

THE RESORT BOOM

Two factors are spawning a growing market for resort living. They're both a result of a resurging economy.

First, it's becoming financially easier for families to take winter vacations and get away from the colder climes. Second, financial institutions are seeing this burgeoning market and sinking their reserves into resort construction.

The following three articles (*Grand Champions*, *Sea Pines*, and *Horseshoe Bay*) illustrate exactly how landscape construction and management is handled at the nation's leading resorts.

Though the financial rewards are great, managing the landscapes in this sector of the industry is not easy, as the following three profiles indicate.



An artist's rendering of what the Grand Champions Resort will look like upon completion late this year.

GOING ALL OUT

European design and lots of irrigation make the new Grand Champions Resort in Palm Springs a haven for travelers who want to escape winter.

Rae Price goes all out to bring authenticity to his landscapes. Even when that means visiting Europe.

Price, senior principal of Peridian Inc., Irvine, Calif., traveled to Spain to capture the Mediterranean look at the new Grand Champions resort in Palm Springs.

During the trip, Price and architect Tom McKinsey researched resorts throughout Spain. The result is a white plaster main building which provides stark contrast to the outside terraces flowing with bougainviella.

The landscape—concentrated groves of date palms, grapefruit, and olive trees—emphasizes the Mediterranean flavor. Price estimates he has used 150 30-foot date palms, 100 olive trees, and 75 mature grapefruit trees.

Price discovered a different attitude among the Spaniards about landscaping. "Their attention to detail and maintenance is rather unique," Price explains. "Many places have full-time resident gardeners making sure it's always presentable."

Price brought back that attitude along with his knowledge of Mediterranean landscapes. He's paying close attention to details as he puts the finishing touches on the ritzy resort, due to open Nov. 14.

The Palm Springs site is the first of four Grand Champions resorts being built. Peridian is also building one in the British Virginian Islands. The other

resorts will be located in Hawaii and Spain. Sites for more resorts have already been pinpointed.

The Palm Springs resort consists of four parts. Although Price is using the same materials throughout the 15-acre site, each area is distinct.

First is the main hotel complex. Price describes it as a "low-profile hotel," with only five stories. He compares it with the Beverly Hills Hotel or Boca Raton in Florida.

The Villa area consists of five, four-unit buildings with one or two bedrooms in each. The Villas have a central courtyard and patio jacuzzi/spa area. They are serviced by the main hotel.

The Grand Champions Club is a private club and restaurant facility.

The club has one celebrity tennis court surrounded by a dining area. Members can play on seven concrete tennis courts, two clay courts, or two grass courts. "We wanted to provide variety for our members," Price says. "The lawn courts will be a pleasant surface in the desert heat."

Grand Champions Club uses a formal European design. Mature grapefruit trees, trunks painted white to protect them from sunburn, are planted in matched pairs. Hedges—including boxwood, myrtle, and privet—and flowers—primarily vibrantly-colored petunias—round out the landscape. Price travelled to Mexico for paving materials.

The fourth area of the resort is the 10,000-seat sunken tennis stadium, which will be home to the

LANDSCAPE PROFILE



Rae Price travelled to Spain to research resorts before beginning work on the Grand Champions in Palm Springs.

Pilot Pen Classic in February.

A 36-hole championship golf course, being built by the city of Indian Wells, will be nestled into the resort. The course is a Ted Robinson design.

The suffocating heat last summer forced Price's crew of six to start work at 4:30 a.m. Record-breaking temperatures of up to 117 degrees also placed a lot of stress on plant materials, making transplants difficult.

Because of the heat, about 12 of the 15 acres are irrigated. Still, to further protect the trees, Price's staff placed "bubblers" at the base of each tree.

"We got about 25 percent of our plant materials from southern California nurseries so we wouldn't have a problem with their acclimation to the heat," Price says.

But by the time Grand Champions opens, the mercury should have fallen to normal levels. The resort is intended to be a luxurious escape for people fending off the approaching winter blues.

WT&T

TURBULENT SEA PINES

From lawsuits to hurricanes, the landscape at Sea Pines Resort on Hilton Head Island has nonetheless withstood the test of time.

The headline in the *Savannah Morning News* reads: **Charles Fraser Files 3 Lawsuits Against Sea Pines' Owners.** Those who live on Hilton Head Island aren't surprised.

