

PROJECT PORTFOLIO

A SCRAPBOOK OF DESIGN/BUILD OVERHAULS

Hilltop haven

THE MISSION

Create the epitome of Tuscan ambiance with Old World charm.

The landscape of this 65,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse, situated on a Central Florida hilltop and overlooking the residential community it serves, features 300 trees, 3,500 shrubs, 8,700 groundcovers, 2,800 annuals and 71,000 sq. ft. of turf. Austin Outdoor, based in Bunnell, FL, dedicated more than 10,000 hours to the project.

To create the feel of a property that has been here for generations, the team, led by Brian Wester, installed mature plant material. This was a challenge, because the landscape went beyond the perimeter of the building — with courtyards and niches at every turn. The tight working environment was overcome by precise placement, using a 100-ton crane.

There was one other major obstacle, notes Wester, who was district manager at the time of installation but has since been promoted to the Southeast regional vice president for Yellowstone Landscape Group, Austin Outdoor's parent company: the strict water restrictions the team faced in light of the site's sandy soil conditions. To compensate, they used drought-tolerant, native plants and drip irrigation.

Austin Outdoor did all the installation work on the \$1.12 million project, except for lighting, water features, hardscapes and parking.



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PHOTOS COURTESY: (1-3, 6) MSI DESIGN; (4) ALEX SHELVER; (5) AUSTIN OUTDOOR; (7) JOSHUA METZGER

THE WORK

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1 | A thing of beauty. The clubhouse is the heart of this community, overlooking two lakes. The owner made sure that much of the natural beauty of the surrounding environment was highlighted, while creating an atmosphere reminiscent of Tuscany.

2 | Perfect placement. An 100-ton crane was used to install the field-grown oaks, including an 18-in. caliper with a 15-ft. spread and 25 ft. tall — no small feat when working in the tight spaces as the courtyards offered.

3 | Italian renaissance. The Tuscan ambiance was achieved through the use of Italian-style plant material, including tall Italian Cypress, drifty Mexican Sage, stately Black Olive trees and flowering Rosemary.

4 | Smart irrigation. Austin Outdoor installed more than 7 miles of dripline, using the nearby lake as the water source. In total, more than 3,000 hours were devoted to the irrigation installation.

5 | Water conservation. Native, drought-tolerant plants include blue Plumbago, trailing Lantana and wispy Fakahatchee grass.

6 | Lots of pots. Potted plants were an important theme element. But moving and arranging more than 100 pots was sometimes a challenge during the process.

7 | Turf choices. The 4-acre site features Bahia grass and Zoysia grass. A full-time crew of eight, plus Wester, worked for nearly 18 months to complete the landscape installation.

Austin Outdoor is a horticultural organization dedicated to creating, building and maintaining sustainable landscapes. This particular installation garnered a 2010 Environmental Improvement Grand Award from the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET). For more information, visit AustinOutdoor.net.