



*The butterfly garden behind the 13th tee of the Ritz-Carlton GC has nectar plants for adults and food plants for the caterpillar stages.*

# Nature's Nursery

*A photo essay by Joel Jackson*



*A Gold Rim Swallowtail caterpillar feeding on a food-source pipevine growing on a trellis in the butterfly garden.*



*An Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterfly with a wing span of 3– 4 inches was the main attraction this day.*



*The White Peacock butterfly ranges from Florida to southern Texas and feeds on spurge plants.*



*Butterfly gardens also provide nectar for a wide range of pollinators like this Mason Bee which ranges throughout North America.*



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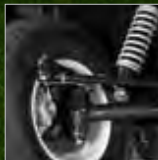
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*A panoramic view up the par-5, third hole reveals one of the 16 lakes on the course, a pine and palmetto habitat and the J. W. Marriott Hotel, which shares the Grande Lakes property with the Ritz-Carlton. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*

*(Continued from Page 20)*

The Ritz-Carlton Golf Club recently was able to switch to reclaimed water for its irrigation of the course and grounds, which is good for conservation of the area's fresh water supplies. Since reclaimed water isn't an infinite resource either, Ragsdale's irrigation technicians constantly inspect, monitor and adjust the operation of the 1500 sprinkler heads on the course and the 10,500 smaller heads around the resort grounds.

Throughout the design, construction, operation and maintenance of the Ritz-Carlton property, Andy Ragsdale was well prepared to fill his current role as superintendent of this premier facility. He developed his interest in this profession while working summers with his father, Wayne Ragsdale, when he was a construction

superintendent for Wadsworth Golf Construction. Andy's keen interest in environmental stewardship may have been kindled when he helped build the Sanctuary GC on Sanibel Island. The Sanctuary exists in the John Ding Darling Federal Wildlife Preserve, proving once and for all that environmental stewardship is alive and well on golf courses.

Ragsdale went on graduate from the renowned Golf Operations program at Lake City Community College in 1999 with his A.S. degree and took a job as an assistant superintendent at the Fox Hollow Golf Club in Trinity, a small community just east of his hometown of Tarpon Springs. After three years at Fox Hollow, he found himself in Orlando helping to build and develop the course he now calls home.

If young Ragsdale is an example of the type of talent and leadership

potential in our industry, then our profession will be in good hands. His observations about work – taking care of your team, communicating clearly up and down the chain of command, and attention to detail – are sage advice for young and old alike. He summed up his personal observations with a phrase that already has found its way into FGCSA communications with members. It is “You can't teach what you don't know and you can't lead where you won't go.”

Learning and leadership are two qualities or skills that a successful superintendent needs to meet the economic and environmental demands and expectations facing today's golf industry. From what I observed, The Ritz-Carlton Golf Club is keeping its promise to do its very best for the guests, the employees and Mother Nature as well.





## CONGRATULATIONS

to Andy Ragsdale  
and his club for being  
selected by the  
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# Now What Do I Do?

## Making a Smooth Transition From Assistant to Superintendent

Congratulations! You are now the golf course superintendent at XYZ Golf Club. Now what? Have you prepared yourself thoroughly for the new challenges ahead? Are you ready to be the one that staff and members (players) look to for answers to the numerous responsibilities of your new position? What if you do not have the answers – what then? Remember – for the many solutions required on a daily basis, the buck now stops with you!

The position of golf course superintendent is as interesting and varied as it is challenging. Obviously you have worked hard to gain the education and work experience, which has resulted in your being hired as a superintendent.

More than likely, however, rarely have you been the one having to make daily decisions regarding hiring, firing, purchasing, or long range planning, just to name a few of your new responsibilities.

Hopefully, those whom you have trained under have allowed you to participate to some degree in these areas so that you are not totally unprepared to make such decisions. But, how far have you gone to be as prepared as possible for your first head position?