It's not the first time Fraser, founder and developer of Sea Pines resort area, has sued. The battle began in 1983 when Sea Pines area merged with the Hilton Head Co. and was sold the next year to Rolyat, a south Florida lending institution.

During the Governors' Conference in August, the island tried to cover up \$100 million in lawsuit claims filed during an eight-month period.

The suits involve property sales and corporate decisions affecting almost half of the island's 25,000 acres.

Sea Pines, the island's oldest resort, (planning began in 1950) has 5,280 acres of developed property. But Gale Smyly, Sea Pines' landscaping director, hasn't seen his million-dollar budget suffer because of the debates.

The resort has, however, admittedly suffered from this summer's drought and three hard winters in a row. But only a true expert could pick out any flaws in Sea Pines' picturesque setting at the tip of Hilton Head Island.



Perhaps the most recognized part of Hilton Head Island is "Liberty Oak," with Harbour Town's candy-striped lighthouse in the background.

The highest standards

"In the resort industry, you have to do a lot of volume to turn a profit," says Smyly, who has been with the company for 14 years. "Particularly here on Hilton Head Island, you have to have a very high standard for the final product—from your landscape management to fine china."

Despite his respect for the current management, Smyly remains in awe of Fraser, the man who at age 21 had a vision of Sea Pines as a thriving resort.

Pointing to perhaps the most recognized part of the island, the large oak tree called "Liberty Oak," with Harbour Town's candy-striped lighthouse in its background, Smyly explains that it took an extra \$60,000 from Fraser to save the tree when the harbor was developed.

"Charles Fraser had a photographic, projective mind," Smyly says. "The way the buildings are set in conjunction with the landscape...there's no negotiation there between man and nature. It all just comes together."

And it's Smyly's job to keep it together. During the resort season, which runs from March 1 to Sept. 1, Smyly and his summer staff of 48 (it dwindles to about 25 in the winter) are responsible for more than 300 acres: villa properties, clubhouses, the Hilton Head Inn, restaurants, and Harbour Town village.

Villa management produces revenue which supplements the regular budget. But Smyly calls it a thankless job. "There are 5,000 property owners who all have their own green thumbs and their own direction to follow," he says.

The four golf courses in Sea Pines are maintained by others although Smyly occasionally helps out a superintendent. (One time, his crew had seven days to plant 1,000 azaleas on a course before a big tournament.)

Varieties of turf

Although Charles Fraser is the vision behind the resort, landscape architect Robert Marvin designed many of the areas. The Greenery, a local landscape contractor, did most of the original installations.

Turf on the island consists of the three major warm-season varieties: hybrid bermudagrass, centipede, and St. Augustine. "Centipede is a hardy grass," explains Smyly. "The golf courses use bermuda for its aesthetic

value, and St. Augustine grows well under the shade of the large oak trees."

Besides oaks and live oaks, characterized by willowy branches drooping over roads, the island's most abundant trees are palms. Ornamental pampas grass adds a tropical look to many of the villas. It also helps naturally control erosion.

Some native plant materials haven't survived the recent harsh

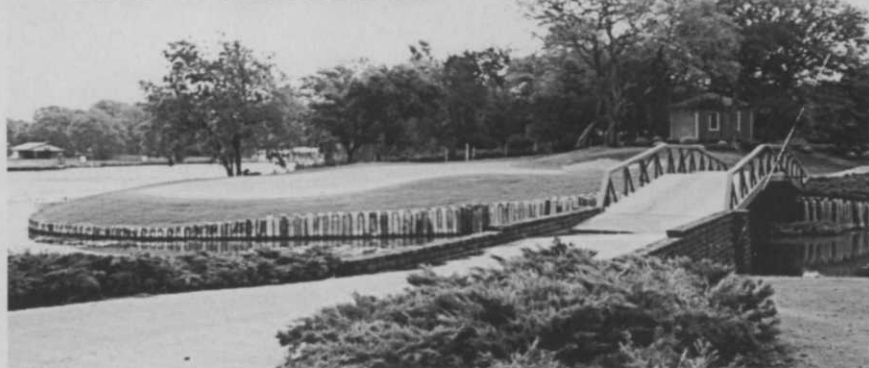
winters. "We've had to redirect our thinking to late-blooming materials," says Smyly.

