

It takes a splash of color to break-up the monotony of a solid sea of green. Flowers are the answer.

By THOMAS CAREY

Few people will argue that a well maintained golf course doesn't approach the ultimate in beauty. But one who will, curiously enough, is Ray Gerber. It just happens that Gerber has been the superintendent at Glen Oak CC, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, for the past 31 years and, altogether, has been tending turf at country clubs for nearly a half century. In addition, he was president of the GCSA in 1951.

For a superintendent to even hint that a flawlessly groomed course isn't the most inspirational piece of landscape around, suggests heresy. But don't get the impression that Ray is turning his back on his fellow superintendents. Most of them, he says, are perfectionists and the condition of their courses reflect it.

However, they have one glaring failing. They only think green, and they should be thinking other colors as well. This means that outside the sandtraps and occasional water hazards, the average course should not be so green that it is oppressive — "oppressive" is Gerber's own expression.

The Glen Oak superintendent feels that more flowers should be growing around

country clubs—if not out on the course, at least on the club grounds. Where the turf and trees leave off, he says, evergreens are planted. It's monotonous.

"The scenery would be greatly improved," he adds, "if superintendents would put in a few dahlia and petunia beds and if planters filled with geraniums were used here and there to give a lift to the color scheme."

Psychologists, in general, agree with Gerber. People may not be conscious of it, they say, but it takes a splash of color in a sea of green to give them a lift.

Many years ago, when the maintenance cost permitted, Gerber had large flower beds spread over Glen Oak's entire 18 holes. They were located between tees and greens; even in the outer reaches, trees were ringed with beds of dahlias, zinnias and petunias, and potted geraniums decorated some of the tees. But in recent years the high maintenance costs has compelled Ray to shorten his lines and confine his flower show to the vicinity of the clubhouse. Even so, Glen Oak in bloom is still something to see.

The largest and most spectacular flower beds at the club are located behind the clubhouse in a parkway between the parking lot and main building. Traffic is heavy here. This is why the flower beds are concentrated in this location.

The largest bed is about 50 feet in diameter and has a centerpiece of canna. Encircling it are rows of dwarf marigolds, petunias in various hues, marigolds of

Are your grounds too

medium height, a silvery low growing plant known as Dusty Miller, salvia and pampas grass. Behind the circular bed is a large, elliptical bed, planted to zinnias, and a smaller, triangular bed in which zinnias bloom. Last year, this bed was planted in snapdragons.

In the parkway, along with the flower beds, is a statue of a caddy, sculptured in copper. It's the first thing guests usually ask about when they visit the club, and numerous photographers have come to Glen Oak just to take pictures of it.

Legend has it that the statue is a memorial to a caddy who was killed on the spot by lightning, about a half century ago. But Gerber, Al Huske, the pro who has been at Glen Oak for 25 years, and older members of the club say there is nothing to the legend, and nobody knows how it got started.

The copper caddy, known affectionately as Pinky, has been standing in the parkway for at least 40 years. The statue depicts a youth of about 12 walking across a moss covered coral footbridge, carrying seven clubs in a canvas quiver of immediate post World War I vintage. A jet of water pulses out of the top of the umbrella the boy is carrying and streams down over the bumbershoot

into a beautiful pool below the bridge.

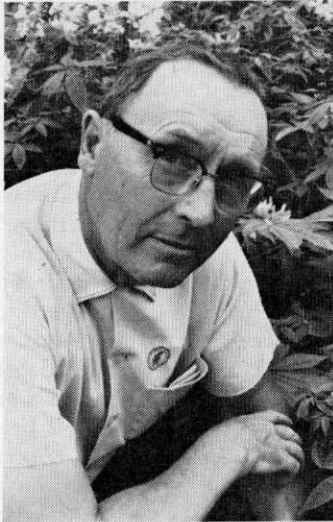
The statue is or was intended as a memorial or tribute to caddies of all eras. The name of the sculptor is unremembered. It is quite fitting that the statue should be standing in the Glen Oak yard because the club has long been noted for its excellent caddy program.

The back of the clubhouse and a wing form an L-shape backdrop for the parkway flower panoply. Low growing and medium yews are planted in a three-foot wide bed that surrounds the clubhouse and wing in this area. Less imaginative superintendents would hide the base of the building here with a hedge, but, at Glen Oak the yews are trimmed to give an alternate box and cone effect. They are also spaced far enough apart so that it is easy to weed between and behind them and to clean out paper, leaves and other debris that blow into the bed.

