the roses." Through the use of the many varieties of colors of flowers and shrubs, we can vary the vistas that are seen day in and day out

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Bright colors — whether from annuals, perennials or flowering trees and shrubs — provide a cheery environment that gets everyone in the mood to slow down and take time to smell the roses.

by many of our clientele.

Shotmaking: Landscape areas should not intrude on the playing of the game. Using plantings as backdrops or to emphasize certain areas is fine as long as they aren't in play. Too many times I see ornamental plantings and flower beds placed where they are too close to a green, in the direct path of the playing of the hole, or

even in areas marked off as hazards.

These scenarios lead to the slowing down of play, arguments between golfers as to whether a free drop is allowed, and even to lost golf balls. Speed of play is a paramount issue these days, so everything we can do to decrease the time spent on a round of golf is important.

Colorful landscaping is a definite as-

set to any golf course, but be careful not to sacrifice the integrity of the game itself.

Pete Bass

6. Tree maintenance

During the construction and grow-in at Gateway Golf Club, one of the biggest challenges we had to face was keeping several thousand newly planted live oak trees watered.

A drip system was installed initially, using pressure-reducing valves off the main lines of the irrigation system, coupled to 1/2-inch PVC. The 1/2-inch PVC pipe was installed using a small vibratory plow. This caused minimal disruption of the turf and the pipe was just snaked through the trees to afford the closest access to each group of plantings.

Quarter-inch tubing was then attached to the 1/2-inch pipe and hand-trenched to each tree. A half-gallon-per-hour emitter was attached and we were in business. After approximately one year, the drip system was phased out as the trees established a good root system.

The second phase of our tree maintenance program began with the use of water-absorbent polymers.

The polymers were placed in the root zone by injecting them through a modified spray rig. A powdered form of polymer was necessary to allow it to pass through the sprayer and the injection



A touch of formality can blend nicely with more natural plantings with thoughtful, careful planning.