

THE
Magnolia
NEWS

NEWS OF INTEREST TO THE RESIDENTS OF MAGNOLIA POINT

VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 9

SEPTEMBER 2026



2026
WINNER CHARLIE AWARD
 Association/Non Profit
Best Overall: Magazine

WINNER CHARLIE AWARD
 Association/Non Profit
Best Overall: Design

 **fma**
 Florida Magazine Association

HOTEL *Holidays*

COMING! Something new for TMN, our first fiction series, authored by **Larianne Stutts**, President of our Village Improvement Association. Her contributions started with last month's 'Rivers Run Through It', and continue with 'When Charles and John Met Frederick', here. For 'Hotel Holidays' starting next month, she'll be writing a piece presenting each of three landmark hotels from local lore, focused on the people and lives they touched. **Pages 14-17.**

And special thanks to our own **Janet Schaeffler**, for her suggestion of this month's featured flower, the **Siam Tulip**.

2025

FIRST PLACE
 BEST USE
 PHOTOS

National Newspaper Foundation

SECOND PLACE
NUSA
 COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER
 Neighborhoods USA

A long-time fave at our house, we bring you, '**Chicken Dixie Piccata**' made right at home in the southland, **pages 10-11.**



A slump can happen! Christian shares advice to help get over one in this month's 'Playing Through', **pages 27-28.**



Speaking of hacks, this month's 'Southern on the Side' shares some uses for yellow cornmeal you might not have tried yet, **page 12.**



We call their lullabies 'Songs of the South' the two iconic minstrels in our 'Bird Break' on **page 30.**

This month's cover, a local joy and color, it's the legendary **Siam Tulip** in this month's 'Potting Bench', **pages 18-19.**



Miss Puddles has some advice for visitors to one of our neighbor's Koi ponds: 'stand back', on **pages 33-34.**



Never one to pass up a chance to mix up a tall one, the **Siam Tulip** is this month's 'MIXmagic' inspiration, **page 22.**

In 'Tool Talk', we review a mini hedge-trimmer that punches way above its weight, **page 23.**



THE MAGNOLIA NEWS

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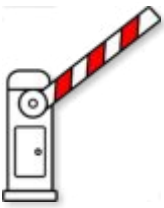
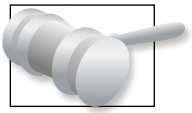


CURB DROP



EDITOR





ACCESS CONTROL

Chair: Chuck Cox

The Access Control Committee continues to wrestle with the community's most expensive headache: gate damages. In July, the community saw another 10 billable incidents, matching the high of 10 in

June. Most incidents were caused by tailgaters hitting the gate arms, including one driver who physically dislodged a gate arm to enter. Year-to-date, billed gate damages have skyrocketed to \$27,275, with only \$9,450 successfully recovered.

On a positive note, the RFID rollout is underway. The rear gate RFID reader was successfully installed and tested. The front gate RFID reader panel was successfully installed on July 27, 2026. Software integration and credential enrollment are currently underway. Additionally, in July, the committee resolved several critical equipment issues: replacing a pedestrian gate hydraulic closer on August 3, 2026, replacing low batteries on the rear swing gates on July 14, 2026 after a power outage, and updating the firmware of the new Techna barrier arms to ensure they open automatically upon power failure.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, Initiatives

Leadership Transition: Chairman Chuck Cox somewhat 'officially' stepped down at the end of July but continues to serve as Chair to assist with the transition. A new chairperson is urgently needed to lead this vital committee.

Hardscaping Enforcement: In response to persistent piggybacking at the rear gate, the committee shifted tactics from purely electronic access control to physical deterrents, installing a new exit bollard on August 3, 2026, to prevent drivers from cutting across the island.

September Action Items

- Complete the RFID system software integration.
- Complete the installation of a dedicated water line to the guard shack.
- Seek Board approval for a \$2,500 NTE motion to procure and install a solar-powered warning sign on Medina Avenue (west of the property line) to deter unauthorized vehicles before they reach the rear gate.
- Continue evaluating maintenance service plans to cover all gate and video equipment.

From 8 reports submitted of a total of 8 year to date.



ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

Chair: William M. (Wally) Bransford

The ARC remains highly productive, reviewing 14 project requests in July, which brings their year-to-date total to well over 115 reviews (following 12 in Dec, 14 in Jan,

9 in Feb, 21 in Mar, 20 in Apr, 11 in May, and 15 in June). July approvals included 6 roof replacements, 3 fences or fence modifications, 2 landscaping projects (one involving tree removal/trimming), 1 home repaint, and 2 entry door repaints.

A major ongoing challenge is non-compliance by speculators and lot owners who clear-cut properties without prior ARC approval, such as the complete clearing of two lots on Barton Creek Circle in June. The ARC has referred these violations to the Rules Enforcement Committee and the Board for disciplinary action.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, Initiatives

Regulatory Adaptations: The committee continues to enforce its long-standing rule prohibiting "separate structures" (such as denying a June inquiry for a standalone pool house at 1856 Colonial Drive while offering breezeway-connected alternatives). This boundary is maintained despite the state's FS 720 legislative changes that forced the HOA to permit small, hidden storage sheds on homesteaded properties.

Leadership Hand-off: Wally Bransford remains committed to stepping down as soon as a qualified volunteer steps forward to assume the chairmanship.

September Action Items

- Press the Board to explicitly define and publish clear fining and disciplinary policies for lot owners who clear-cut trees without ARC permission.

From 8 reports submitted of a total of 8 year to date.



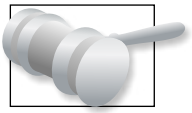
COMMUNICATIONS

Chair: Joanne LaBeouf

The Communications Committee achieved its monumental goal of launching the brand-new MPCA website on May 18, 2026, and fully retiring the old HOA Express platform on June 1, 2026.

Community emails are now officially flowing through Constant Contact, which houses the secure member





database. As of July 28, 2026, website registration has grown to 540 registered users (representing 488 primary resident homes out of 969 total individual homes in the community). A total of 1,284 residents are successfully receiving email blasts through Constant Contact.

While the transition was highly successful, the committee worked hard to resolve early registration bottlenecks, including assisting 12 residents with database enrollment issues in June and addressing minor resident feedback regarding the new website's visual layout.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, Initiatives

Data Management Boundaries: The committee set clear boundaries with residents, explicitly reinforcing that homeowners are strictly responsible for updating and maintaining their own account details, reversing previous assumptions that the committee would manage these updates for them.

Decoupled Email Systems: To enhance database security, the committee permanently decoupled the email system from the website host. Because Constant Contact emails are not directly linkable on the website, the committee now posts notification dates on the website to nudge residents to check their inboxes.

