

# Ward gives course feminine touch

By Vern Putney

Jo-Ann Eberle and John Ward met at the Playboy Resort, but it was all business. Down-to-earth business.

Their common interest was a love of the soil and Mother Nature.

John came to the Playboy Resort Golf Course in New Jersey in 1979 as the new assistant superintendent. Jo-Ann had been a "groundsman" there since 1975.

Her fascination for the managerial part of the job brought her in closer contact with John, who liked to elaborate on the technical aspects of turf management.

He told her about Rutgers University turfgrass courses. It changed her life. She

attended Rutgers in 1979 and 1980, and during that time was promoted to 27-hole supervisor at Playboy.

She became course assistant superintendent at High Mountain Country Club in Franklin Lakes, N.J., in late 1980, and early in 1982 became assistant super at Americana Resort and Country Club in McAfee, N.J.

Responsibilities included 27 holes, all hotel grounds and activity areas. Three supervisors and three mechanics reported to Jo-Ann. Total crew comprised 40 men and women.

Jo-Ann and John were married in 1981. He had been working as course super at Cedar Hill CC in Livingston, N.J. Daughter Kate

was born Christmas Day, 1983, "in the off-season, of course," jokes Jo-Ann.

She switched to her present post, super at Sunset Valley Golf Course in Pompton Plains, N.J., in August 1984. Sunset the past three years has been nominated for inclusion among *Golf Digest's* top 75 courses.

Since last August, Jo-Ann has been filling the vacancy of golf director, overseeing 36-hole Flanders Valley and 18-hole Pinchbrook as well as Sunset.

"At first, an 18-hole course and a 7 winter, 13 summer crew seemed like a vacation," Jo-Ann noted. "Then the push for public golf was on. Players came out in droves and continue to this day. I'm learning that communication and cooperation between pro shop personnel and the golf maintenance department is the key to mutual respect and a well-run organization.

"We try to put our best foot forward. Not only is pride the outcome, but excellent conditions for our customers. I'm often dubbed 'Unique Ward' thanks to a newspaper article referring to my pioneering as a woman in this field. I hadn't realized I was among a handful of women in the U.S. working in this position."

Jo-Ann's success meant some sacrifices for John. For 20 years, he'd managed golf courses, the last at Tamiment Resort and Country Club in the Pocono Resort Region of Pennsylvania. Their home was on the Sunset Valley GC grounds, which meant a two-hour commute for John.

In the winter of 1989, he changed careers. He became superintendent of horticulture for three internationally acclaimed arboretums in Morris County, N.J.

Jo-Ann thrives on the outdoor life, and Kate is proud of her mother's special role.

Jo-Ann is elated to be part of an industry she feels has come out of the Dark Ages and is growing by leaps and bounds. She points to sophisticated irrigation systems, computers, newer and better equipment, and a business much more aware of and concerned with the environment.

She never has encountered prejudice or



Jo-Ann Ward at Sunset Valley GC.

discrimination among her peers and, except once, has been hired for key positions where she's applied.

Application to a private club in northern New Jersey went into the "round file," she said, because her resume indicated she was female.

Jo-Ann is a long-standing member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, New Jersey Turfgrass Association, Metropolitan GCSA and the GCSA of New Jersey, in which she served as district director and chairperson for organizing state association meetings and speakers.

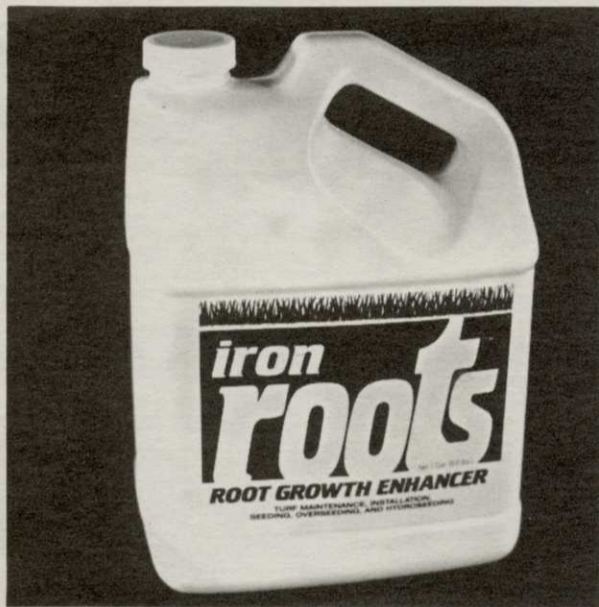
That post led to one memorable incident. She was conducting a state meeting at a private country club. The all-male superintendents were in the men's grill.

"I was not permitted to go in (according to the club's charter) and hand out dinner tickets. I packed up my paperwork, drove two miles to the local driving range, and hit golf balls for a few hours. I returned close to dinner time, so as not to cause too much chaos.

"I never intended to go against the club's charter, but it was the first time I was flatly turned down and not able to run the meeting according to plan simply because I was a woman."

That years-ago annoying episode, she feels, has yielded to an enlightened era.

Comments now are confined to course conditions. Feedback is largely positive, and the Good Earth doesn't seem to mind that feminine hands provide the gentle touch.



## SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

ironROOTS, biostimulant plus chelated iron increases carbohydrate reserves in your plants to minimize the potential for winter freeze damage.

"When a biostimulant such as ROOTS™ has iron added to it, the biggest advantage would be an immediate color response that wouldn't be associated with a resulting flush of shoot growth. This could be very advantageous to turf managers in the spring when everyone is trying to get their grass to green up without promoting shoot growth at the expense of root growth."

Dr. Mike Goatley  
Mississippi State University  
Starkville, Mississippi

"I saw immediate results. We had a much earlier green-up in the Spring and a much deeper green color where the tank mix ROOTS™, AGRIPLEX 8% IRON, and SOLUBLE N was applied. The treated turf recovered much quicker from the winter damage, and those treated fields were ready to cut in April."

John Chapman  
Craft Farms  
Gulf Shores, Alabama

"There are now a few reputable scientifically-minded and sophisticated companies involved in the manufacture and sale of biostimulants. One good company that comes to mind is ROOTSinc. This company is doing good, realistic advertising, has national marketing and research programs in place and is committed to the marketplace over the long run."

Eliot C. Roberts  
The Lawn Institute  
Pleasant Hill, Tennessee

To order ironROOTS call your local ROOTS distributor. For university research and technical questions call us toll free at 1-800-342-6173.

**roots inc.**

25 Science Park, New Haven, CT 06511  
\*ROOTS and ironROOTS are trademarks of Soliizer Corporation.

## IF IT WERE ONLY THIS SIMPLE



Quality irrigation systems are anything but simple. Your golf course is unique and it requires unique solutions to its water management needs. Textbook irrigation designs simply won't do.

Certified Consultants, Ltd., is a water systems management/consultant/design firm with extensive experience in golf course irrigation systems.

We are committed to the proper use, management and conservation of water within the horticultural environment. We provide our customers with a superior product that is sensitive to budget without sacrificing function.

We have the experience and the knowledge to handle your water management needs effectively and professionally.

**CERTIFIED CONSULTANTS, LTD.**

Water Management Professionals

3904 Wilson Road, Woodstock, IL 60098



PH: 815/338-3947 FAX: 815/338-3968