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# Spreading the Good Word

By Darren J. Davis

If you have read previous "Super Tips" in *The Florida Green*, you know that I generally highlight unique tools or innovative solutions that my peers have developed. However, in this installment I am going to take a different course and speak on a topic that is near and dear to me — communication. This Super Tip will focus on communicating our value to others, or "spreading the good word" about the golf course management profession.

It is rare to come across a report that highlights the challenges, issues, and hard work of a golf course superintendent. However, it is all too common to stumble upon negative reports or viewpoints of the golf course industry and those connected with the vocation. For this reason, it is my belief that each of us needs to step out of our comfort zone and become diligent promoters of the trade that provides immense satisfaction and gainful employment.

When most people think about the duties of a golf course superintendent, they think about our agronomic responsibilities. If they have been educated about the profession, they might also understand the business aspect or people-management side of our vocation. However, those not directly connected to our line of work often are unaware of the countless auxiliary duties that we perform on behalf of our employers, those things that don't fall under the typical golf course superintendent job description. One example is the massive fund-raising efforts we undertake to subsidize turf-grass research that directly benefits our employers. A second example, and the topic of this article, is about promoting our profession to portray our occupation in a positive manner.

Many things I do relating to the golf course management profession come from suggestions or ideas that I have gained from my peers. The idea that I am writing about in this "Super Tip" came primarily from Joel Jackson, the commander and chief of our terrific magazine,

*The Florida Green*. Shortly after my fellow FGCSA board members and I were fortunate enough to entice him into early retirement and come aboard as director of communications for our association, Jackson began submitting short educational articles to golfer-oriented magazines and newsletters in the Central Florida area.

## FLORIDA GOLF CENTRAL GOLF IS OUR GAME

These publications are distributed to golf course pro shops and retail outlets and are read by golfers, the people whom we superintendents are trying to influence and educate about the profession.

The idea stuck with me, and it resurfaced one afternoon last year when I was grabbing lunch at a nearby sandwich shop. While I waited for my hot Italian sub to be prepared, I began thumbing through a local ball and stick publication that was on the rack next to the *Homes and Land* magazine. In browsing through the magazine, I recalled the numerous articles that Jackson wrote and subsequently shared with the FGCSA board. After I finished my lunch I returned to the office with a copy of the publication.

So I wouldn't forget, I immediately e-mailed the publisher with the question, would he like me to supply him some editorial at no charge? Like many regional publications of this type, it provided its readers with scores, names of golfers who had holes in one, an instructional golf tip, and sometimes a few photos of area golf events. The editor responded to my e-mail with, "No promises but go ahead and send me something."

This email began a long-term relationship which has provided me an outlet to spread the good word on the positives of the profession and the hard work of my peers.

Just as Jackson was not looking for praise for his efforts, I am not seeking recognition for mine. I can honestly say that the most rewarding outcome of me

writing for the local golf magazine is when one of our peers reaps the benefits of having a golfer recognize what it is that their golf course superintendent does for them. The intended outcome of this editorial (Super Tip) is not to draw attention to Jackson's or my efforts, but rather entice others to follow suit.

So if you are asking where do I start? After getting the green light from a local publication, I suggest you look at your previous submissions in your club newsletter. More than likely with just slight modifications those articles will work well in this format.

My first few submissions came from stock articles that Jackson provided me and I modified to fit with my region of the state. Since then, I have submitted my own work monthly, 800 – 1200 words on topics including "Off the Beaten Path," an article on golf-car traffic and its devastating effects on turf; "Green Speed"; "Golf and the Environment," an editorial that highlighted the numerous positive impacts a golf course has on the environment and the community; "Water - A Precious and Expensive Resource," a discussion on the efforts made by golf course superintendents on water reduction; "The Augusta Syndrome – TV Golf is not a Reality Show;" "Jack of all Trades – A Look at Today's Golf Course Superintendent;" "The Language of a Golf Course Superintendent - A Primer of Terms"; "Grain or Grade," a discussion on the realities of grain on putting surfaces; "The Summer Culture – Cultural Practices Require Golfer Patience," and "Bunkers – A Hazard of the Game," an article that depicted the time and money that is poured into an area of the course that was once truly considered a hazard.

A few suggestions: remember your audience and speak on their level, prepare several editorials at once so that you can always meet your deadline, and finally submit your own photography so you can further highlight the issue you are addressing.

So what are you waiting for?  
Spread the good word!





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From left, new GCSAA managing directors Bryce Gartner, marketing; Teri Harris, development; Hannes Combest, member programs; and Cam Oury, finance.