Although the larger flower beds are concentrated behind the clubhouse, the general pattern is a large Georgian-type structure, to have the beds encircling the entire building, which was built around 1920.

In the immediate area east of the clubhouse and in front of it there is a predominance of low-spreading pfitzers, but the monotony of the greenery is broken

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Ray Gerber, above, believes that more flowers should be growing around country clubs—if not on the course, at least on the club grounds.

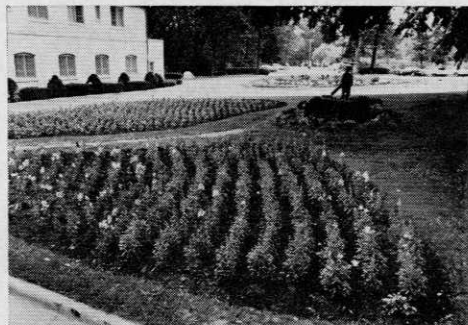
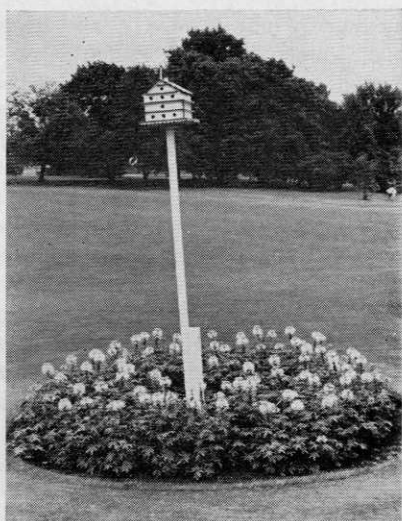
green?

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Rectangular flower beds are not part of Ray Gerber's philosophy. He believes they should have a character all of their own such as these circular, elliptical, triangular and irregular-shaped flower beds as shown here.



here by vari-colored phlox, snapdragons and lillies of the valley that peek out from among the shrubs.

Planters on a slightly elevated patio that fronts the clubhouse contain petunias and geraniums. Farther to the west in front of the clubhouse, ground level beds are planted in geraniums and small, delicate impatiens. The whole front side flower arrangement, which can be seen from the main dining room and a lounge, is floodlighted at night.

Elm trees and tall evergreens grow

flush to the building on the west side. But beyond the adjoining practice green, Gerber's garden grows anew. Lining the first tee on one side are phlox and daisies. Almost directly behind the practice green is a large bed, about 30 feet long and 15 feet deep, that has become to be known as Glen Oak's great seal or trademark.

This is bordered by spreading phytolacca and, in the center, fashioned of cohee, or burning bush, a gossamery plant that grows to a height of four or five inches, the legend "Glen Oak and the year" is

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fashioned. The remainder of the bed is filled out with dahlias and dwarf marigolds. Through mid-July of this year, however, the cohee that Gerber planted and replanted hadn't come through.

Moving toward the front of the clubhouse and about 75 or 80 yards out, one of several three-story birdhouses that are spotted around the Glen Oak property is surrounded by a 15-foot circular bed of salvia and white petunias. A flagpole, 20 yards away, is encircled by a bed of dwarf dahlias. This variety, Gerber points out, often wilts in the heat and wind but quickly snaps back upon being watered.

Between the 18th green and 10th tee, both of which are located almost directly in front of the clubhouse, are two large and artistic beds in the configuration of traps that are planted to petunias, marigolds, dahlias and impatiens. Many people consider this blending of the contoured green with its large bunkers, the nearby bentgrass tee and the traps of colorful flowers as the most beautiful spot on the property.

Gerber doesn't feel that square or rectangular flower beds are very artistic. He prefers to plant flowers in circles, semi-circles, triangles or in beds the shape of traps. These forms lend themselves to more colorful and imaginative flower arrangements that will catch your eye.

The slope of the beds in which flowers are planted, the slope of the surrounding terrain, even the height of the flowers themselves should, Ray feels, dictate the configuration of a bed.

Speaking of the back of the clubhouse, Gerber is critical of the way in which many clubs maintain this area. More often than not, the parking lot is located at the rear of the clubhouse and members usually enter the building through the back door. What they see doesn't always re-



As a tribute to caddies of all eras, Pinky, a copper statue-fountain, has stood for the last 40 years in the parkway with water flowing down over his umbrella.

flect too well on the fastidiousness of the superintendent — weeds, unkempt grass, junk piles, gargage cans. "It's enough to make them want to turn around and go back home," says Ray.