Preparing for your first head position as thoroughly as possible is essential for future success. Jack DelRio, head coach for the Jacksonville Jaguars was called at 8 p.m. the evening prior to interviewing for the position the next morning without notice. He was considered a long shot for the position but he so impressed the owner of the team with his preparation that he was hired. How could he have prepared so thoroughly overnight? The answer – he didn't. He had been preparing for several years – developing a book

that outlines every aspect as to how he would operate as a head coach. DelRio covered everything from offensive and defensive philosophy, training camp routines, disciplinary rules, etc. His preparation was so complete that he outperformed other more highly regarded candidates.

The lesson of course: don't wait for the interview to prepare for the interview. The time to start planning comes when you make the final decision to become a golf course superintendent. From that time forward, a vision should be developing as to how you will manage the course and the staff that you inherit.

It's never too late, but you should have started your book on the day you made that decision. If you somehow got the top job without a plan, you need help. A lot of help. In a hurry.

### ESTABLISH A NETWORK

One of the first things you should do is establish a network of peers who have been there, done that... and had it done to them. Their advice can help you save your course... and your head.

Your local chapter of the FGCSA provides you with a built-in network of superintendents who not only understand the job, but - particularly if you've moved to a new region - they know your golf course almost as well as your predecessor... and probably better than your new boss!

Furthermore, membership in the FGCSA includes membership in the GCSAA, the national organization with a wealth of resources to help you in every aspect of your job.

This advice may be old news. If you had a far-sighted boss when you became an assistant, you may have been encouraged to join as soon as you got the job. Maybe chapter dues were even built into your compensation package.

If that's not the policy at your new course, it's one you might consider... *after* you're firmly established in the job. Don't try to turn the horse before

you're easy in the saddle with a firm grip on the reins!

### UTILIZE RESOURCES

You've already mastered the technical aspects of the job, have all the appropriate licenses and have learned how to supervise work crews. You know all about safety and scheduling but do you know how to *manage*?

Managing a large ecosystem with a diverse group of people, all subject to the whims of nature, upper management, members and regulators is a whole different ballgame.

Supervising is getting a crew through a punch list; managing is figuring out what should be on the punch list in light of scheduled activities, requirements of management, agronomic issues and the weather.

The GCSAA Web site has an amazing array of management resources for superintendents.

For instance, you can learn five strategies for making yourself heard. One example:

- **Talk daily with your management team**, especially the golf professional, regarding course conditions and schedules? Since the golf professional has more visibility with golfers, you want to be sure accurate information is communicated to them. Initiate the meetings with the golf professional, the general manager and the food and beverage manager to discuss mutual plans, areas of concerns and upcoming events. These interactions will help to create an effective working relationship.

Or 39 strategies for success, such as

- **Take responsibility for your own mistakes** and for those of your subordinates. Blaming others, however justifiable, makes you look small-minded and weak. Earn a reputation as a "fixer" of errors, someone who can snap back from setbacks and learn from mistakes.

There's a wealth of practical management advice waiting for you at [www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org).



# HOW DROUGHT-PROOF IS TIFSPORT BERMUDA?



## It Recovers Faster With Less Stand Loss Than Other Fairway Grasses

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The Central Florida TESTA organizes an annual shop tour so area mechanics can network and see different operations. Photo by Joel Jackson.

## Make Opportunities Available for Vital Staff Training, Education

“You cannot teach what you do not know. You cannot go where you cannot lead.”

This was a comment by Andy Ragsdale during research for the cover story for this issue. I thought it fit perfectly with the Hands On theme.

While it is vital for superintendents to be up to date on regulations and turf management technology and equipment, it is clear that communication, business and leadership education are also key components for a successful career and operation.

Superintendents can attend GCSAA, FTGA, commercial and local chapter education programs, but what are courses doing to train the staff that is also critical for the success of the facility?”

Many courses send their assistants, technicians and/or foremen to the FTGA Regional Seminars in January. Several TESTA (Turf Equipment Service Technicians Association) chapters offer training sessions for certification in several maintenance areas.

Requiring pest control technicians to become certified Pest Control Operators is another way to improve their knowledge and environmental awareness.

