

# Edward C. “Ted” Horton

## 2008 Green Section Award Recipient

Right:  
Ted Horton  
is known for  
his effective  
leadership, and  
he has been a  
strong advocate  
for making golf  
courses more  
environmentally  
friendly.

Below:  
Ted Horton  
(right) and  
Iain Struge,  
superintendent  
at Hidden Valley  
G.C. in Norco,  
California.



Wherever he has gone in his 40-plus years of service to the game of golf, Edward “Ted” Horton has been a leader who has always made a significant mark. If asked to describe him, you would include words such as helpful, productive, determined, thoughtful, practical, welcoming, and a steward of the environment and the game.

Born and schooled in Canada, Ted received a degree in agricultural biology from McGill University in Montreal and went on to obtain a degree in turfgrass science and management from the University of Massachusetts.

As a golf course superintendent, Ted broke on the scene in 1967, taking the reins of the hallowed 36-hole Winged Foot Golf Club beginning at the age of 23 and staying for another 12 years. He was the mastermind of what later was called “The Massacre at Winged Foot” in the aftermath of the 1974 U.S. Open Championship. Slick greens, demanding roughs, and dry conditions produced a winning score of 7 over par and an average round of 76.99 strokes. Interestingly, Horton was the first golf course superintendent in a major event to use out-front rotary mowers to groom the roughs, rather than the traditional “reel blitzers” that tended to lay the grass down. The rotary units made the roughs the thickest and most difficult ever seen, and thereafter all golf courses have used out-front rotary mowers for rough maintenance.

In 1980, Ted moved across town, where he supervised and revitalized the 45-hole Westchester C.C. for 11 years as superintendent. Despite dealing with an outdated irrigation system and other infrastructure problems, Ted instituted a triplex mowing program for the fairways, adjusted cultural practices across the board, and in the process transformed the condition of the course. While there, he hosted 12 PGA Tour stops and many other events.

After leaving Westchester C.C. in 1991, Ted spent two years working as the vice-president of agronomy of a club management company. There he managed budgets and agronomic programs for 13 golf courses from Pennsylvania to Florida; he was involved in the acquisition, reno-



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vation, and staffing of three new properties; and he implemented a training course for employees.

Next he went on to serve an eight-year stint as vice-president for resource management for the Pebble Beach Company. Responsibilities included the maintenance of five golf courses; management of all resort vehicles, golf carts, and property servicing equipment; 17-Mile Drive; forestry; ecology; open space and nursery operations; 25 miles of equestrian and walking trails; dunes and seashore restoration; and a multitude of environmental projects. While there, Ted had major responsibilities for the 1999 USGA Men's Amateur Championship and the 2000 U.S. Open Championship. In his 33 years at Winged Foot, Westchester, and Pebble Beach, Ted has supervised course setups for five USGA championships and 28 PGA Tour events.

Since leaving Pebble Beach in 2001, Ted has founded the California Golf Course Owners Association and now serves as its executive director. This role has had a more national impact, too, with biannual meetings that bring together agronomists from many club management companies from around the country. The purpose of the organization is to lead a cooperative effort for all of their agronomists to share information and build customer service. He also has established a consulting company and is involved in conducting seminars for academic institutions and other organizations.

But beyond his official duties, Ted has been an effective leader and negotiator wherever he has gone. In the early 1980s during a severe drought, Ted was instrumental in negotiating with water authorities to limit water use restrictions on golf courses in the New York metropolitan area. While at Westchester he also negotiated with more than 250 union employees. For the good of the game and the turfgrass industry, Ted has sat on dozens of committees having to do with all facets of golf and turf management. For example, he participates in the Environmental Horticultural Science Department Advisory Council at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, the President's Advisory Commission on Agriculture and Natural Resources for the University of California Berkeley, the Agriculture Advisory Council for the University of California Riverside, and the California Alliance for Golf, to name a few.

Ted has been a strong and effective advocate of making golf courses more environmentally

friendly, and he has earned several national and regional awards for his efforts. He sits on many committees having to do with golf and the environment, and he has been a key organizer for several national conferences having to do with water, pesticide use, and wildlife. While at the Pebble Beach properties, Ted guided the Links at Spanish Bay through the process of obtaining certification from the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, the first fully Audubon certified facility in California. Included among his environmental awards are the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's President's Award for Environmental Leadership, *Golf Digest* magazine's Environmental Leader in Golf Award, the California EPA IPM Innovator's Award, and the California Golf Writers' Award for Environmental Leadership.

Despite his many remarkable achievements, there's a lot more about Ted than golf. He has served on many community boards and committees, including service on the Drought Emergency Task Force for Westchester County, New York; vice-president of the Monterey Bay Area Council Executive Board; and the Boy Scouts of America, where he served for 12 years and received the BSA Council's highest award for volunteers, the Silver Beaver Award. He has also made it a point to put his family first. Ted, wife Nancy, and sons Tim and Chris are very close, and although the boys are on their own now, they see each other frequently. Ted and Nancy live in Canyon Lake, California, and, not surprisingly, are immersed in family, church, community . . . and golf.

Ted Horton's achievements are broad in scope and importance, and in our view he is an incredibly deserving recipient of the 2008 USGA Green Section Award.



Steve Smyers, a USGA Executive Committee member, presented Ted Horton with the 2008 USGA Green Section Award at the Golf Industry Show held in Orlando, Florida.