Unusual weather still doesn't weigh as heavily on Smyly's mind as does the threat of a hurricane. Hurricane David in 1979 forced evacuation of the island. "It's like Russian roulette," he says.

"Eventually it's going to happen."

—Heide Aungst

A COOL BREEZE IN TEXAS



One of the reasons for the popularity of Horseshoe Bay is the ample water supply, a pleasant change from other Southwestern resorts. The 16th hole at Applerock, one of three courses at the resort, provides a picturesque setting.

Draw a mental image of south central Texas. Include cacti, tumble weed, dust, and pancake-flat prairie stretching as far as the eye can see.

But some Texans just north of Austin have a secret oasis—a place that looks more like Eden than Tombstone Gulch. Tucked into 50 miles of rolling, fertile green hills is a series of sparkling channel lakes, beginning with Lake Austin and ending with Lyndon B. Johnson Lake in Marble Falls. Alongside "Lake LBJ," the striking beauty of this unexpected hill country reaches its pinnacle at Horseshoe Bay Country Club (HBCC) Resort, where you can follow roads like "Bay West," and "Smuggler's Cove."

"The hills and the lakes definitely set us apart from most Southwestern resorts," says Alan Houdek, the HBCC director of golf course and amenity grounds maintenance. "But we have some other things we're proud of here that keep people coming back year after year."

When HBCC opened in 1971 on

what was previously the Coca-Cola Ranch, it was primarily a yacht club, marina, and riding stables. Today, additions include 14 tennis courts (four under a dome) and 54 golf holes. The 4,600-acre resort is the largest Robert Trent Jones-designed complex in the continental United States.

And golf is the drawing card. "Our primary clientele are the retirees who own homes here," Houdek says. "They live here because of the golf."

Another factor is the resort's aesthetic appeal—the kind of appeal that involves hard work and expert care. Owner Norman Hurd favors Oriental influences in the landscape: statues, fountains, and sculptured ornamentals.

Torrid Texas winters

This year is Houdek's 13th at HBCC. He's experienced some challenges the past few years.

Two years—1984 and 1985—were entirely out of character for south central Texas' climate. Both years,

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THE LEADER IN INNOVATION

LANDSCAPE PROFILE *continued*



Alan Houdek maintains his Penncross bentgrass greens at $\frac{5}{32}$ -inch.

brutal winter temperatures caused damaging freezes. "In '84, we had about two weeks of sub-20's temperatures," Houdek remembers. "The next winter wasn't quite as bad, but between the two, we lost all of our 50-foot palm trees."

Each of the three courses has at least 10 holes with water hazards. The tees are Tifdwarf bermuda, the

that draw people to Horseshoe Bay. Houdek says that he has applied 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ pounds of Bayleton per acre every three weeks during the warm season for the past three years, and it has kept dollar spot from being "much of an issue."

A fast fungicide

The primary disease, Houdek says, is brown patch. "It's just a predictable, consistent disease in this part of the country from May through October," he says. "There are a number of chemicals with comparable prices that can control it, but Dyrene fungicide is the fastest I've tried."

He alternates the Dyrene with Scotts Fluid Fungicide, which also gives him satisfactory results.

Houdek is thankful for the independence his job at Horseshoe Bay gives him. "We're privately owned, and I prefer it that way," he says. "We care about the members' opinions, but we still get the pride of knowing it's our course done our way."

"I run a pretty tight ship, and I know the owner is happy with what his money is getting him."

Houdek predicts almost 100,000 rounds next year. Within 10 years, he predicts the resort to be within Austin's rapidly expanding boundaries. That means the number of retirement and second homes around Horseshoe Bay will multiply rapidly.

"And then," he says, "the secret will be out." **WT&T**

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—Alan Houdek
Horseshoe Bay C.C.

fairways Tifway bermuda, and the greens Penncross bentgrass maintained at $\frac{5}{32}$ of an inch.

"We were one of the first to use Penncross in this part of the country," Houdek says. "For quite some time, we were the most southerly course in the nation using it."

Houdek controls a light grub problem by applying Oftanol insecticide once a year.

The more difficult problems are turf diseases associated with the same weather conditions—moist lake air and balmy temperatures—