September Action Items

- Complete the ongoing database audit once the majority of residents have completed registration.
- Seek Board approval for new volunteer Yvonne Dae Retzinger to lead the new resident welcome segment, and continue delivering welcome packets to new homeowners in coordination with the Magnolia Point Women's Club (MPWC).
- Continue publishing the monthly community newsletter with independent publisher Sandy Weber.

From 7 reports submitted of a total of 8 year to date.



LANDSCAPE & IRRIGATION

Chair: Cindy Francisco

The Committee continues to battle harsh seasonal elements to keep Magnolia Point beautiful. Volunteers have been actively weeding, fertilizing, and maintaining common-area flower beds along Magnolia Point Blvd. and the Medinah gate.

However, Mother Nature remains a major bottleneck. The unseasonably cold winter freeze followed

Continued

immediately by a severe spring and summer drought—accompanied by ongoing Phase II watering restrictions from the St. Johns River Water Management District—has severely limited plant availability and delayed sodding and bedding projects. The committee also had to manage the physical fallout of the entrance road-widening project, which damaged irrigation lines and cut landscape lighting wires.

Despite these setbacks, the committee successfully sodded the lawn on the entrance side of Magnolia Point Blvd. and mulched under the Magnolia trees in July.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, Initiatives

Strategic Pivot to Restoration: Due to weather-planting delays, the committee previously pivoted toward hardscaping and structural preparation. Now that the entrance widening is complete, the committee is shifting back to landscape restoration, including replacing damaged turf and dead/dying shrubs.

September Action Items

- Rework the landscape lighting in front of the Magnolia Point entrance sign on Harbor Road. Remove weeds, regrade, and resod the area in front of the Harbor Road entrance sign (recommending the addition of two large date palms or other specimen trees).
- Request Board release of funds for urgent irrigation repairs to two zones on Magnolia Point Blvd damaged by road construction.
- Continue road-canopy trimming to meet FDOT clearance standards, focusing on the Colonial side where residents raised clearance complaints.
- Discuss the creation of a walking trail around the exit-side fountain pond and the restoration of irrigation near the Colonial pond.

From 5 reports submitted of a total of 8 year to date.



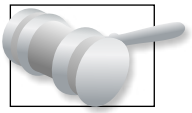
ROADWAYS, DRAINAGE & WATERWAYS

Chair: Vacant

RDW has made significant progress in addressing the community's critical stormwater infrastructure and roadway safety. The long-awaited entryway expansion is complete, with only lane labeling, gate zone striping, and reflector signage reinstallation left to finish.

To enhance roadway safety, the committee installed a new 30" stop sign at Colonial and Quaker Ridge Road. They are also in the process of installing two electronic





speed limit signs (one on Colonial, and the second on Muirfield or Olympic). Major physical repairs were successfully wrapped up: A Team Site Works completed priority road patching (Priority A items, including Colonial & Muirfield, Castle Pine Court, and Shinnecock & Colonial) in March. Minor settlement at the lower outlet of the Oglebay drainage project was fully repaired by DNS under warranty at no cost to us.

A major ongoing bottleneck is manpower: the committee is operating with a thin roster and is urgently seeking volunteers to help monitor infrastructure after losing key volunteer Tom Sprott.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, Initiatives

Proactive Disaster Mitigation: Following the catastrophic \$500,000 Oglebay pipe washout earlier this year, the committee executed a shift from reactive repairs to aggressive preventative maintenance before hurricane season. They are establishing robust baselines to verify storm system and weir performance.

September Action Items

- Hire a surveyor to shoot elevations and install gauge boards on all community ponds to easily monitor and verify drainage system operations.
- Have engineer John Nevin officially map water flow directions on the master stormwater drainage map.
- Coordinate with Bold City Seal to begin roadway crack-filling projects, addressing Priority B and C patching lists (including Glenn Abby and Olympic.)

From 4 reports submitted of a total of 8 year to date.



RULES ENFORCEMENT

Chair: Larry Francisco

The Rules Enforcement Committee continues to maintain neighborhood standards, with landscape maintenance and general maintenance consistently representing the vast majority of written violations (accounting for 62% and 31% respectively in July, down from April's 33% and 42%, and February's 20% and 46%).

Resident compliance has generally trended upward this summer. The committee did not have to hold a single hearing in June. At the July 7, 2026 hearing, two of the three scheduled residents came into compliance before the meeting, and only one fine of \$100 was upheld for an RV parked in a driveway without a pass.

Shifts in Priorities, Reversals, Initiatives

Drought Leniency Policy: The committee maintained its strategic reversal regarding lawn violations. Starting in April, dead-lawn violations have been held in abeyance due to the severe drought conditions and watering restrictions, giving residents a fair opportunity to recover.

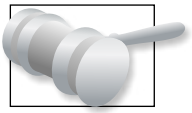
EDITOR

September Action Items

- No new formal motions. Ongoing efforts focus on standard compliance monitoring and issuing courtesy notices.

From 6 reports submitted of a total of 8 year to date.





BOARD NOTES



VOLUME 7 ISSUE 9

- SOURCE: magpt.org • SUMMARY BY EDITOR

SEPTEMBER 2026

The Q2 Transition: Structural Governance and Communication Pivots (April – May)

The second quarter opened in April with a leadership transition. David Miller assumed the presidency, moving Sprinkle to Vice-President, and immediately instituted formal procedures under Roberts Rules of Order. This shift coincided with a loss of the Board's previous voting unanimity. Major decisions began passing on split 4-1 or 3-2 votes, indicating differing strategic directions among the directors.

The Newsletter: Over a dissenting vote from Director Ann Sims, the Board committed up to \$2,000 to fund a printed monthly community newsletter through the end of the year. This outbound communication method is meant to replace the digital Members Forum that the Board had abruptly shut down in January.

Financial and Operational Restructuring: The Board approved the 2026 Reserve Study, moved \$525,000 from a reserve account into Certificates of Deposit (CDs) to maximize returns, and began drafting an RFP to potentially replace their property management company.

Access Control: In May, the Board pushed through the long-delayed RFID gate conversion and access credential policy on split 4-1 votes, committing \$52,500 to its implementation.

The routine agenda was permanently disrupted in May when Magnolia Point Investment (MPI), announced a pending agreement to sell the club's assets and the Red 9 to a third party, RCBF Properties, LLC. This forced the Board to review its Right of First Refusal to purchase the club; it was pronounced immaterial.

