

# THE 'Wow'



**U**PON SEEING IT, Randy Allen and Alan Jarvis couldn't believe their eyes. Allen and Jarvis of Pine Lakes Country Club in Myrtle Beach, S.C., were downright dazzled by the carpet-like turfgrass comprising the tees, greens and fairways of Tuscany Reserve Golf Course in Naples, Fla.

"That place is so pretty, it's unbelievable," says Allen, director of golf course maintenance for Burroughs & Chapin Golf Management, which oversees Pine Lakes. "I felt like it was the first time I went to Augusta National."

"Words can't describe that golf course," adds Jarvis, Pine Lakes' certified golf course superintendent. "It's truly remarkable."

Seashore paspalum, a warm-season grass that has been around for centuries, will do that to you.

Allen and Jarvis visited Tuscany Reserve to see the seashore paspalum because the two were considering regrassing their course with the variety.

"We left there thinking we couldn't believe what we just saw," Jarvis says.

J. Bryan Unruh, Ph.D., a turfgrass pro-

fessor from the University of Florida, is not surprised Allen and Jarvis were smitten with seashore paspalum, saying the variety has become increasingly popular in the past 10 years because of its curb appeal.

"People are drawn to the look of seashore paspalum, especially in bermudagrass markets where there's difficulty in getting the greens to stripe up," Unruh says. "Seashore paspalum has really pronounced striping."

Allen and Jarvis went home from Florida and went to work lobbying the club's brass that seashore paspalum would be the perfect choice to regrass Pine Lakes, which was about to undergo a major renovation.

## Planting the seed

Pine Lakes, built in 1927 as the Ocean Forest



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After seeing seashore paspalum, the brass at Pine Lakes Country Club not only believed in it, they wanted it at their course

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR IN CHIEF

Golf Club, was the birthplace of golf in Myrtle Beach's Grand Strand, Allen says. The club changed its name to Pine Lakes in 1944. But as years went by, the 27-hole club fell into disrepair.

Burroughs & Chapin purchased Pine Lakes in 2001. Allen says a major renovation of the club was discussed in 2002 but was shelved when Burroughs & Chapin decided to build another Myrtle Beach golf course, The Members Club at Grande Dunes. Burroughs & Chapin returned to the Pine Lakes project in 2006.

Pine Lakes was one of a handful of courses in Myrtle Beach still using TifGreen 328 bermudagrass greens, Jarvis says. It was assumed the course would regrass with another bermudagrass variety. But one day, while Allen was playing golf at Pine Lakes with his son, Lance, the topic of seashore paspalum came up.

Lance, the superintendent at Woodfin Ridge Golf Club in Boiling Springs, S.C., had previously helped build the May

River Golf Club in Bluffton, S.C., where seashore paspalum was used. Lance was awed by it.

During the round with his dad, Lance said to him, "What kind of grass are you going to use when you renovate the course?"

"Bermudagrass, I guess," Randy replied. "That's about the only choice we have because of our poor water quality."

But when Lance began touting the benefits of seashore paspalum, the elder Allen began listening intently. One of the benefits is seashore paspalum can tolerate poorer water quality, including higher salt levels, than other warm-season grasses.

"Lance planted the seed in my head," Randy says.

Randy then asked Jarvis if he knew anything about seashore paspalum. Jarvis admitted he knew little, so the two began researching it together. Jarvis attended seminars on the subject. He also planted a few plots of seashore paspalum varieties at Pine Lakes to study them.

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## The 'Wow' Factor

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Then in 2006, Allen and Jarvis took the trip to Naples to see seashore paspalum up close.

"After the visit to Tuscany Reserve, both Alan and I went from being comfortable to being excited about using seashore paspalum on our golf course," Allen says.

Others touted seashore paspalum's benefits, including Todd Lowe, an agronomist for the United States Golf Association, who told Allen he had never met a superintendent who changed his course's turfgrass to seashore paspalum from bermudagrass and wanted to go back to bermudagrass.

### 'Is it real?'

Allen and Jarvis picked SeaDwarf, a seashore paspalum variety from Environmental Turf Inc., to regrass the entire course. SeaDwarf is the only dwarf cultivar of seashore paspalum. Its attributes include a bright-green color, a fine texture, a tolerance to a range of mowing heights and that it can be irrigated with varied water sources, including effluent, reclaimed and brackish water.

"Another reason we chose SeaDwarf was because of its drought tolerance," Jarvis says.

Construction on the renovation began in October 2007. The Pine Lakes staff made three applications of Roundup and Fusilade as well as a Basamid application to kill the existing bermudagrass, which was viewed as a weed in the midst of wall-to-wall seashore paspalum.

Most of the course was sprigged with SeaDwarf in May 2008. The greens were sprigged in June. Jarvis says growth took off five weeks after sprigging.

