

Condos in Sunriver: Oregon's Recreational Mecca Braces for Major Growth

Nestled in the shadow of the Three Sisters mountain range and the inviting ski slopes of Mt. Bachelor, are Quelah and Alberello. The two posh condominium complexes in the Sunriver resort area are harbingers of only the beginning of a boom in growth for this central Oregon area.

by Maureen Hrehocik, managing editor

Oregon is quickly changing from a lumber capitol to a recreation mecca. More and more condos will be built to accommodate the increasing influx of tourists.

Marvin Mix, in charge of landscape maintenance at Quelah, and Mike Dawkins, his counterpart at Alberello, both predict that the Sunriver area will explode in growth within the next few years.

"It's really the only growth going on in Central Oregon," says Mix.

A road has been completed from Sunriver that cuts about 45 minutes traveling time off getting to Mt. Bachelor, one of the premiere skiing mountains in the Northwest. It has opened the floodgates for skiers. The entire Sunriver area boasts about any sport you could be interested in—golf, tennis, rafting, canoeing, horseback riding and hiking.

Both Mix and Dawkins share some of the same landscape concerns. Both Quelah and Alberello are relatively new developments (especially Alberello).

They both have growing pains. Couple that with the extreme weather fluctuations of Central Oregon and you have one of the more challenging landscape situations in the country.

Quelah

Marvin Mix got the maintenance contract to the 15-acre Quelah complex only a year ago.

He inherited a headache.

Mix is the owner of Marvin's Gardens, a private firm specializing in large, commercial landscaping projects. He also has a retail garden center and landscape architects and construction crews available to clients

who would like them. Marvin Gardens has also branched out into interiorscaping.

Landscaping, maintenance and the nursery each make up about 1/3 of his business. Mix also has the maintenance contract to Tennis Village, another Sunriver complex.

Quelah is a six-year-old, 92-unit complex. The last phase was completed a year-and-a-half ago, with an additional two phases planned.

Mix's biggest initial challenge at Quelah was the irrigation system. It was badly maintained with most of the lines lying bare on top of the dirt. The systems in all four phases were different.

"We redid the whole system," says Mix. "We had one good system out of those four."

Mix's next order of business was to plant \$10,000 worth of shrubs once the irrigation work was done.

Tricky weather

The weather provides a real challenge

Mike Dawkins, landscape manager at Alberello, is a strong proponent of native plants and drip irrigation for his complex.



for landscapers in Central Oregon. Thirty-one degree nights in August are nothing out of the ordinary.

More often than not, we have a freeze every month of the year," explains Mix. "September is the first freeze and by November we have snow."

The snow can last until April. Ice damage on turf can be high. Mix's growing season is from April to October.

Quelah's lawns are fertilized four times a year. The soil is a sandy pumice that leaches nutrients readily. Mix uses a 12-12-12 fertilizing mixture.

"If I need a quick green-up I add ammonium nitrate."

Mowing on the combination bluegrass perennial rye lawns is done every week with Toro and Honda mowers.

Two of Mix's 40 employees put in about 10-12 hours a week maintaining Quelah.

Most of the units are rentals. The development only has four permanent residents. Because of the high number of transient residents, Mix says vandalism is high.

"People come in and fool with the controls on the sprinkler systems and try to reset them. With the turnover in guests, this happens often."

Mix is a great believer in the color flowers can provide. Among the native kinnikinnick groundcover, he uses perennials and wildflowers.

"I like staying with natural, indigenous plants," reports Mix. He has more perennials included in his 1985 landscaping plan.

"This year I'm just trying to get everything greened-up and up to a respectable level. Next year, we'll



Residents of Quelah get a spectacular view of Mt. Bachelor and the surrounding Sunriver resort area.



Native **poppies** provide color in Marvin Mix's landscape plan for Quelah.

start refining things."

Alberello

Don't mention the word "bark" to Mike Dawkins.

The landscape maintenance manager at the brand new Alberello condos will grimace.

"You mention low maintenance and native landscaping and most contractors (around here) think of junipers and bark."

Not Mike Dawkins.

He is a firm believer that native doesn't have to be synonymous with stark. Native flowers and shrubs are an integral part of his landscape designs. Using drip irrigation is also high on the list of priorities.

Dawkins, 38, is one of three partners in Cascade Garden Center. The company has 30 clients, mainly residential. Most are landscape design cli-

ents, not maintenance. In fact, the barely year-old Alberello is his only townhouse/condo maintenance contract. Only 10 of its 26 units are completed. The rest are currently being built. Alberello has two permanent residents. Most units are vacation homes; the others vacation rentals. Units start at \$145,000.

Each unit has its own courtyard which is completely irrigated.

Dawkins can't say enough about drip irrigation. He uses Microjets which are most widely used in citrus grove irrigation.

"The way the water is put out, it's just like a slow, soaking rain," explains Dawkins, "and it usually costs about 1/4 of what traditional systems cost to run. That leaves me more money for plants."

Dawkins also likes the ease of installing drip systems.

"I think cost and ignorance are the main reasons why more people don't use it (drip)."

Dawkins used Fortress fine fescue in the area between the residences and the golf course onto which Alberello abutts.

"It's a low maintenance grass that blends well into the rough of the golf course," he says.

Chipmunks are a major problem at Alberello and Quelah. Situated in the Deschutes National Forest, the area is full of them. They find Dawkins' succulent plants a particular treat.

"They're a real problem and we have to design what we plant around the critters."

Like Mix, lack of a growing season is also a problem for Dawkins.

He uses a lot of native kinnikinnick

groundcover to "cement" the earth. Potentilla, another native flowering deciduous shrub, is used extensively. Beds of daffodils and rambling roses are also used for color.

An alpine garden is in the works for a slope on one side of the tennis courts. Three hundred plants from as far away as South Africa, Asia and the Himalayas, will provide a stunning focal point on the slope facing the entrance to the complex.

"The different types of plants will provide different color breaks and will extend the blooming season. The alpine plants will also keep with the natural setting of the woods and rocks."

Penstemmons, saponaria, phlox, campanula, sedum and saxifraga will be part of the garden.

Dawkins, a bird lover, said he plants a lot of berry-bearing bushes such as choke cherries, beech plum, viburnum and manzanita.

Dawkins has been a full-time landscaper since age 17. He grew up on a golf course surrounded by a housing development his father owned. He did the landscaping there and his career as a professional landscaper was launched.

He majored in biology with an emphasis in botany at Southern Oregon State. He's lived in the Sunriver area seven years.

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Dawkins and his partners are optimistic about the area's growth. Business has been so good, Cascade Gardens usually will not maintain a development it didn't design. **WT&T**