

Golf course care was weed man's training ground



Virginia Beach resident John Snyder, owner of the local Weed Man franchise, says Virginia Beach's transitional climate presents a challenge to lawn care. (Ben Werner | For The Virginian-Pilot)

John Snyder, owner of Weed Man franchise in Virginia Beach, offers tips for a great lawn:

By Ben Werner
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VIRGINIA BEACH

The whir of a neighbor's lawn mower isn't just the sound of spring and summer; it's the amazingly appropriate background music for John Snyder as he tells his life's story.

At 14, Snyder fell in love with creating and tending to the manicured grass of a nine-hole golf course by his home in the Canton and Akron, Ohio area. It's a love he's never left. He even lives on Ryder's Cup Lane, in the Larkspur neighborhood.

"I rode my moped there before school to mow grass," Snyder said about his teen job.

For three decades Snyder has cared for the fairways and greens of golf courses visited by the sports greats.

He's chatted with Jack Nicklaus at his home course, discussing grass health. He breakfasted with Gary Player, detailing the condition of Player's namesake course in South Africa. He's watched over the grass at the PGA National in Palm Beach, home to the Honda Classic, ensuring the grass was cut just right to allow the ball to roll a certain way.

He's the guy neighbors approach at barbecues seeking advice for their lawns.

Fittingly, Snyder even met his wife at a golf course, here in Virginia Beach. About 17 years ago, her dad was the mechanic at Virginia Beach's Honey Bee Golf Club, which was one of several Snyder then managed for a golf course company.

Today Snyder is retired from golf course management. He and his wife moved back to Virginia Beach to raise their two young children near her folks. Since January he's applied his vast grass knowledge to tending to the lawns of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake, as owner of the local Weed Man lawn care franchise.

Snyder also uses his expertise and franchise as a way to help give back to the community. He's part of Project Evergreen, which matches lawn care professionals with military personnel who have deployed. The idea is while family members are deployed, they at least won't have to worry about their yard.

So why, after so many years, does he still go out to tend to lawns? The answer is quite simple - it makes him happy. Snyder said it's very pleasing, "At the end of the day, you look at what you've done and the people enjoying golf, or how they enjoy their lawns."

Plus, Virginia beach offers an interesting, even challenging work environment. The amount of rain, coupled with the high humidity in the summer, create a situation where various types of grass can thrive, but so can a horticulturists' list of weeds.

"Virginia Beach is a tough area for lawns," Snyder said. "It's called a transition zone. You can grow grass from the north or from the south."

The most important thing homeowners can do is fertilizing their lawns, Snyder said. A healthy lawn will prevent weeds from growing. But once weeds do take hold, Snyder said they're very hard to get rid off.

"In Virginia Beach you just about always have to be doing something if you want that deep green healthy lawn."

For more information about John Snyder's Weed Man lawn care franchise, visit <http://virginia-beach.weedmanusa.com/>, email jbsnyder69@msn.com or call - using the area code - (757) 350-1488.

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