Mid-Year: The Asset Acquisition Pivot (June – July)

By June, the potential MPI sale became the dominant strategic focus, forcing the Board to put other long-term plans on hold. The Board tabled its property management RFP to avoid organizational instability during the transition. To evaluate a possible purchase of the golf course, the Board quickly allocated significant community funds:

- \$9,000 to CBRE for a professional golf course appraisal.
- \$7,500 to hire specialized land-use counsel (Brennen Manna Diamond).
- \$3,500 for a contingent USGA assessment of the active 18 holes.
- In July, the CBRE appraisal valued the club assets at \$4.15 million.

- Financially, the Board continued to restructure its capital, moving \$375,000 into a CDARS ladder.

Late Summer: Project Execution and Maintenance (August)

The Board focused on executing operational projects alongside the ongoing club evaluation:

Tree Canopy Trimming: Resolved a major community maintenance issue that had been tabled in July due to unanswered questions. They unanimously approved up to \$21,000 to Tree Tech for community-wide tree trimming to a height of 16 feet, contingent on the contractor meeting all RFP specifications.

Gate Operations: Approved \$2,500 from general maintenance funds for a new LED sign at the Medinah Gate (which followed previous Medinah Gate upgrades and repairs from earlier in the year).

Key Strategic Reversals from Q2 to Present

The transition from Q2 to the present highlights two stark reversals in the Board's long-term strategy:

1. Traffic and Community Safety

EDITOR

January Stance: The Board flatly dismissed speeding complaints, citing police studies to claim no speeding problem existed.

The Reversal (June – August): In June, the Board spent \$1,200 to buy and beta-test two radar speed signs. In July, they voted 4-1 to spend HOA funds hiring off-duty police officers (up to 25 hours per month) to randomly monitor traffic. In August, they unanimously approved another \$1,200 for two additional speed limit radar signs, completely reversing their earlier refusal to address the issue.

2. Communication and Engagement Boundaries

Initial Stance: The Board began the year by shutting down the interactive digital Members Forum to curb unregulated resident discussion.

Current Strategy: A shift to controlled, outbound messaging. This involved funding the new newsletter, launching a new website in May (magpt.org), and publishing "fluid" living document updates regarding the club sale. Simultaneously, the Board established strict legal boundaries: in July, they announced the successful copyright registration of the MPCA logo and warned residents that the Board is "not committed to engage in discussions on social media," directing all inquiries strictly to the website portal.

- SUMMARY OF MINUTES AND HIGHLIGHTS, BY EDITOR THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2026





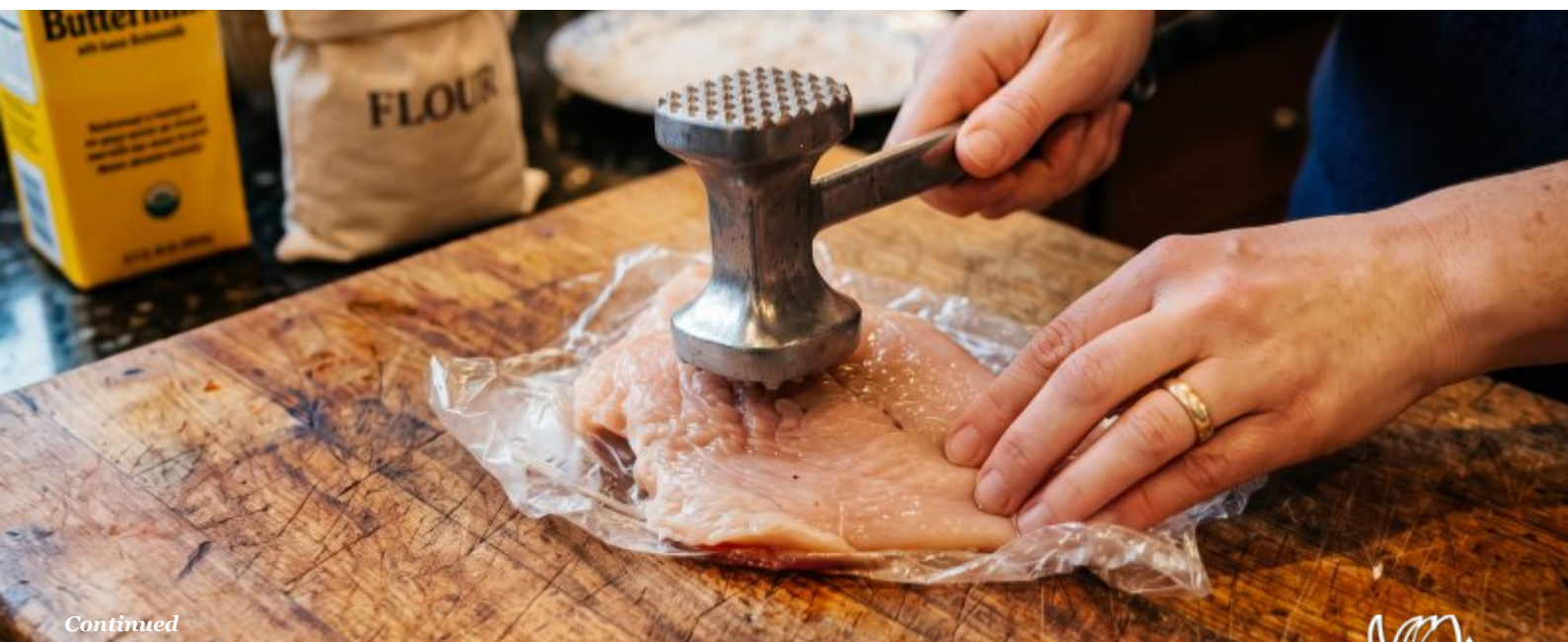
Classic Italian piccata is beloved for its bright, zesty lemon-caper sauce, but the American South knows how to bring a cozy, satisfying twist to this quick skillet favorite. By giving the chicken a tenderizing buttermilk soak and adding a touch of warm spices like cayenne and smoked paprika, you get a gorgeous, golden-brown crust with a hint of Southern heat. Best of all, this impressive-looking dish cooks up in a single skillet in under 30 minutes, making it the perfect weeknight "Good 2 Go" meal!

The 'Good 2 Go' Fast Fact: *Pounding the chicken breasts to an even 1/2-inch thickness is the ultimate secret to quick weeknight cooking. Not only does it guarantee the chicken cooks completely evenly, but it also breaks down the muscle fibers so the buttermilk can tenderize the meat in as little as 30 minutes.*

CHICKEN DIXIE PICCATA!

INGREDIENTS

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (pounded evenly to 1/2-inch thickness)
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 2 tablespoons canola oil (or light olive oil)
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 3 tablespoons capers, rinsed and drained (to cut through the richness with salty pops of flavor)
- 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/4 cup heavy cream (optional, for a slightly richer finish)



Continued





DIRECTIONS

The Buttermilk Bath: Place your pounded chicken breasts in a shallow dish and pour the buttermilk over them. Let them soak in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes, or up to 4 hours to maximize tenderness.

