

Solutions Center

GROUNDS

REAL ANSWERS TO REAL CHALLENGES

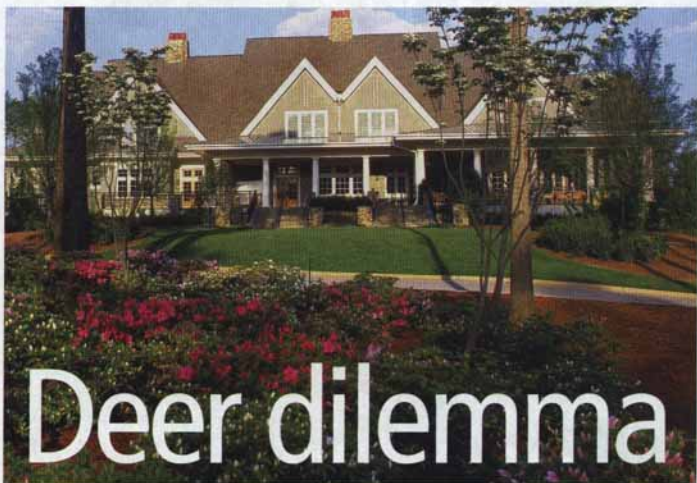
BY ALAYA BOISVERT

What do you get when you combine an award-winning resort, scenic vistas and add deer, armadillo and beaver? A potential landscaping disaster, that's what. Yet despite these challenges, Reynolds Plantation is an example of how to achieve effective plant protection.

Reynolds Plantation, located between Atlanta and Augusta, GA, is an 8,000-acre golf and lake community with 50-plus miles of shoreline on Lake Oconee, one of the largest lakes in the southeast. Named "Best of the Best" Golf Community by *The Robb Report*, Reynolds Plantation features 81 holes of championship golf from designers Jack Nicklaus, Bob Cupp, Tom Fazio and Rees Jones, award-winning dining, swimming pools, tennis courts, a fitness center, pedestrian walking trails and two full-service marinas.

The scenery is also breathtaking, as the Piedmont Region of Georgia sees seasonal changes in vegetation and weather. Native plants include dogwood, redbud, magnolia, holly, oak, maple, elm, sweet gum, black gum and azaleas.

Jana Otis, the Landscape Horticulturalist and Manager, has the daunting task of managing landscape maintenance and landscape improvements at the facility. She handles the main-



Deer dilemma

This grounds manager relied on a trusty chemical repellent to reduce browse damage

Reynolds Plantation

► AT A GLANCE

**Horticulturalist/
landscape manager:**
Jana Otis

Employees: 24 — two full-timers, 1-2 part-timers and 20 subcontractors

**Acres of turf and
plant beds:** 150

tenance of over 150 acres of turf and plant beds, and oversees 24 employees.

Otis' passion for plants originates from her childhood. "I got my first job in a garden center," she says, "and knew that was the field I wanted to study."

Otis says that flexibility is key in managing Reynolds. "Between too much rain, droughts, insects, disease and animal damage, plans are constantly changing," she explains. "Plant selection is important; we try to choose the hardiest plants to ensure survivability throughout our challenges, and use plants that have shown some deer resistance. However, it's my experience that deer will eat anything if they're hungry enough."

The problem: browsing damage

Deer — those adorable creatures fancied by travelers, dreaded by gardeners. Otis describes how a growing white-tail

deer population calls Reynolds Plantation home. "We're constantly dealing with browsing damage to ornamentals and seasonal color, and injury to small trees due to 'rubbing' in the fall. In the state of Georgia, the overpopulation of deer has become a serious problem."

It turns out deer are a nuisance elsewhere as well. According to the National Parks Service, the deer population in the U.S. reached over 24 million in 1999 — populations that are reported to cause over \$1 billion in annual damage to desirable plants throughout the country.

Not only does Otis and staff have to worry about deer, but

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armadillos and beavers also are known to wreak havoc on the property. Armadillos, Otis says, cause mostly aesthetic damage by digging in mulch beds, but can also cause damage to the roots of plants they dig around. As far as beavers go, Otis explains that they "can be very destructive, especially with small trees and shrubs."

The solution: chemical repellent

Challenged by such diverse problems, Reynolds Plantation has had to use three different

methods of plant protection — physical barriers, chemical repellents and occasionally culling the herd.

"The chemical repellent we have found most effective is the product Plantskydd," says Otis.

Plantskydd is an organic animal repellent manufactured in the United States that acts as a natural deterrent for deer, elk and rabbit browse damage.

"We've tried just about all of the other products currently on the market and Plantskydd has worked the best by far. It has been very effective on the ornamentals, keeping browsing at

a minimum," Otis explains. "We also use physical barriers when necessary, deer netting and fencing for browsing, and tree wrap for rubbing."

As a final option, Otis notes that "when deer populations reach unhealthy proportions, a USDA Wildlife Management team comes in and thins the herd." Trapping, Otis says, is also used to control damage caused by beaver and armadillo.

As reflected in the radiant landscape at Reynolds Plantation, Otis and her team have done a remarkable job manag-

ing the botanical beauty at the facility. "Being able to have blooming plants in the winter and all year long is one of the best rewards of effective plant protection," Otis says.

So while visitors at Reynolds Plantation find the sight of wildlife part of the benefits of their rural vacation experience, whether one would say they're in the company of "friends" would depend on who you talked to. **LME**

— *The author is a public relations representative with Earth-Net Communications. She can be reached at 604/740-9948.*