

A new hazard to avoid on the links

■ Real estate and golf course developers are giving new meaning to the phrase: "playing in your own back yard."

It is becoming increasingly common to see private golf courses being designed around housing communities, stirring changes in both the way we play and the way we live.

National Golf Foundation figures show that in 1985, 39 percent of the nation's 13,000 golf courses were private, but this is changing. "Golf courses can convert marginal land into prime land," John Rooney, a professor at Oklahoma State University, said in a *Wall Street Journal* article.

Gerald Barton, CEO of Landmark Land Co., a leading developer of golf communities, echoes the sentiments of many would-be homeowners. "I've never hit a golf ball, and I don't know anything about the game," he says. "But I'd like to live on a golf course."

Golf legend Jack Nicklaus has also gotten in on the act. A 3½-year partnership with Tampa businessman J. Robert Sierra has led to a number of these communities, including six presently in the works. All include high-priced private housing built around a Nicklaus-designed course.

Work began on one of these projects, the Country Club of the South near Atlanta, last year. The 800-acre, 600-family community, built around a 200-acre golf course, will be walled or fenced, with 24-hour security.

Although the golf course is expected to be the loss leader, profits from the land sale will more than make up for it. The total project cost is estimated at \$45 million, with projected property sales of \$78 million. Of the 200 lots in the first-lot phase, 165 have sold. Sierra expects the project to take eight years to sell out.

The natives are restless and growing

■ Native wildflower gardens are sprouting up around homes across the country. Homeowners are taking advantage of a wide range of American wildflower and shrub species with texture, color, size and shape to match anything from around the world.

"Until recently, nurseries, and garden centers didn't carry many native species; and to landscape architects, using native species was a novel idea," says Leo Collins of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).

This new American revolution is still in its infancy, though. About 80 percent of all nursery and garden material available in the TVA area is still exotic. But, Collins says, wholesalers and retailers are beginning to adjust to consumer changes.

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