

GARDEN REPORT FOR COMMITTEE MEETING JULY 9 2012

REPLANTING

It is extremely difficult to keep track of what is happening in the gardens whilst I am not in the country. Owners in general were pleased with the replanting. However, I do get complaints from owners who feel that the area close to their building is not getting the attention it should, subsequent to the replanting. In the main the complaints refer to the fact that the new plants are not getting sufficient water and are therefore in danger of dying or that the flower beds are not being weeded often enough and weeds look unsightly or are swamping the new plants. Some of the owners are themselves weeding and watering whilst they are on site but there is an element of 'why should I when I am paying so much for gardening', and concern about what will happen when they leave the resort. Any complaints that I receive I pass on to STV via Resortalia if the owner hasn't already done so but I look forward to being back on the resort when I can personally check on these things. In the meantime I have acquired 2 volunteers who are willing to help whilst I am absent and I have asked that they survey the resort on a regular basis to highlight similar problems that arise. I am grateful to Phase Presidents who do the same job whilst they are on the resort.

TREES

As you are aware, John Frizell conducted a partial survey in the Spring to ascertain the number of dead trees on the resort. His numbers were worrying high but it was hoped that as the season progressed some of the trees he pinpointed would prove to have survived and this does seem to be the case. STV's own survey lists 80 dead trees in total around the resort. (Although Ron noted that he could not reconcile the numbers listed on his phase with the STV list - anyone else feel the same?) Some of these we would not necessarily wish to replace - for example; where trees are too close to a building, in areas where it is considered that there are a sufficient number of trees already, in areas that are not considered suitable for the health of such a tree etc.

I hope to conduct a survey in liaison with STV in the autumn to ascertain just which ones do need replacement and just what that would cost us.

We have had a quote for the removal of dead palm trees and this I think does need action now. We had one on Phase 6 that started to lean and then, despite being actioned quickly, fell before it could be removed, damaging part of the pool fence.

WATER-SAVING

There are two points under discussion;

1. What should we do with the Council areas where, at the moment, we are just allowing grass to die?.
2. How can we save water on the general community areas?

I put forward my opinion on these points for consideration.

1. There is the suggestion that these areas are planted with grasses in the same way as some of the 'rough' parts of the golf course. This solution is simple and relatively cheap. I think this would be appropriate for some small areas (on the steep slopes by phase 4 for example). I would not like to see all the council areas treated in this way as it would be boring in large swathes and have a rough appearance not in keeping with the manicured gardens expected in a resort such as ours. It would not be completely maintenance free and would require weeding.

We have had plans and a quote from Xilema for landscaping these areas. I find their landscaped plans quite impressive and their report on Xeriscape does suggest that they know what they are talking about. Ron and Nigel have had a meeting with the company and perhaps can give their reactions. I did make note in the report to the last committee meeting that there did seem to be rather a lot of trees in the plans (and there are quite a few trees in these areas already). If we decide to go ahead, it might be possible to reduce costs by adjusting the plant content. I would be happy to be part of a more detailed study of their plans if this takes place whilst I am on the resort.

2. In many quarters, Hacienda Riquelme is regarded as the best of the Polaris resorts. This is due in part to its perception as a restricted number of buildings on a wide open area. The feeling of spaciousness is reinforced by large lawned areas. Whilst the need to save water is not in dispute, I think we have to be careful not to lose what many owners consider to be the best part of our resort.

Having said that I believe that we can find areas of grass that are not strictly necessary. There are strips alongside parts of the outer fence where gravel could be substituted for the grass (on phase 5 for example). There are large expanses between buildings where some sort of fancy pebble and cactus garden would improve rather than detract from the large lawned areas (on phase 2 for example). There are grassed areas on all phases that are not generally in view and could be altered and there are lawns on steep slopes where the grass is poor and would be better replaced by shrubs.

We need a detailed review of these areas - by phase, but with an overall co-ordination around the resort.

STV REPORTS

Weekly reports are produced usually on a Monday listing the jobs that STV expect to be doing over that week. They also produce later reports showing whether the work was actually accomplished. At the moment these are distributed to Nigel, Ron and myself. Pepa has requested that these reports be sent to all owners on the grounds that it would forestall many of the complaints received. I don't have a strong opinion on this - would this be too much info for many owners? - would Phase Presidents be enough? I leave it to the Committee.