

# GOLF AND FLOWERS DO NOT MIX — OR DO THEY?

By Bill Roberts

Golf and flowers do not mix. Flowers are not conducive to the actual, basic, physical playing of the game in the truest sense. A mis-hit shot should end up in long grass, or in a sand bunker or behind a tree possibly. A mis-hit shot should not end up in a flower bed. Comments from players who have had the misfortune of landing in an area planted with marigolds lend credence to this initial premise. Golf and flowers do not mix.

However, flowers do add to what can be described as the "experience" of golf. While it is a game requiring physical skills and mental discipline, it also affords, in most cases, an enjoyable respite from tension, stress and simple everyday pressures. The experience provides an environment in which the senses are affected, particularly sight. Flowers, therefore, can enhance that experience.

Wallace Staats wrote in an article in "GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT" magazine in October, 1982 that you have to "devote time, money and energy to flowers if you are to succeed. This perspective is valid from soil preparation to full bloom. A standard growing medium is desirable. Experience and observation have shown a 70% sand, 20% peat, 10% vermiculite material, settled to a full eight inch depth to be a manageable root zone which provides excellent drainage and adequate moisture and nutrient retention capabilities. "Good old black dirt" can create more problems than necessary over the long term.

This soil medium can be tilled each year prior to planting to relieve the thin layer of surface compaction that can result from rainfall and irrigation. This tilling operation also provides an opportunity to incorporate nutrients into the root zone. A familiar 6-2-0 material is appropriate at pre-planting time. Light applications of a 10-10-10 material can then be used throughout the season as needed.

Planning and budget flexibility can affect irrigation, an essential aspect of any flower operation, as well. "Spray type" irrigation, with control independent of large area turf sprinklers, will minimize light surface compaction thereby insuring sufficient oxygen-carbon dioxide exchange from and into the root zone. Large volume, high pressure irrigation heads can result in plant breakage, will maximize disease pressure and are virtually useless for frost control in addition to wasting significant amounts of water.

With proper field preparation completed, literally thousands of varieties of flowering plants are available and selection will depend on such factors as:

- 1.) length of growing season — tulips, pansies, dianthus and chrysanthemums can be used to lengthen a relatively short growing season,
- 2.) climatic factors — average rainfall, average temperature, humidity,
- 3.) effect desired — mass color, intensity of color, blends, contrasts,
- 4.) budget — how extensive the planting, newer hybrid varieties versus older types,
- 5.) personal choice — up to the individual club or facility but final specific decisions are most appropriately left to the Golf Course Superintendent because he is most in touch with the golf course. That is, in terms of conditions for growing, what areas planted will affect play and so on. The Golf Course Superintendent sees the golf course from all angles, is versed through education and/or experience in landscape management and has the greatest vested interest.

As mentioned, a variety of species including numerous varieties of annual flowers are available. Materials that should be considered are allysum, pansies, snapdragons, celosia, verbena, vinca, zinnia, geranium, impatiens, marigold, canna lily, salvia and

petunia. These annual plants provide a flexibility that would be unattainable with perennials or flowering ornamentals. Designs can be changed from one season to the next using different materials.

Additionally, design may vary from very defined, formal patterns to the more "free-flowing" types. Contrasts, such as reds and yellows, reds and whites and golds and silvers, are particularly effective in drawing or pulling attention while blends, such as reds, pinks and salmon are more subtle. However, formal or free-flowing, contrast or blend, all enhance the "experience" on the golf course.

Flowers in pots, with foliage such as spikes or vinca vine, can be used for a variety of needs including tee markers for special golf events or as a subtle type of traffic control around buildings or lawn areas. Hanging baskets are particularly effective in "toning down" or softening structures.

Once again, the uses of annual flowers are numerous and include highlighting of out of play areas, backdropping or accenting of greens, bordering for definition and traffic control and, in general, simply adding to the visual stimulation and "experience" of a golfer as he makes his way around the golf course. With forethought and proper execution, flowers, which, again, do not mix with the actual playing of the game of golf, can, at least, add to the enjoyment of that venture and serve some practical functions as well.

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