# GCSAA Fills Vacant COO Post With Team of Directors

By Steve Mona, CAE

I have never been shy in recognizing the valuable contributions the GCSAA staff makes to the success of the golf course superintendent and the association as a whole. Since arriving at GCSAA almost 12 years ago, it has been my goal — and that of the elected leadership — to ensure that we are attracting, building and retaining a talented and motivated team.

I realize that as our staff develops, there will be those who leave us for other opportunities. I am proud that GCSAA has been able to further the career of several outstanding individuals.

As you know, Julian Arredondo left GCSAA earlier this year after 11 years of service on the executive staff, first as the chief financial officer and later as the chief operating officer. As is the case with all open positions, we evaluate the needs of the organization and align our resources to best meet them. While Julian's departure was a loss, we are fortunate that GCSAA has developed depth on its staff over time.

Therefore, in late June, I announced a new structure for our senior leadership level that provides the best means to accomplish organization goals — and serve the members. That decision came after spending considerable time speaking with industry leaders and peers within the association-management profession.

Normally, I would not consider staff organizational issues to be of significant importance to association members, but I also realize the GCSAA member-staff relationship is unique. There is a high-level of mutual respect and admiration between the two groups and a strong esprit de corps present that has served the association well. Because of this interaction, I am sharing some basics of the structure so the membership can gain a greater understanding of association operations.

The new management structure will not include a chief operating officer position. Rather, I will have four managing directors report to me, focusing on the areas of Member Programs (career services, education, environmental programs, meeting planning), Marketing

(communications, brand management, publications, technology), Development (Environmental Institute for Golf, corporate marketing and sales) and Finance (accounting, facilities, member solutions). Such a structure allows me direct and frequent access to those individuals conducting the day-to-day business affairs of the association. We have been operating under a similar structure since Julian's departure and have been pleased with the results.

The managing directors include Hannes Combest, member programs; Teri Harris, development; Bryce Gartner, marketing; and Cam Oury, finance. Each is considered an equal member of what internally is known as the Senior Leadership Team. Cam Oury will continue to execute the responsibilities he was assigned when hired to fill the chief financial officer position when Julian moved to chief operating officer. Cam will continue to use the CFO title when appropriate.

Having a talented staff is crucial to the success of GCSAA and ultimately its members. We employ a detailed staff development program that includes ongoing coaching, mid-and end-of-year reviews, 360 degree evaluations and individual development plans. We also evaluate our staffing resources and needs when positions become open, and in the budget and planning process.

With the changes I have noted and with the processes we have in place, I am confident we are making strong progress in the achievement of our mission, vision, goals and strategic indicators.

**Editor's Note:** As we go to press, the GCSAA and Golf Course Owners Association have announced officially that the 2006 Golf Industry Show scheduled for New Orleans has been moved to Houston, Tex., which is also the site of the 2006 GCSAA Golf Championship. Check out the most recent information regarding registration and housing at [www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org).



Steve Mona, CAE  
GCSAA Chief  
Executive Officer

# Plants of the Year

*This is the last in the Plants of the Year series for 2005. This may be the last of this series for awhile. The FNGLA is reevaluating the program. The plants selected for this program have been found to be good performers in the Florida environment and require less maintenance and inputs. Here are two specimens for your consideration.*



**Common name:** East Indian Holly Fern  
**Botanical name:** *Arachniodes simplicor variegata*  
**Hardiness:** Zones 7-10  
**Mature height and spread:** 18-24 x 16-20  
**Classification:** Ground cover masses in part shade to shade  
**Landscape use:** The East Indian Holly Fern features evergreen leaves with yellow variegation along the midribs. It makes a good cut for floral arrangements and is best in light shade of trees, but is able to take sun if well watered.



**Common name:** Weeping Yaupon Holly  
**Botanical name:** *Ilex vomitoria 'Pendula'*  
**Hardiness:** Zones 7-9  
**Mature height and spread:** 20-30 x 10-15  
**Classification:** Multi-trunked tree  
**Landscape use:** Striking accent plant  
**Characteristics:** The Weeping Yaupon Holly features small, white flowers that blossom in the spring and red berries that appear in the fall and winter. Drooping branches give a narrow profile and a distinctive appearance to this evergreen tree. It is an excellent wildlife plant, native to Florida and is disease- and insect-free taking full sun or shade.

