



A Seed Is Planted

EDSEL'S EXPERIMENTAL FARM AT THE FORD PLANTATION

SPECIAL TO BOARDROOM MAGAZINE

In just four short years, what started as a small seed of an idea to grow herbs at The Ford Plantation has blossomed into a bountiful organic operation, known as Edsel's Experimental Farm.

Edsel's, named for Henry and Clara Ford's only son, has become an integral part of the lifestyle at The Ford Plantation.

From fun and educational opportunities to a sustainable food source for the club's dining rooms, the farming operation has produced numerous tangible and intangible benefits for our members.

"It is extremely gratifying to see members and their families, especially lots of young children, enjoying the farm," says Nick Cassala, CEO and general manager. He notes that members have been visiting the farm regularly and showing it off to their friends and families. "Even the real estate sales team has added the farm as a stop on their property tour, as an example to prospects that Ford is innovative in offering the freshest and most healthy ingredients available in our menu preparations," he says.

The most notable impact is on the menus at The Ford Plantation, which are heavily influenced by Edsel's Farm.

Each Monday, Juan Carlos Rodrigue, executive chef, visits the farm to determine which products are ripe and ready to pick.

Based on his findings, Juan Carlos, chef, crafts a new menu each week, with at least half of the items, including salads, soups and side dishes, coming from farm items. Last year, the farm harvested a record number of potatoes, weighing in at more than 500 pounds.

One item that is always plentiful from the farm is eggs. More than 45 fresh eggs are collected each day from the Japanese Bantam chickens living at Edsel's.

These eggs are used in a variety of food preparation and menu items. A community favorite is the ice cream, made fresh on property. An exciting new event this year, which used the crops from Edsel's, was a celebratory dinner for the Ford 100, a 100-day health and fitness initiative encouraging Ford members to log 100 miles of walking, biking or running.

The dinner coincided with the first harvest of the season in early April, and a variety of fresh items including an organic green salad with radishes.

In addition to providing members with a wide variety of delicious, homegrown dishes, Edsel's Experimental Farm brings economic benefits to the community. Vegetables that the club's chef would pay a premium to purchase at market are now available in the club's own backyard.

The farm also provides Ford members with educational and social opportunities, not to mention a chance to get their hands dirty.



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From the outset in 2009, the Ford Garden Club has played a critical role in the growth and development of the on-property farming operation.

Garden Club members assist with the seasonal planning and planting and help determine which crops will be most beneficial to farm and community.

Member Anne Copp, a Georgia master gardener, has proven to be an excellent consultant for the work being done at Edsel's.

She works closely with the Ford maintenance team to design raised planter beds and specify the soil mix. But, Copp says she most enjoys herself when she gets the time to work in the garden.

"Being part of the success of Edsel's Experimental Farm here at Ford has been a true joy," says Copp. "Gardening is something I am very passionate about, and being able to share that with my neighbors who love to garden, or with neighbors who are learning to garden for the first time, is a special experience."

Tending to the garden has truly become a must-do activity for many families at The Ford Plantation.

Looking ahead, there are many exciting plans in place to continue building on the success of the farm at The Ford Plantation.

A neighborhood within Ford that was once part of a separate plantation is embracing the agrarian theme of Edsel's. Two new model homes are being considered in this part of the community will offer direct views of the working farm.

Chef Juan Carlos is currently pursuing his Master Gardener Certification to further expand his knowledge and expertise.

This year, there are also plans to experiment with the growth of two new crops: pumpkins and mushrooms.

The club is currently working toward building a greenhouse on property so that staff and members can garden and harvest year round, rather than the current eight month harvest cycle, resulting from the climate in Georgia's Low Country.

"The commitment of everyone at The Ford Plantation to making the experimental farm a success is a perfect example of how our diverse and interesting members are making this a great place to live," said Bill Coad, club president.

It all started when the community developed an interest in creating an on-site farm to table experience that would elicit more creativity from the culinary team and spark the interest of all FP's well-traveled members.

With the added benefits that a small garden would bring to members, namely agricultural education and bringing a piece of plantation life back to the community, the seed of an idea was planted and plans began to take shape.

