



Stoneleigh GC superintendent Rohan Somers displays the basic elements of the club's new bokashi composting program. Photo courtesy of Rohan Somers

How Stoneleigh's garden grows

When Rohan Somers, the GCSAA Class A superintendent at Stoneleigh Golf Club in Round Hill, Va., got the message that the club's management had decided to implement a zero food waste program, he found that it was "no big deal" to go with the, uh, sludge.

Somers says the club views the new zero food waste program as a natural extension of its participation in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

"Everybody's behind it at the club," he says. "Honestly, there's not that much work involved — a couple of hours of work from different departments, and it was up and running."

According to Damon DeVito, managing director of Affinity Management which operates the facility, Stoneleigh is the first private club in the Mid-Atlantic region to commit to a zero food waste initiative and has chosen to implement an innovative type of fermentation composting called bokashi. Bokashi is a composting practice that uses fermentation to break down all food scraps — including meat and dairy — in less than half the time of conventional composting.

"Between member dining, golf outings and weddings, Stoneleigh generates literally tons of food waste annually," DeVito says. "With membership and the numbers of weddings and charitable golf outings on track to double this year, serving those groups generates a lot of waste."

DeVito estimates Stoneleigh's adoption of the zero food waste initiative will divert more than 1.6 tons of food waste annually from the landfill to the club's new herb and vegetable garden. With more than 4,400 private clubs in the U.S., DeVito says, if every country club were to follow Stoneleigh's lead, an estimated 13,000 tons of waste could be recycled.

"It's a phenomenal way for a small business to make a difference," he adds.

For Somers, the process began with the pur-

chase of two 50-gallon plastic trash containers from Home Depot, which he and his crew rigged with spigots near the bottom for the draining of excess moisture during the breakdown of the food waste. An area near the kitchen's outdoor dumpster was cleared, and the containers were set onto pallets to raise them off the ground. The location makes it easy for kitchen staff to transfer the food waste to the containers every day.

Each day's waste is layered with the bokashi — a mix of lactobacilli, fungi yeast and phototropic bacilli — and wheat bran. The microorganisms and the fiber are what speed the breakdown and allow for the composting of meat and dairy waste without unpleasant odors that attract pests and repel golfers.

"The dumpster actually smells worse," Somers admits.

When a container is full, Somers' crew pours the sludge onto a tarp, covers it with another tarp and eventually applies the resulting rich humus to the kitchen garden. While Somers doesn't foresee being able to generate enough compost to fertilize the golf course, he does expect to eventually expand applications to the club's flower beds. The liquid that is drained from the containers during fermentation also gets put to good use down the clubhouse plumbing as a natural drain cleaner, Somers adds.

"It's a new concept for all of us," he says, "but it's a great program and we're excited and proud to be doing it."

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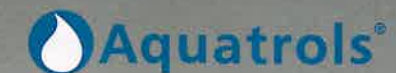
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NEWS & notes

Sweden's Forsgårdens Golf Club recently became the first club in the world to be re-certified by the Golf Environment Organization. Recognizing the significance of the club's achievement, GEO board member Gordon Shepherd stated, "I have seen landmark points in time, when something significant demonstrates a clear path to a more sustainable future. This is one of those moments." Ole Riger-Kusk, an independent verifier accredited by GEO, conducted the initial certification and the re-certification and found that Forsgårdens upheld and strengthened a solid environmental performance, making more improvements in the three years since becoming GEO certified, especially around landscape and ecosystems, energy and resource conservation, waste management, and also more communications with authorities and the surrounding community.

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The Bright Stuff

A South Carolina golf club in peril turned to Nick Bright. He didn't disappoint.

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