The Seasoned Dredge: In a shallow bowl, whisk flour, salt, black pepper, cayenne, and smoked paprika. Lift each chicken breast from the buttermilk, allowing any excess to drip off, and press firmly into the flour mixture until fully coated on both sides.

Skillet Sear: Heat the canola oil and 2 tablespoons of the butter in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Once the butter is melted and foaming, add the chicken in batches. Cook for about 3 to 4 minutes per side until the crust is beautifully golden-brown and the chicken is cooked through. Transfer the chicken to a warm plate and set aside.

Simmer the Pan Sauce: Reduce the skillet heat to medium. Pour in the low-sodium chicken broth and fresh lemon juice, using a wooden spoon to scrape up all those flavorful, caramelized brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Stir in the rinsed capers and let the sauce simmer for 2 to 3 minutes until slightly reduced.

Glossy Finish: Turn off the heat. Stir in the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter and the optional heavy cream. Swirl the pan until the butter melts and the sauce becomes rich and glossy. Return the chicken to the skillet, spoon the luxurious lemon-caper sauce over the top, and let it rest for 1 minute before serving!

The 'Good 2 Go' Lighter Upgrades & Pairings

We recommend our **Chicken Dixie Piccata** be served over a bed of heavy, buttery rice or white flour pasta. Or, to keep this dinner light on the lighter side, energizing, and high-fiber, try these quick mods:

Swap the Bed: Serve your chicken and its glorious pan sauce over a scoop of fluffy creamy stone-ground yellow grits made with low-sodium vegetable broth and a sprinkle of sharp cheddar (shown, previous page). Alternatively, a bed of cauliflower rice or whole grain brown rice acts as a wonderful sponge to soak up every drop of that tangy lemon-caper sauce!

The Green Side: Pair this zesty main dish with a side of skillet garlicky spinach or a crisp, vinegar-dressed Southern cucumber and tomato salad to provide a fresh, cooling contrast.

RECIPE, PHOTOS: EDITOR



RECIPE, PHOTOS: EDITOR



SOUTHERN ON THE SIDE

NEW! Cornmeal Down Low

Cornmeal, with that nutty texture and faint sweet corn goodness! What's not to like? Stone-ground from dried 'field corn' kernels (vs. 'sweet corn' we love on the cob), this humble pantry staple is more versatile than most cooks realize. Beyond the skillet, cornmeal moonlights as a non-stick dusting for pizza peels and baking sheets, a crunchy coating for roasted vegetables, a natural thickener for soups and stews. BEt that bag sitting in the back of your pantry is doing far less work than it could be!



Hack #1 - Cornbread Mix Bliss

This brand needs no introduction, it's #1 in the world. What's out of this world is adding just two tablespoons of yellow cornmeal then prepare and bake according to the direction on the box. Well, three tablespoons if you rustle cows for a living. You won't regret it. The hacked result is a bite and 'mouthfeel' as they call it, that delivers on that cornbread promise. Make sure you have a few extra boxes of that mix on hand. Y'all are gonna want this a lot!

Hack #2 - Milk Run

Okay, what's the catch? How can there be any left over? Well, it happens. And what do Southerners **do** with that piece of leftover heaven? That ol' standby: **Cornbread and Milk!** Not much to it, just crumble up the leftovers into a tall glass, and pour in ice-cold milk. That's it. Eat with a tall spoon. A little sugar is *never* needed, but has been known to happen. This is one leftovers that produces no leftovers!



Hack #3 - 'BOGO'

Here are **two** more options for cornmeal for the price of one: mush and cakes! Mush, a traditional native American *and* Southern dish, couldn't be easier: 1 1/4 cup cornmeal and 2 1/2 cup water and a dash of salt in a bowl. Microwave 2 minutes on half-power to start, go from there until thickened. Add honey, sugar, and a bit of cream to taste. **YUM!**

The 'BOGO' part: with the leftover mush, form into patties and fry the next day. Serve with butter and syrup! OR, add 2 tablespoons of bacon fat or oil, and fry up some crispy **Corn Pone!**

RECIPES, PHOTOS: EDITOR



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WHEN CHARLES AND JOHN MET FREDERICK

Charles leaned back against the white lattice of the large house in Spring Park. He put out his cigarette and shoved it between the slats. He knew John would be along any time, and he didn't want his friend to know he had been smoking. John's parents didn't allow him to smoke, and Charles didn't want anything to ruin their plans for the afternoon.

Charles was a local boy. His parents didn't have much money, and Charles did his part to contribute. He'd done quite well this morning carrying the heavy trunks from the riverboats to the new Qui Si Sana Hotel. Rich people didn't like to carry their own luggage. The tourists coming in this morning had money to burn and Charles knew how to play that game. He could always be at the right place at the right time. His arms were sore from the morning's heavy lifting, but John would be here soon, and they had plans for the afternoon.

John was an outsider. He and his family had moved to Green Cove Springs when the Qui Si Sana was being built. His father was a construction worker, so his family relocated often to find lucrative work. His mother cleaned the rooms for guests at the Magnolia Hotel, so they lived on the grounds. The boys met on the river one day on a hot afternoon and had quickly become close friends. They soon found that they could help each other. Charles had become quite clever since turning thirteen, and he had learned to look for ways to make money for as long as he could remember. John's parents kept a closer watch on him than Charles's did, but they both worked whenever they could. John had just turned twelve and they allowed him to do "odd

jobs" to make extra money. They also trusted Charles. They relocated often, so they were glad that their son had found a loyal friend to keep him company.

The parents of both boys trusted that they would be at the Qui Si Sana hotel shining shoes for the duration of the afternoon. That was their typical plan for the hot afternoons, but not today. They were certainly heading to the Qui Si Sana, but they would not be shining shoes. This afternoon would be different, because yesterday they had met Frederick.

Both John and Charles knew that Frederick was different from the first time they saw him. They met haphazardly at the edge of the St. John's River, all prepared to go for a swim. Frederick stood at the edge of the bank wearing what looked like tight knickers in bright red and white stripes. His hair was somewhat curly and trimmed neatly above his ears. When the other boys saw him, their first instinct was to laugh, but then they felt almost embarrassed. They stood there with their unkempt hair slicked back, wearing only their cotton underwear, and wondered what this new guy must be thinking of them.

Pretty soon, however, they were all laughing together and enjoying the cool spring waters. They learned that Frederick's parents were guests at the Qui Si Sana for an undetermined amount of time. Frederick's father was in meetings all day, and his mother was getting her hair done. Frederick was eagerly looking for some company, so he was meeting them this afternoon at the entrance of the hotel, where they typically waited for customers needing their shoes shined.