Perhaps the best way a superintendent can improve performance and training of their assistants is to have

them join the local FGCSA chapters and give them the opportunity to attend several meetings each year.

Here are thoughts of some FGCSA members on job training, health and safety topics:

### SEVEN RIVERS UF/IFAS PLANT SCIENCE CENTER

We have quarterly safety meetings throughout the year with the entire staff. Topics include pesticide safety, heat stress, equipment safety, etc. We do most of the training in-house but have brought in individuals from outside the organization such as Lee Bloomcamp and Chris Pappas.

We have had unusual training sessions for forklift operation, proper lifting, and passenger bus operation (*I bet no one else has that last one*).

The University’s policy on pesticides is more strict than the state’s policy. Almost everyone on the staff has a pesticide license and therefore needs opportunities to earn CEU’s. We provide them with several opportunities to achieve those CEU’s.

We usually send everyone to attend Chris Pappas’s First Response Chemical Spill Training Course. We send two people every year for the week-long class for Site Commander Training for Chemical Spills.

We have conducted Fumigation

Training sessions over the last couple of years for the entire University which serve as a review for most and an opportunity for others to take the test and receive their license or earn CEU’s.

The Marion County Jail supplies trustees daily to work on the site. They watch the Workers Protection Video every day on the bus bringing them from the jail. We get a few new people every day, so we need to make sure that they all see it.

My turf crew attends the FTGA seminars every January. When I had a mechanic, I sent him to equipment technician seminars that were held around the state. The University offers computer training classes, which many of our staff have attended. We keep very detailed records of applications and inventory, so having computer skills is a big plus for many of the employees.

Mark G. Kann  
Coordinator of Research Programs

### CENTRAL FLORIDA MARRIOTT WORLD CENTER

We have numerous associates going through a certification program at this time for high-reach, forklift, and pallet-jack operating. The associates are required to have their certification with them whenever they’re operating any of that equipment.

We’re also all attending a safety seminar on hearing, which includes a hearing exam.

John Kopack  
Golf Course Superintendent

### TREASURE COAST HOBE SOUND GOLF CLUB

We have monthly general safety videos, with tests at the end, sent by Risk Compliance. We very rarely have a workman’s comp claim so I would say the videos do their job. When I review the video program with insurance adjusters, they are usually pretty impressed. We have been doing this for five or six years.

We also have a checklist for operators for everything from fairway mowers to string trimmers. This checklist was taken directly from the



## A Unique Workforce – and No Absenteeism

**Editor's Note:** When Mark mentioned the inmates who worked at the Plant Science Center and the mandatory Worker Protection videos that they have to watch, I asked him for more information about the program.

The inmates or "Trusties" that work at the UF/IFAS Plant Science Center come from the Marion County Jail. The sheriff believes that by working on the farm, they will learn some skills that they will be able to use when they get back out into the world. As of last word, six former trustees are now working on golf courses.

The farm gets about 25-30 inmates Monday-Thursday from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. I normally get 4-6 trustees each day to work in the turf area. I try to teach them to mow, but they need to be monitored rather closely at first. It's nice because I don't have to worry about them showing up, but I do have to worry about the quality of work that they do.

They get 8 days gain time off their sentence for each month that they work out here. They are all low-risk offenders, mostly DUI's, failure to pay child support, drug possession – no violent crimes. We do not pay to have the inmates come here, but we do send all of our leftover produce to the prison instead of trying to sell it and compete with local farmers that pay taxes and our salaries.

This past year, we sent over 350,000 pounds of potatoes to the prison. We will send other crops such as watermelon, tomatoes, peppers, carrots, cantaloupe, corn, eggplant, squash, etc. In addition, the sheriff has about 40 head of cattle that graze the prairie here. We can not use the area for experiments, so we let the cows graze there and they keep the weeds and grass down so that we do not have to mow it. We will bail hay for them and also feed them leftover field corn, soybeans, sorghum, and other silage crops.

*Mark Kann, Coordinator of Research Programs*

operators' manuals of the various pieces of equipment. We review important items from the manual and make the operators sign off on each piece of equipment.

