

Moody Gardens Golf Course Galveston Island, Texas

Superintendent
Steve Yarotsky

Architect
Jacobsen Hardy Golf Course Design

Distributor
Estes, Inc.



Superintendent Steve Yarotsky (left), and golf course designer Rex VanHoose (right), examine the Sea Spray at Moody Gardens.

Sea Spray Delivers Salt Tolerance, Affordability to Seaside Course

Located off the coast of Texas on Galveston Island, Moody Gardens Golf Course is in the midst of a complete renovation. Formerly known as the Galveston Island Municipal Golf Course, the goal of the renovation was to create a first-class public golf facility, which meant a redesign of the entire course along with a new club house and maintenance facility.

To begin the renovation process, the golf course architectural team of Jacobsen Hardy Golf Course Design first developed a master plan to assess the existing conditions of the course. Among the lengthy list of challenges were agronomic conditions that made growing turf difficult such as anaerobic and salt-laden sandy soils, an effluent water supply, and near-sea level elevations coupled with constant airborne salt.

Although the course previously had Bermuda grass surfaces, the design team concluded that seashore paspalum was better equipped to resist high levels of salt.

“When we started out on the selection of turfgrass, water quality and climate were major considerations,” said Rex VanHoose, senior vice president for Jacobsen Hardy. “Paspalum was more salt-tolerant than other options and gave us more opportunity to manage the soils and turf, but still could be mowed tight.”

After deciding on the use of paspalum, sprigs were immediately considered as the means of turf establishment. However, an unusually cold spring season resulted in availability issues and increased cost concerns, so the team investigated other options.





This par 4 fairway was seeded with Sea Spray in the summer of 2007.

“When we were told we wouldn’t get sprigs until September, that posed a problem,” explained VanHoose. “Looking for alternate solutions, we went to Scotts and they informed us of the seeded variety Sea Spray and the rest is history.”

The use of Sea Spray, the industry’s first seeded seashore paspalum, on tees, fairways and roughs allowed the renovation of Moody Gardens to stay on budget, while eliminating concerns of availability.

Steve Yarotsky, superintendent at Moody Gardens, soon realized additional benefits from using Sea Spray. “You’re not going to see the seams of the sod get meshed together and you won’t have any root dieback. And I think timewise it might be a little faster than the sprigs.”

Recent research has shown that Sea Spray establishes faster with more consistent uniform coverage than sprigged varieties at recommended rates.

The ease-of-use and availability of a seeded variety such as Sea Spray will also help quicken recoveries from divots and other damaged or high traffic areas of the course.

“I think it’s going to be the grass of the future,” said Yarotsky. “Water will continue to be a major issue, if not the number one issue on golf courses throughout the United States and throughout the world. A lot of people are going to use reclaimed water or effluent water, so this variety being more salt-tolerant will increase its use on golf courses for years to come.”



Once established Sea Spray can be irrigated with effluent or brackish water.