Continued



WHEN CHARLES AND JOHN MET FREDERICK

But this time, it was going to be different. Frederick was going to show them the tennis courts and the golf course — places that they had only seen from afar and heard about for over a year. Frederick had also promised them some ice cream and cakes made from the butter at Penney Farms. John and Charles were not sure how he was going to make that happen, but Frederick's father must have been important to be able to do it.

Charles saw John heading his way. Both boys were almost giddy as they sauntered towards the hotel. Frederick was waiting there for them, just as he said he would be, and looking just as excited as they were. Frederick was eager and proud to show his new friends a side of life that they had imagined but never experienced.

Charles and John had been at the entrance of the Qui Si Sana many times, but they had never gone inside any further than the covered veranda. Charles had often stared at the intricate details in the wood carvings as he assisted guests with their luggage, but he had never been inside long enough to get a good look. The air flow from the gazebo into the open-air courtyard almost felt like silk.

"I can't believe it! We're walking in just like we belong! No one is even staring at us," John said.

"They aren't gonna," responded Frederick. "People come here from everywhere. They're looking for the springs. Some of them spend all they have just to get here. Quit worrying about it. Now, we can play tennis, golf, or go to the pool. Your choice."

"Tennis," John replied quickly. "We can enjoy the springs from the outside anytime."

So off they went to play tennis. Carefully, Charles picked up a racket. Until now, he had never even seen one, but now, in his hands, was an oval-shaped racket, with a tough gut string strung across its center. He could feel the eight-sided handle in his grasp, and was pretty confident he could swing it pretty hard. John did

the same, and Frederick showed them how to hold the racket properly. "I've held a baseball bat many times. This feels completely different," Charles said.

"It is different," Frederick responded. "You're going to hit it and I'm going to hit it back to you. Get ready!"

For over an hour, the boys ran across the soft grass, swinging and hitting the white flannel-covered rubber balls.

Charles was a little more skilled than

John or Frederick,

as his arms were much more muscular, and he had built strength and speed from assisting the hotel guests with their trunks and heavy luggage. He was also a little older than the other two boys.

Afterwards, they all walked over to try golf, but their conversations and schoolboy laughter were annoying to the other players. The boys quickly moved to the Qui Si Sana terrace and enjoyed light biscuits with the best butter Frederick had ever tasted. John and Charles were used to the local dairy products, but Frederick could not get enough of the soft butter pats. They also had egg salad sandwiches, which were equally fresh and delicious.

Charles took his last bite of biscuit and wiped his mouth with the soft cloth napkin. He closed his eyes and turned his head slightly to allow the breeze to touch his face. He opened them just in time to see a



Continued



WHEN CHARLES AND JOHN MET FREDERICK

young girl walking past the terrace, in the direction that the boys had just left.

She looked to be about his age. Her hair was dark and pulled back tightly away from her face. She was wearing a long, white flared skirt with a white sailor-type blouse, and it was obvious that she was dressed for tennis. She held a wide-brimmed straw hat in her hand, with a pink ribbon tied to it. Her skin was fair and rosy, and the hat was there to keep it that way. She glanced at Charles for a moment, and he was pretty sure she had almost smiled.

Charles quickly looked away, though, and realized that both John and Frederick were staring at him, grinning.

"Do you know her?" John asked.

"Of course not," Charles replied. "How would I know her?"

"She looked right at you," Frederick said, smiling.

"Well. I don't know her, and I likely won't ever see her again," Charles snapped a little, but he was definitely intrigued with the young girl.

"Can we see your room, Frederick?" John asked.

Charles was glad that the subject had changed.

Frederick was eager to show them his room. Charles knew he had to put the pretty girl out of his mind, at least for now.

Frederick's room was like nothing Charles had ever seen before. John had been inside the Magnolia, and its rooms were very nice, too, but even he was taken aback when he saw the Qui Si Sana's accommodations.

The hardwood floors were polished pine and covered in the center with a brightly colored woven rug. The

plaster walls were a soft blue shade, and the large windows were draped with sheer lace curtains. The bed was a dark wicker, and there was a marble-topped washstand beside it. A cane-bottom rocking chair sat in the corner. There was also a small writing desk by the window with the same dark wood as the chair and washstand. The breeze from the window was so peaceful. John could only imagine the peace one might feel, sleeping in this room. It was both beautiful and masculine.

As the sun went down, John and Charles knew they had to head home. The summer was ending soon, but Frederick had a few more weeks at the Qui Si Sana. The

boys made a pact to spend as much time as they could together, until circumstances would separate them.

"Will you be here for Decoration Day?" Charles asked Frederick.

"A lot of people show up in the park that day," John told him. "This town honors our Civil War heroes in the park on May 30th. You'll see a lot of soldiers bringing fresh flowers and gathering around the springs. Some

of them will walk down the edge of the river towards the Magnolia. Most of them wear their uniforms, too. The springs are full of blue, gray and army green."

"Right," said Charles. "We must be quiet, but it really makes you think. You should come if you're still at the hotel, Frederick. Lots of local heroes live here."

"I'm not sure if we'll still be here or not, but I'll sure come if I can. My mother is hoping to spend Christmas here, but my father says that isn't possible."



Continued



WHEN CHARLES AND JOHN MET FREDERICK



The boys continued to meet at the big white house across from the hotel every afternoon. Some days they would swim; some days they'd fish; and whenever Frederick could find a way to get them into the hotel, he would do so. Sometimes John and Charles would shine shoes, and Frederick would bring them cucumber sandwiches and lemonade. Their friendship might have seemed very unlikely, but it grew very strong.

As predicted, Charles never saw the young girl again.

The time came when both Frederick and John were leaving Green Cove Springs. Frederick's family was taking the ferry back north, and John's father was heading further south to begin construction on a new hotel closer to Tampa. The boys exchanged addresses and promised to keep in touch. Frederick knew he would likely be back every summer for a while, and Charles wasn't going anywhere. John wasn't too sure about his family's future, but he was committed to maintaining his friendships through the mail as best he could.

"Let's make a promise, guys," Frederick announced.

"We already said we're going to write to each other. Let's promise to meet back here in 10 years. We'll be grown men by then, probably married with children, but we can do whatever we want as adults. Are you with me? We can meet at the Qui Si Sana, or right next to this porch where we are today. Hey, we could plan for November or December and see the hotel all lit up for the holidays!"

So John, Charles, and Frederick made a pact to keep in touch, and to meet again in Green Cove Springs in 1920. Both Charles and John knew that it wasn't very likely, but it was something for which three young teens could aspire. On the day that Frederick left, Charles sauntered towards the large white house, where he typically sat to smoke and think. A part of him wanted to cry, but he knew he couldn't do that.