I have two guys who have been with me for only three years. The rest of the staff have been here a minimum of six years, most of the them more than 10, so most of the crew know their jobs and safety requirements inside out.

My mechanic also goes to FTGA and GCSAA conferences when they're nearby and he is active in the local mechanic's association.

*Roy MacDonald*  
Golf Course Superintendent

### **CALUSA MAPLE LEAF G&CC**

We use a wide variety of training methods.

Internal Training: One-on-one training with manager or experienced crewmember, using the SVW videos and staff meetings. We also have

safety training with our personnel management group, daily supervision of operators including guidance and advice. We also have hired a supplier's technical rep to come in and teach a class.

External Training: Staff members attend UF/IFAS Extension classes and manufacturers' seminars. The club reimburses employees for tuition for college classes, and registrations for FTGA and GCSAA conferences and shows and also monthly Calusa GCSA meetings.

My current assistant is planning to retire next spring. I have an irrigation tech who is an excellent candidate for advancement and is interested in becoming a superintendent. We are paying his tuition for the turf program at Edison College so that he will be well-trained to assume the assistant's position in the spring.

*Nancy Miller*  
Golf Course & Grounds  
Superintendent

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## SUPER TIP

## Carry A String Trimmer in a Box

The subject of this issue's Super Tip, "String Trimmer in a Box" comes all the way from the state known as "the land of 10,000 lakes." This past summer I visited Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn. where Jim Nicol, CGCS shared with me a Super Tip that he and his staff have found very useful. Nicol, an industry veteran, has been the golf course superintendent at Hazeltine for 12 years.

The highly regarded Hazeltine was designed by Robert Trent Jones and modified by his son, Rees. Over the years Hazeltine has produced a resume of championships that is unmatched among clubs less than 50 years old: U.S. Women's Open (1966, 77), U.S. Open Championship (1970, 91), U.S. Senior Open (1983), U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship (1994), NCAA Division I Men's Golf Championship (1999),

PGA Championship (2002), and U.S. Amateur Championship (2006). In addition, the club will host the 91st PGA Championship in 2009 and the Ryder Cup Matches in 2016.

It goes without saying that course conditioning is incessantly on Nicol's mind and he is continually experimenting with techniques to increase productivity and provide an improved product. To mow the numerous bunker faces at Hazeltine, Nicol utilizes the Toro Groundsmaster 3500D (rotary Sidewinder). To avoid a potential accident, or damage to a bunker face Nicol feels more comfortable having his operators keep the Sidewinder cutting units about 12 inches away from the edge of the bunker.

This is where the string-trimmer-in-a-box idea comes into use. After



Close up of the PVC section and bracket that holds the string trimmer shaft. Photo

mowing the bunker face as instructed, the operator dismounts the Sidewinder and utilizes the string trimmer to finish trimming the bunker face. My supposition is the device might also be useful at golf courses that utilize trim mowers (either reel or rotary) to cut turfgrass on lake banks and around trees.

The box that houses the trimmer's power head is constructed from plywood and is affixed to the right side of the mower. The box measures approximately 20 by 12 by 10 inches deep. A channel was cut into the front of the box so the trimmer will remain level while in transport. The shaft near the trim-head rests in a sleeve made of a piece of 2-inch PVC pipe with a slot cut into it and affixed to a metal bracket on the front of the mower. The metal brackets and PVC sleeve used to secure the box were affixed to the mower utilizing existing bolts on the Sidewinder frame.

As "a picture is worth a thousand words," I think when you view the photographs of the string-trimmer-in-a-box you can envision slight modifications to both the dimensions and the mounting technique to fit your brand of mower and/or weedeater, but I thought the Super Tip was extremely innovative, creative and worth sharing.



Close up of the plywood box and bracket attachment housing the motor part of the string trimmer. Photo by Darren Davis.



At the famed Hazeltine Golf Club in Minnesota they mount string trimmers on the trim mowers for increased productivity and operator safety. Photo by Darren Davis.