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## 2,4-D Occupational and Residential Risks 'Not of Concern'

*EPA News Release*

The Environmental Protection Agency released its comprehensive assessment of the herbicide, 2,4-dichloro-phenoxy acetic acid (2,4-D), under the Agency's reregistration program Aug. 8. EPA's decision document concluded that 2,4-D does not present risks of concern to human health when users follow 2,4-D product instructions as outlined in EPA's 2,4-D Reregistration Eligibility Decision (RED) document.

The agency's announcement and release of the RED on 2,4-D completed a 17-year EPA review process. 2,4-D is a phenoxy herbicide discovered 60 years ago and is used worldwide for a wide variety of applications in agricultural, non-crop, residential, and aquatic settings. The agency concluded that acute and short-term margins of exposure for homeowner applications of 2,4-D to lawns were "not of concern."

Over the course of 17 years, the Industry Task Force II on 2,4-D Research Data developed and submitted to EPA more than 300 Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) toxicology, environmental and residue studies which EPA scientists reviewed to assess the herbicide's safety under the Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) and the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA). Task Force members hold technical 2,4-D FIFRA registrations and include Dow AgroSciences (U.S.), Nufarm, Ltd. (Australia), Agro-Gor Corp., a U.S. corporation jointly owned by Atanor, S.A. (Argentina) and PBI Gordon Corp. (U.S.).

"The EPA's assessment of the human and environmental scientific data reinforces a growing number of regulatory decisions and expert reviews that conclude the use of 2,4-D according to product instructions does not present an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment," said Don Page, assistant executive director of the Industry Task Force II on 2,4-D Research Data.

"EPA's comprehensive findings are consistent with decisions of other authorities such as the World Health Organization, Health

Canada, European Commission and recent studies by the U.S. National Cancer Institute on 2,4-D", added Page.

EPA's RED assessment included a review of animal and human data, the latter in the form of epidemiology studies (the study of the incidence of disease in populations). EPA stated, "The Agency has twice recently reviewed epidemiological studies linking cancer to 2,4-D. In the first review, completed January 14, 2004, EPA concluded there is no additional evidence that would implicate 2,4-D as a cause of cancer (EPA, 2004). The second review of available epidemiological studies occurred in response to comments received during the Phase 3 Public Comment Period for the 2,4-D RED. EPA's report, dated December 8, 2004 and authored by EPA Scientist Jerry Blondell, Ph.D., found that none of the more recent epidemiological studies definitively linked human cancer cases to 2,4-D."

2,4-D, one of the most widely used herbicides in the U.S. and worldwide, is applied to crops such as wheat, corn, rice, soybeans, potatoes, sugar cane, pome fruits, stone fruits and nuts. It controls invasive species in aquatic areas and federally protected areas and broadleaf weeds in turf grass. An economic evaluation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (NAPIAP Report 1-PA-96) concluded that the loss of 2,4-D would cost the U.S. economy \$1.7 billion annually in higher food production and weed control expense

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For more information about 2,4-D visit [www.24d.org](http://www.24d.org) or call 800-345-5109.