It looked as if no one was home in the white house, and Charles wondered if he could see clearly into the Qui Si Sana if he stood on the porch. Slowly, he walked up the steps to take a quick look.

The view was all he hoped it would be. He could clearly see the hotel guests laughing and sipping lemonade. Charles thought he could likely hear their conversations if the music wasn't so loud! This was great! There was some sort of party taking place on the veranda, and Charles was able to see it all.

Just as he was about to leave to head home, he recognized a familiar face. It was that girl again. This time her hair was only half up and half loose, flowing in soft curls. A pink ribbon held it back from her face. Her dress was pink, too, and looked to be made of silk. She was wearing white satin slippers, and she was looking straight at him, once again.

"Was she back?" Charles wondered. "Or had she never left?" he asked himself.

This time, however, Charles did not look away, and he managed a timid smile. To his delight, she smiled back.

Suddenly, he remembered that he was standing on the porch of a house he did not own. He stepped down quietly and slowly, all the while maintaining his gaze on this beautiful girl.

Charles thought back to the pact he had made with Frederick and John. "...meet back here in 10 years..." Frederick had said, "probably married with children..." The summer wasn't over yet, and Charles had learned a lot from his friends. He also had some goals for himself, and he was ready to work hard to reach them.

The first thing on his list was to talk to that beautiful girl.



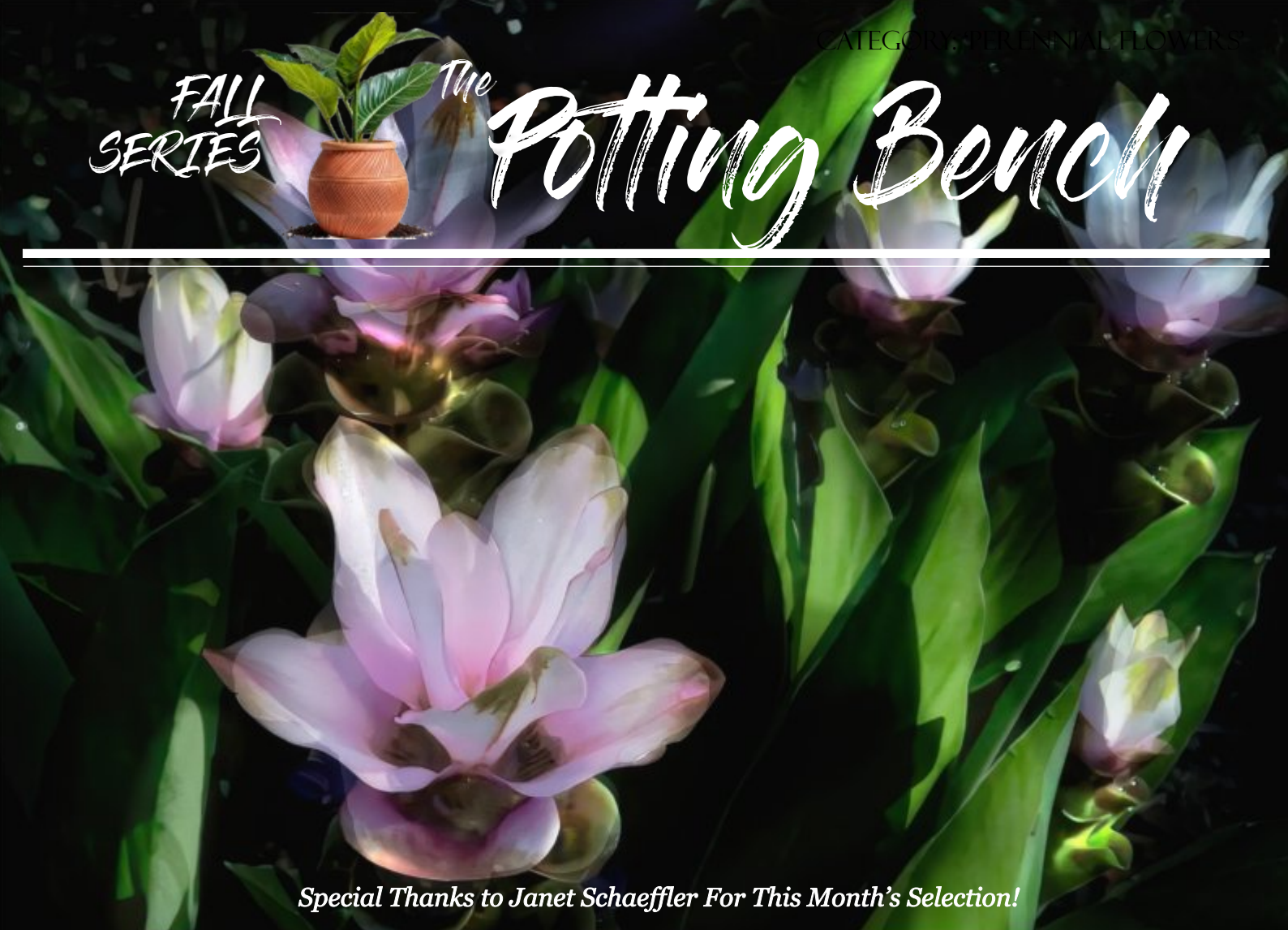
- LARIANNE STUTTS
for The Magnolia News



FALL
SERIES

The

Potting Bench



Special Thanks to Janet Schaeffler For This Month's Selection!

Sometimes we just want a splash of pure, tropical drama to light up our hot, humid North Florida summers. This month, we are highlighting the exotic and elegant Siam Tulip (*Curcuma alismatifolia*), and, being September, we're reaching the last stages of its presence here, starting our 'Fall Series' at The Potting Bench. Now we'll have fall and winter to plan our spring homage to this wonderful flower.

As so often happens with many common names (technically known as 'etymological misnomers' like 'Spanish Moss' or 'Pineapple') and despite its common name and cup-shaped blooms, the Siam Tulip is not a true tulip at all. It's a tropical perennial member of the ginger family (*Zingiberaceae*) native to Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. It grows from fleshy, segmented underground rhizomes (not bulbs!) and produces incredibly long-lasting, waxy flower-like bracts that stand proud above its lush, lance-shaped leaves. And at Magnolia Point, it's a must have in any planting or foundation bed; they are downright iconic!

Sourcing Your Siam Tulips

Where to Buy: Active plants or rhizomes are found at local nurseries or online in spring and summer.

What to Look For: The waxy bracts come in gorgeous shades of pink, rose, lavender, and pure white. Look for popular cultivars like the soft-pink 'Pink Pearl', 'Green Jade', or 'Sunrise' (which features white bracts tipped in raspberry red).

