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GOLFCOURSE

m a n a g e m e n t

Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

bunker down

the hazards of perfection

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front nine

A five-star backyard

If Rob Crompton had a bigger backyard, heaven only knows what the self-made turf manager would have there.



Rob Crompton began construction of his USGA-style backyard golf hole by digging out the green cavity with a pick and shovel.



An authentic sod-wall bunker fronts the green of the backyard golf hole.



The 500-square-foot perennial *Poa annua* putting surface is mowed at $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in the summer.

As it is, the property is the talk of an otherwise ordinary residential area on Vancouver Island in Victoria, British Columbia. Crompton has his very own USGA green nestled alongside an authentic sod-wall bunker. And not very far away is a made-to-specs tee box. All were built and now maintained by Crompton, who, of course, had a little help from his friends, including three Canadian superintendents.

And that's only part of the story. Crompton has also created a Web site for Kinipela Golf Club, a virtual venue, that recounts the construction of the backyard golf hole step by step, from start to finish and professionally documented with text and more than 100 photos.

Words don't do justice to the Web site (www.kinipela.ca) — an instructional manual and a virtual lesson in how to create three major golf course components that would do just about any golf course manager proud.

Kinipela is the Hawaiian equivalent of the name Jennifer, which is Crompton's wife's name. Appropriately, she is the general manager of Kinipela Golf Club, which means that her husband has two of the loves in his life pretty much in hand.

Crompton says the backyard golf hole came to be a few years ago because of his fascination with agronomy and turf botany. The project was accomplished in just 10 months, completed late in the summer of 2002.

The 525-square-foot green, built to USGA recommendations and planted with cores of perennial *Poa annua*, is currently cut at $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in season and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in the winter. The sod-wall bunker fronting it is complete with drainage infrastructure, a geotextile liner and 5-inch-deep white sand. The 250-square-foot tee box also sports drainage infrastructure and immaculate turf conditions. A small footbridge was built across an old streambed to connect tee to green. Crompton mans a Jacobsen walk-behind greensmower for the tee, collars and approaches

and a Toro Greenmaster 1000 for the putting surface.

Crompton sought and received expert advice from many fronts, including that of three superintendents in the Victoria area, which is located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island just up Puget Sound from Seattle. Aiding in the project were two GCSAA members, Randy Page of Olympic View Golf & Country Club and Brian Youell of Uplands Golf Club, along with Greg Kowalski of Royal Oak Golf Club.

When asked why he would do such a thing, Crompton replies: "I often thought when I was reading a trade magazine and the subject was on the benefits of aerating a green or the dangers of lowering cutting heights to achieve unrealistic greens speed that the golfing public should be reading this important information. And how do you reach out to that large group? The personal computer — a Web site on greens construction, make it free access and lots of photos."

Crompton recently added a "Turfgrass Cultural Practices" section to the Web site.

"Some of the comments on the site have been positive and others have put me back in therapy," he says. "My hope is that the site will provide a starting point for those who are curious about this subject and will find it interesting. The long-range goal for the site is that with some knowledge a better understanding of what the superintendent and staff have to do to maintain healthy greens can be reached. It's a long shot, but I'm allowed to dream."

— Terry Ostmeier