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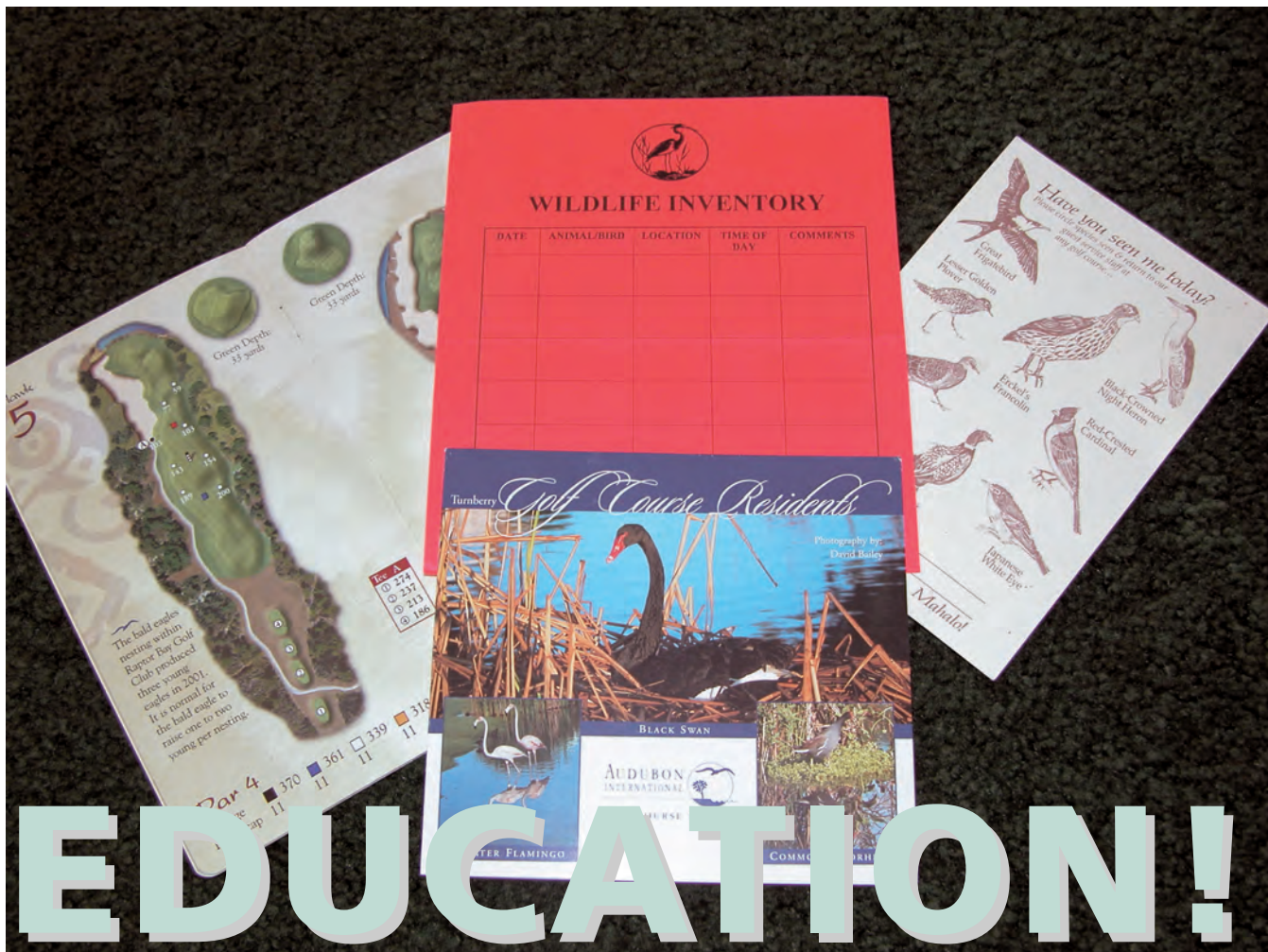


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# EDUCATION!

*My friends tell me that on occasion I sound like I'm preaching, because once I get stuck on an issue, I have a hard time letting it go. Well, my 'thing' for this article is outreach and education and the benefits to you when you do this correctly.*

By Shelly Foy

Education.

It is an exciting time when our children start school. They start learning all kinds of interesting things; how to read and how to write their names, how to stay in a straight line, and how to tie their shoes. They also come home and repeat things they have learned at school like, "a baked Alaska is a cake with a fire in the middle of it," or "Mommy, do you know what the capital of Georgia is?" The answer is Athens, home of the Georgia Bulldogs, right? They have a thirst for knowledge, and it is very rewarding to watch it happening every day.

Education — we all got it, we all use it, and most importantly we all need to keep getting it. Fortunately, life is an ongoing education process. We learn by doing, by seeing, by reading, by watching and by listening. Some of us even still learn from our mistakes, and this is also a good thing.

I think that the most important part of the ACSP for Golf Courses is Outreach and

Education. Yet, this is the most overlooked, ignored, and put-off aspect of this program for almost every person who is working toward certification. Or worse, you do a couple of things just to get you through the certification process, and then you never think about education again. You are not getting the full benefit of the Audubon program if you are not taking outreach and education seriously and if you are not making them a regular part of your program.

You let your golfers know before you aerify because you don't want to have everyone complaining about you tearing up the golf course. Ideally you want them to understand that aerification is a basic part of golf course management and that if they want to have healthy turf, then they are going to have to put up with it from time to time. You hope that once they become educated about aerification they are not going to give you any more grief about it, and better yet, they are going to explain it to other golfers. You have benefited from sharing a little education with your members.

The same principle is true for the envi-





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ronmental programs on your golf course. You want to share this information so that the golfers will in turn share the information. Maybe one day when golf courses are getting slammed as being bad for the environment, lo and behold one of your very own golfers will take the stand that golf courses are good for the environment. They know this because their golf course superintendent took the time to educate them and share information with them. Hey, it could happen. More importantly, it needs to happen.

Forget about the ACSP for a minute.