The Hidden Surprise: Deep within the lower bracts, you will find tiny, true violet flowers peeking out, the 'Siamese twin', a delightful, colorful surprise!

Varieties

- **Pink:** Ranging from light rosé to bold magenta (such as standard *Curcuma alismatifolia*), representing the classic look.
- **White Wonder:** Features crisp, dazzling white summer bracts.
- **Sangria:** A striking red hybrid known for long-lasting color.
- **Solar:** Displays unique yellow bracts finished with fiery red tips.
- **Swing:** Showcases soft light pink bracts edged with wine-colored tips.
- **Torch Series:** Bred for strong, upright stems and vivid pink or purple torch-like displays.

Continued



Potting Bench



Warning: To keep humidity up, you can place containers on a pebble tray, but never mist the flowers directly, as this can spread *botrytis*, 'petal blight'.

Feeding: Siam Tulips are light feeders. Avoid high-nitrogen fertilizers, which will push floppy, leggy leaves instead of flowers. Instead, apply a slow-release balanced fertilizer at planting, or feed every two to four weeks during the blooming season with a potassium-rich fertilizer (like tomato feed) to prolong the lifespan of the gorgeous blooms. Stop feeding the moment the bracts begin to color up.

The Master's Touch: Winter Dormancy

If you want your Siam Tulip to return year after year, managing its mandatory 3-to-4-month dormancy period is absolutely critical.

1. **Taper Off (Autumn):** In September, as nighttime temperatures drop below 62°F, cut your watering frequency in half and stop fertilizing. The leaves will naturally begin to yellow from the tips, do not cut them yet, as they are still feeding the rhizome.

Transplanting and Placement

- **Climate & Hardiness:** Siam Tulips are perfect for our gardens and are reliably perennial in our USDA Zone 9b they thrive as container plants on patios or indoors as houseplants.
- **The Perfect Light:** The ideal spot receives bright, filtered sunlight or morning sun with afternoon shade. The dappled shade of citrus or crepe myrtles, is perfect. Avoid direct midday sun, which can curl the leaves and brown the edges. However, keeping them in too much shade will shorten their blooming time and even cause the plant to collapse.
- **Soil and Drainage:** Like their ginger cousins, Siam Tulips demand fast-draining, slightly acidic to neutral soil (pH 5.8 to 6.8). They will quickly rot if left in heavy clay or soggy conditions. Amend our native soil with equal parts organic compost, coarse perlite, and pine bark fines. In containers, use a loose potting mix with plenty of drainage holes.

Maintenance

Precise Watering: During the active growing and blooming season (late spring through early fall), keep the soil lightly moist. A good rule of thumb is to allow the top third of the soil to dry out between waterings. Under-watering will cause the leaves to wilt or curl, while over-watering is the fastest way to trigger fatal root rot and "basal collapse".



2. **Dry Out (Winter):** Once the foliage completely collapses and turns papery-brown, cut it back to the ground. Stop watering entirely.

3. **Store Safe:** If potted, move the container to a cool (55–60°F), dry, dark location like an unheated garage. Never water a dormant rhizome, or it will rot. In-ground rhizomes should be protected with a thick 3-inch layer of pine straw or bark mulch.

4. **Awaken (Spring):** In mid-to-late April, as the soil warms, bring them back into the light, resume watering, and watch your tropical tulips spring back to life!

Pests

Keep an eye out for mealybugs and spider mites hiding in the folds of the foliage.

Deer & Pets: While deer and rabbits will completely ignore your Siam Tulips, keep them out of reach of curious cats and dogs, as they are poisonous to pets if chewed on.

- STORY, PHOTOS: EDITOR





BECKY HINSON



BECKY HINSON

- 1½ oz Bourbon [1½ oz Unsweet Black Tea]
- 1 oz Fresh Peach Nectar or Purée
- ¾ oz Hibiscus Syrup*
- ½ oz Fresh Lemon Juice
- 2 oz ginger beer, chilled
- 2 dashes aromatic bitters
- Peach slice and/or edible flower for garnish

[] NA version

* Hibiscus Syrup

Simmer equal parts water and sugar with dried hibiscus flowers for about 5 minutes, strain, and chill. For a shortcut, a good hibiscus tea can be reduced and sweetened.

THE SIAM TULIP

A Southern poolside cocktail with a tropical heart

- *Fill a cocktail shaker with ice.*
- *Add bourbon, peach nectar, hibiscus syrup, lemon juice, and bitters.*
- *Shake vigorously for about 10 seconds.*
- *Strain over fresh ice in a rocks glass or tall glass.*
- *Top with ginger beer and give it one gentle stir.*
- *Garnish with a peach slice and, if available, a small edible flower.*



Floral • Peachy • Lightly Tart • Gingery • Refreshing • Subtly Earthy

The hibiscus supplies the Siam Tulip's beautiful ruby-pink color and a delicate floral tartness; peach brings unmistakable Southern character; ginger provides a little heat; lemon keeps everything bright. Bourbon adds vanilla, oak, and caramel without overwhelming the floral notes.



TOOL TALK



They just keep coming, these miraculous, low-cost, high-output power tools designed to put a dent in your yard chores. And did we mention *light*?! This month's feature is a *highly* portable hedge/grass trimmer combo that's the poster child for 'grab and go'. These are available online, at astonishing values, given the technology and add-ons crammed into one small box.

I had my doubts! How could I not? A single 2100 mAh battery, something you would expect in hand-held clippers, *for hair*! This version, given all the hoopla and rave reviews that just *had* to be AI baloney, would find its first test on 60 feet of the backside of our Viburnum along one side of the house. No, this is not a trimmer for your big-boy bushes, ***the blade is all of 7"***

long! This is a trimming 'quick fix' for those light jobs, and because the first task I gave it was that backwall trim, I didn't mind the length at all. That part of the hedge I manage normally with a 28" electric, with a power cord which, in those confines between hedge and house, never wants to cooperate. This little guy is all of 1 1/2 pounds in the hand. Battery life? I started at one end of the hedge with 3 green LED 'bars' of power. When I finished 60 feet later, I had, wait for it, the 3 green bars I started with!

The included grass clipper, which changes places nicely with a clap right in place of the hedge cutter, works great on our army of Muhly grass clumps around the place, and for a grass-edging tune-up.



The battery in the handle makes for a compact unit.

It's the miracle of the brushless motor, which just sips power, and delivers torque and power-to-weight combo that's off the charts. And it will trim just about nothing off your wallet.



- STORY, PHOTOS: EDITOR





"My wife says my headcovers make me look fat."

TOONS



"My AI is impressive. And handy. But it still thinks I want extra pickles."





