

# Save Water While Increasing Appeal

The Tournament Players Club at Summerlin, Las Vegas, Nevada, goes natural.

BY JOSHUA CONWAY



The Tournament Players Club at Summerlin lowered its water consumption, reduced its maintenance, and increased visual appeal by converting a sizable area to a desert garden.

Water is perhaps our most valuable natural resource, and careful steps must be taken to ensure its continued availability. Golf courses are often criticized for the large amounts of water they use as part of their turf care operations, and, as a result, water conservation projects are often given priority. The Tournament Players Club at Summerlin, a private 18-hole club located in Las Vegas, Nevada, is no exception. Its

location in a desert ecosystem makes it especially scrutinized in the local community.

To reduce water consumption, a 7,500-square-foot area of sheep's fescue adjacent to the 6th hole was chosen for naturalization. Golf course superintendent Dale Hahn selected this project to reduce water consumption and convert an unsightly grass area into a more aesthetically pleasing garden. To achieve these goals, he converted the area into

a low-water-use desert garden that serves as an educational resource for members, informing them about the variety of native plants that could be found on and around the course.

The first step in implementing this project was to cap the existing irrigation lines in the section chosen for naturalization, which would cause the grass to dry out and die. The dead grass and associated organic matter were then removed, and the area was



Using some plants from other sections of the property, this project was completed for under \$3,000 and will result in a labor and water usage saving of over \$2,000 per year.

cleaned down to bare soil. Three hundred plants were transplanted into the area, representing 18 species of desert plants present in the surrounding ecosystem. Once the plants were in place, desert rock and soil were hauled in from other parts of the property and spread over the entire garden area. Labels were placed near the plants, allowing members and their guests to learn about the different plants that were selected for the garden. The labels were professionally made and included the common names and Latin names of the plants in the garden.

The resulting desert garden requires some occasional hand-watering and weeding, but it is considerably less expensive to manage than the sheep's fescue, both in terms of man-hours and associated materials such as fertilizer, chemicals, and fuel. Since the plants chosen for the garden are native desert

plants, they are better suited to the dry desert climate and require much less water. The low-maintenance garden requires only 10 percent of the man-hours that were needed to maintain the fescue, and it will also result in a saving of approximately half a million gallons of water per year.

Many of the plants selected will flower in the spring, adding aesthetic appeal to the golf course while at the same time providing nectar for hummingbirds. The total cost of the project, including labor, was under \$3,000, and it will result in a saving of more than \$2,000 per year, including reduced labor and water use. Many of the plants used in the project were transplanted from other portions of the property, which helped to keep the cost of the project low.

According to Hahn, response to the project has been very favorable, and,

considering all of the environmental factors, the project has been a home run. Plans are underway to expand the project in the future.

Members and guests were kept apprised of the project through photos and information placed on the bulletin boards in the men's and women's locker rooms, as well as in the display that the TPC at Summerlin uses to inform members about the projects undertaken as part of the club's membership in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses.

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