Regardless of whether you are participating in this program (although I think you are crazy not to be), there are lots of reasons to tell your golfers how many different ways golf courses are good for the environment. The perfect example came to me when I was reading Joel Jackson's article "Responsibility Lacking, Not H-2-O" in the April 2005 issue of *Golfdom* Magazine.

He wrote, "According to a recent Golf Economic Impact study, there are 4 million acres of lawn turf and 140,000 acres of irrigated golf turf in Florida. The public sector uses 30% of the water; golf uses 3.5%. Agriculture (the biggest user of water) and golf (one of the smallest) still get hammered in the press, even though both manage and recycle water better than John Q. Public."

I believe that most of you knew that already, but answer this question truthfully: How many of you have shared that information with your golfers?

Here is another perfect example: Most of you know the information in the gray box elsewhere on this page, but have you shared it with anyone?

There is factual, unbiased university research to support each one of the above golf-course benefits. Got any idea how simple it would be to take one or two topics at a time and put a paragraph about them in your club newsletter or on the course Web site, or pin it up in the locker room?

The beauty of this is that the information is already written and out there, and all you have to do is reprint it. Who has time to reinvent the wheel these days? It is up to you to help educate golfers, and it takes very little effort on your part.

How do you communicate with your golfers? Post information, either on the course or in the clubhouse. Write monthly articles for your club newsletter. Speak to your golfers personally while you are out on the golf course. Is this enough?

Here are some simple ideas on ways to communicate effectively with your golfers.

- Take advantage of your club's Web site and newsletter. Writing a monthly or even quarterly article may seem daunting. Don't reinvent the wheel. The USGA, GCSAA, Audubon International and others have Web sites where you can download tons of information and reprint it. Just give credit to the folks you borrow it from and that is that.

### The golf course ecosystem:

- Provides wildlife habitat
- Protects topsoil from water and wind erosion
- Improves community aesthetics
- Absorbs and filters rain
- Improves health and reduces stress for more than 25 million golfers
- Improves air quality
- Captures and cleanses runoff in urban areas
- Discourages pests (e.g. ticks and mosquitoes)
- Restores damaged land areas (e.g., former landfill or mining sites)
- Makes substantial contributions to the community's economy
- Converts carbon dioxide to oxygen
- Improves property values
- Can act as a firebreak
- Is often the only significant green space in an urban environment
- Lowers temperatures
- Filters dust and pollen in the air

- Craig Weyandt does a great job with his "Wild at Heart" column in his club's newsletter at The Moorings in Vero Beach. He picks one wildlife species that lives on his golf course and writes a few paragraphs about its life cycle, what it eats, its benefits to the environment, etc... and he includes a picture. Craig would be the first to tell you that the information is easily accessible from a variety of books and Web sites.

## Consumer Golf Show Pays Off

On March 19 and 20, the MetGCSA sponsored a booth at the Journal News Golf Show in White Plains N.Y. The weather was a perfect spring day. When I arrived, there were 600 or so people waiting at the door for the 10 a.m. opening. By the end of the day more than 1,350 tickets had been sold. The show featured more than 75 different golf exhibits. Everything from area courses selling memberships, to the gentleman selling hand-rolled cigars.

We borrowed a display from Audubon International. If you wanted a good laugh you should have been there when I put it up. I must say though, that after all was said and done, the booth looked pretty sharp. Audubon also donated a golf print of Pebble Beach. In order to be eligible to win the print golfers had to fill out a quick questionnaire (*See facing page*). We collected more than 60 surveys. The responses were very positive. Most golfers do view their courses as being good for the environment and would be willing to travel further and pay a little more for golf courses that have demonstrated good environmental stewardship. We also had rule books to give out complements of the USGA.

and literature from GCSAA and our local *Tee to Green* publication.

The show generated a lot of interest. We answered a wide variety of questions from goose control to organic fertilizers. Tim Moore said he spoke with a reporter from a golf magazine with the possibility of writing some articles. It's that kind of networking that can become invaluable.

I would like to thank the people who helped man the booth. Chuck Denny, Glenn Perry, Glenn Dube, Tim Moore, Blake Halderman, Peter Waterous, and my daughter Megan. I would also like to thank Dave Oatis from the USGA for the *Rules of Golf* books and literature, Shelly Howard from the GCSAA, and JoEllen Zeh from Audubon International for letting us borrow her display.

In closing I think the show went quite well. We were able to pass out a lot of good information. It was a great place to stand on a pedestal and tell the golfing world what we do and how we do it and that golf courses are good for the environment.

Matthew Ceplo CGCS