"These eyesores should be cleaned up," he adds. "A small flower bed or beds bordering paths or sidewalks is one way of doing it. A hedge or clumps of bushes can hide a lot of dirty linen. So can a trellis covered with climbing roses, clematis or some kind of a vine. Weeds shouldn't be seen, even in the backyard. Guests especially, and more members than are realized, grade the superintendent on the way the back looks, so why shouldn't he go out of his way to keep this area looking presentable?"

What does it cost to plant and maintain flowers in the clubhouse area, such as is done at Glen Oak? Something like \$3,500 a year, including labor and the

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flowers themselves. Gerber keeps one of his veteran employees, Mike Arone, on the flower detail from the latter part of May until October. Another man is occasionally taken off turf maintenance to trim the yews and pfitzers.

Flowers are expensive. Cannas, salvia, petunias, marigolds, dwarf dahlias, snapdragons, Dusty Miller, etc. are bought in flats. Dahlias and marigolds can be obtained in dwarf, medium and tall varieties. Zinnias are the only flowers that are planted from seed at Glen Oak because they germinate much faster than others.

Gerber doesn't plant spring flowers such as tulips because there aren't enough members around to enjoy them. Pretty much the same is true of fall flowers although salvia, dahlias and marigolds linger until well into October.

Maintaining flower beds doesn't take as much work as most people suppose. The important thing is finding an employee who has a feeling for flowers.

The soil at most clubs probably doesn't require much preparation for flower growing. When the plants are put in they should be fertilized with a handful of 12-6-4 or 10-6-4. Later, a sprinkling of 10-7-3 is enough to keep them in bloom. The only exception are zinnias which require a rather constant light fertilizing.

The rule of thumb for watering is to turn on the sprinklers when the ground is dry, meaning that watering should be fairly constant in July and August.

After flower beds are established for two years, weeding isn't much of a problem. It can be done by hand, especially if the weeds are kept out the first two years. At the end of the season the dead plants should be removed from their beds.

October or November isn't too soon to

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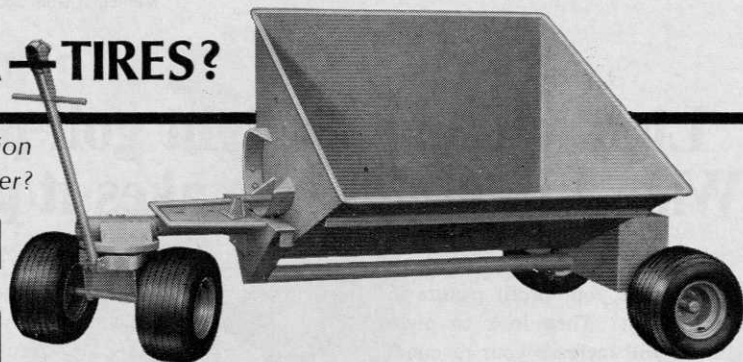
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Coming Events

PGA West Coast Golf Merchandise Show, Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles, California, November 26-29.

22nd Annual Texas Turfgrass Conference, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, December 4-6.

Minnesota GCSA 40th Annual Turf Conference, Normandy Hotel, Minneapolis, Minnesota, December 6-7.

Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association and the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission "The Physical Nature of Soils" symposium, Pfister Hotel, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, December 13-14.

PGA Merchandise Show, Palm Beach Gardens, Lake Park, Florida, January 20-23.

Golf Course Superintendents Conference, San Francisco Hilton, San Francisco, California, February 18-23.

Cornell Turfgrass Conference, New York State College of Agriculture, Ithaca, New York, February 26-29.

Club Managers Convention, Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 5-9. •

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start planning for next year's flower arrangements, especially if a club is starting from scratch. It is advisable to get advice

from a nurseryman before beginning widespread planting.

If you are going to plant from flats, and this is advisable, Gerber strongly suggests that you place your order before Christmas, and no later than New Year's. If you don't give a nurseryman an order this early, there is a chance that you may be disappointed come delivery time. •

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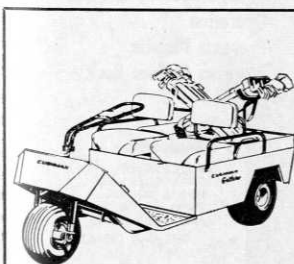
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