From that first seed of an idea, to the numerous crops and chickens the staff and members tend to today, it has been a fun project for all involved, in addition to being a source of pride – something the club's members truly care about and appreciate. **BR**

Ford Plantation Facts, Figures and Water Conservation

The Ford Plantation, located just 18 miles outside of Savannah, Georgia, in Richmond Hill, currently has about 300 resident memberships with a planned community allowing for a maximum of 400 resident memberships.

The Ford Plantation is a premier sporting community with all the grace and charm of the Georgia Low Country. Members enjoy traditional club activities, like golf, tennis, fitness, swimming and spa treatments, while also engaging in the opportunity to experience new and different activities, such as sporting clays, deep-sea fishing, hunting, boating, horseback riding, kayaking, croquet, hiking, bird watching, shrimping and fly-casting. Here's it's all about the member experience.

There are two types of memberships: Resident and sporting. Resident members own property in the community and are equity owners in the club. The club recently introduced a non-equity national sporting membership, and is currently accepting applications for a waiting list.

A special feature of our equity memberships is that they are generational, inviting all members of a family to enjoy themselves at The Ford Plantation. A member's children, grandchildren and parents are all extended membership privileges in the community. This fosters a sense of tradition throughout the entire family unit.

This October, The Ford Plantation will break ground on a \$7 million restoration to its Pete Dye golf course. All improvements are being done with the goal of restoring the detail of designer Dye's features, especially sculpturing of bunkers, greens and fairways.

The Ford Plantation golf course restoration also will allow this club community to make huge strides in water conservation with the installation of a state-of-the-art irrigation system. The galvanized steel connections used in the original piping systems have been deteriorating at an alarming rate, resulting in water loss and poor water conservation.

The new irrigation system offers the most advanced technology, with water conservation in mind. Golf course superintendent Nelson Caron assembled a team of the top professionals in the South East region to design and build the system. It's a design purposefully planned to maximize the club's benefit, taking into account budget, expectations for turf grass quality, electrical consumption and, most importantly, water conservation.

Sprinkler efficiency will be tremendously improved by limiting the gallons-per-irrigated-acres through smart sprinkler placement, reducing unneeded overlaps and gaps in coverage. Caron's team will also benefit from the new system's high density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe and fittings reliability, which will minimize loss and waste of water from breaks and malfunctions.

Toro Company's Turf Guard in-ground moisture sensors are the final underground component and will optimize water conservation. The Turf Guard system gives the superintendent real time information from the soil by instantly tracking the soils condition in relation

to moisture, temperature and salinity. As a result, Caron's team will be able to water objectively based on true below-ground environmental conditions and automatically make adjustments to the amount of water being distributed.

A new weather station will deliver information in real time, 24 hours per day/seven days per week, and allow Caron to water objectively based on above-ground environmental conditions, considering variables such as current evapotranspiration rates.

A key objective of the planned improvements is that the course becomes more playable for all members, challenging the best amateur players while allowing the more casual playing members to enjoy golf on a regular basis.

An active and outdoor lifestyle is an important part of the culture at The Ford Plantation. Members can take part in hiking excursions, nighttime gator spotting boat rides, wildlife interaction at the club's wildlife interpretive center and kayaking and canoeing at the marina. Ford is privileged to have a staff of three U.S. Coast Guard licensed captains and NSCA Level One shooting instructors available every day to take members and their guests fishing and shooting.

Ford also includes a state-of-the-art equestrian center, which is a full-service boarding facility that supports all equestrian disciplines...a unique feature that continues to attract new and current members. **BR**

PAGE 21 - A view of Edsel's farm shows the raised planting beds and the tools our volunteers use to tend to the vegetables and herbs.

PAGE 22 TOP - With a firm belief in the concept that "the shortest distance between farm and tabletop" is good for business and good for our members, we use the bounty of our farm in the food and beverage operation. Members and guests enjoy a variety of naturally fresh, farm-grown products in our menus - farm-to-table at its finest.

PAGE 22 SECOND PHOTO - Excess yield from the garden is cooked into stocks, soups and sauces, canned in-house, and sold to members and guests on the honor system through The Ford Market in custom-labeled mason jars. Executive Sous Chef Derek Benoit makes these delicious, creative items.

PAGE 22 THIRD PHOTO - Ford's food and beverage staff and garden club work closely together to plan, plant and harvest our garden. Several workdays are planned throughout the year, where many volunteers come together to contribute to the farm.