"We were 90 percent grown-in after seven weeks," he says. "It went much faster than we thought."

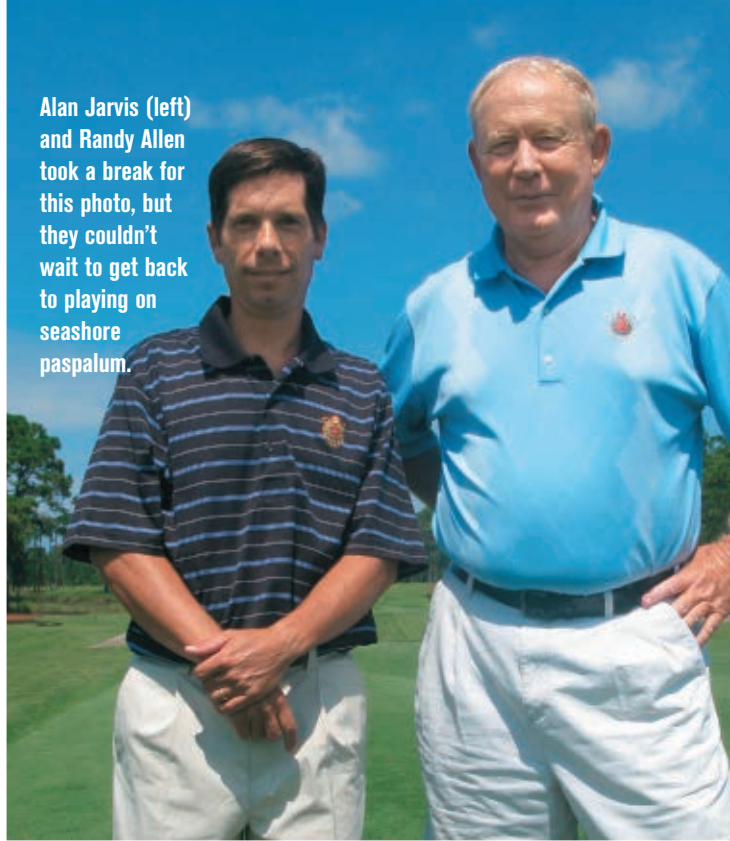
Yellow spots were detected on some fairways a few months after sprigging. Jarvis conducted a soil sample and discovered the areas were manganese deficient. They were spot-treated with manganese and the areas healed.

A benefit of seashore paspalum is it requires less fertilization annually. Through September, Jarvis says the fairways had received about 4 pounds of nitrogen (N) and 4 pounds of phosphorus (K) with some manganese mixed in. The greens required even less fertilizer — about 3 pounds of N and about 6 pounds of K.

Jarvis and Allen are also impressed with seashore paspalum's color and how it holds that color. When the course reopened in March, it hadn't been overseeded, but Jarvis says the course's color would green up in front of one's eyes on warm spring days. Jarvis is also impressed with how seashore paspalum retains its color in the fall for a longer time than bermudagrass.

The turf is also very playable. Craig Schreiner, the golf course architect of the Pine Lakes renovation, says SeaDwarf

Alan Jarvis (left) and Randy Allen took a break for this photo, but they couldn't wait to get back to playing on seashore paspalum.



provides firm but not hard conditions. "In the rough, the ball sits up beautifully," he says. "It's not penal and provides relief."

Jarvis says seashore paspalum can be tough on mowers because the turf can dull mower blades faster than other varieties. He says plant growth regulators can ameliorate this problem, but it's important to keep reels and bed knives sharp.

Jarvis, who previously worked at a course with bentgrass greens, says working with bentgrass has helped him with maintaining seashore paspalum because the varieties have similar maintenance tendencies.

"I'm spending more money to maintain the seashore paspalum," he says. "With the bermudagrass, we mowed it, which is about all we did. I maintain the seashore paspalum more like bentgrass. I use fungicides — preventively and curatively. I spoon-feed the greens."

While Jarvis says seashore paspalum is labor-intensive, it's not as labor-intensive as maintaining bentgrass. Jarvis says he'll spend about the same amount of money on fungicide as he spent for bentgrass. He won't water the seashore paspalum as much, though.

"You don't have to be out there hand-watering all the time," Jarvis says with a thankful grin.

Pine Lakes did oversee the greens this fall with *Poa trivialis*, which is said to transition well even after cold winters.

Jarvis says the word is out about Pine Lakes' renovation — and its new turfgrass. Just like Jarvis and Allen, golfers can't believe their eyes when they see it.

"They ask me, 'Is it real?'" Jarvis says. "They also say, 'It looks like plastic,' or 'It looks like freshly laid carpet.'"

Jarvis understands that seeing is believing. ■