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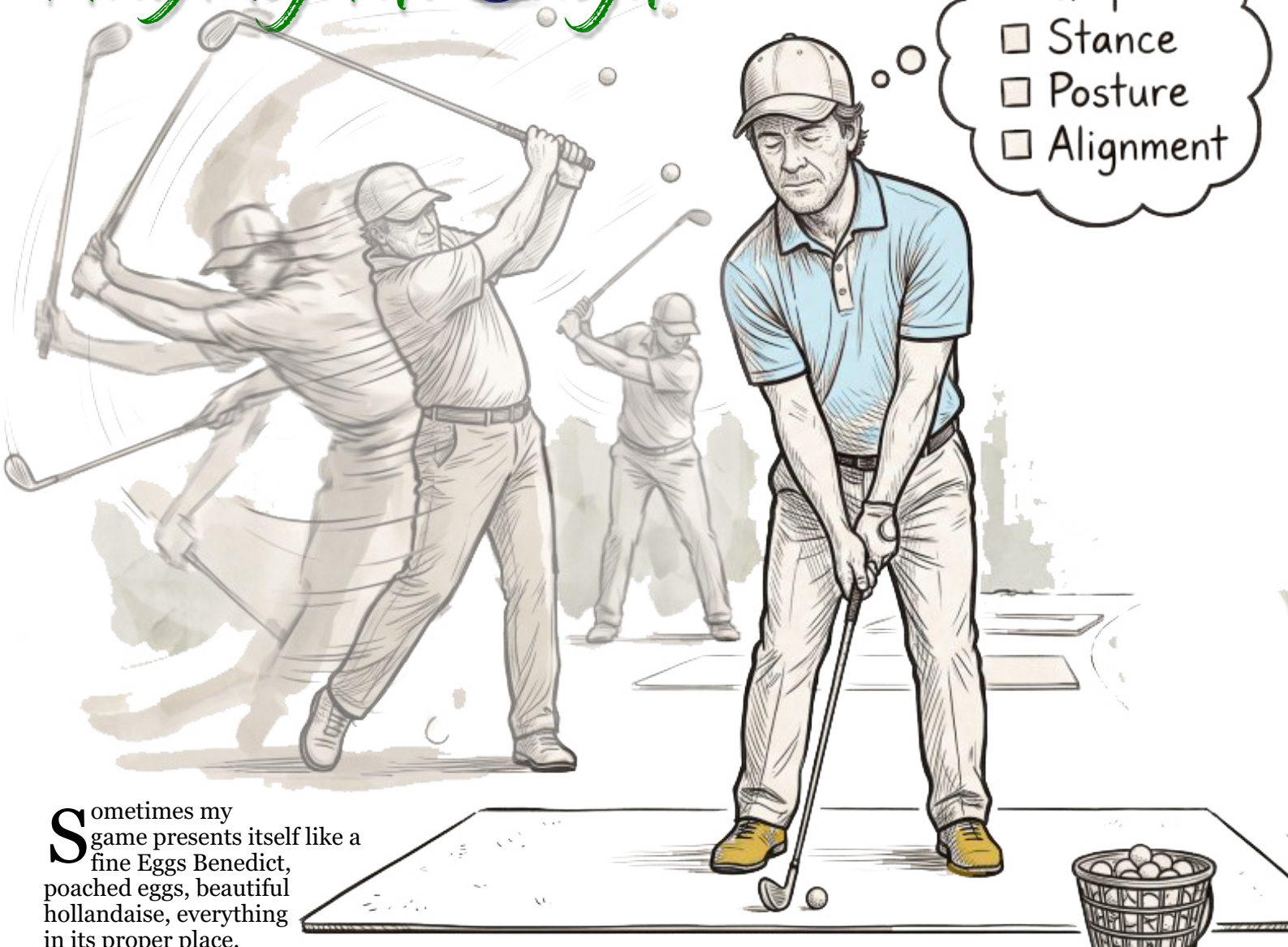
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Playing Through

- CHRISTIAN SMITH



Sometimes my game presents itself like a fine Eggs Benedict, poached eggs, beautiful hollandaise, everything in its proper place.

Right now, it looks more like scrambled eggs from a burner stuck on high. The dreaded slump.

Since I got back from the tournament in Santee, I've been a little out of sorts. I've been working on a minor swing change to get out of a bad habit I formed over the summer, and I attribute some of my poor performance to adjusting to a new feel. So I want to focus this article on the psychology of a slump and ways to help yourself out of it when things aren't going your way.

I find it interesting how people deal with the psychology of golf. Jack Nicklaus had one of the most positive outlooks of any player in history. I'm paraphrasing, but he said something to the effect of, "I never hit a bad shot. I only hit shots that turned out badly." To me, that is a little myopic and not a mindset I can maintain when I've chunked a wedge and hit two out of bounds on the day. Tiger Woods was equally defiant when his confidence was questioned. He would often point to swing changes he was putting into place, or physical ailments he felt he was experiencing. How can we ever forget "my glutes aren't firing"! On the flip

side, you have someone like Lucas Glover who was completely candid about his putting yips. This is a former U.S. Open champion, All-American at Clemson, and multiple-time winner on the Tour. He owned up to his deficiency and went back to work. After ten years between victories, he won twice in 2023. I think the most important thing is to be comfortable in your own approach to dealing with poor play and, most importantly, not let it define you.

So...how do we get out of the rut?

Too many times, golfers start to look for the miracle cure. New swing thoughts. New grips. New YouTube videos. New equipment. Rapid-fire range sessions. Before long, we've turned one small leak into five different problems. Golf is hard enough as it is, so introducing a lot of new variables in search of a miracle cure can create a tangled web very quickly.

What I find most effective is to go back to the basics: grip, stance, posture, and alignment. The majority of the time the culprit for your struggles comes from one of these things; it's rarely a change in your actual swing.

Continued





For me, in this endeavor over the last few weeks, I realized that my grip had gotten progressively weaker, particularly my left (lead) hand. This tracked with my misses typically being right of the target. It hasn't been as much of a contact issue, but more of a direction issue: I'd feel like I hit a good shot, then look up and the ball is 15 – 20 yards right of my target!

Here are a few things I find helpful in my practice when you are feeling out of sorts.

1. Use an alignment stick or club across your foot line to ensure you are setting up parallel to the target (the old train tracks analogy): foot, line and club are pointing on the same lines. Other training aids can be helpful but can also create more confusion. Getting your alignment correct is a great starting point.
2. Take your time when you practice. Be diligent in your setup and keep mental notes of how your swing feels. Rapid fire hitting balls is not helpful. Hitting 30 balls with intention and reflection is more meaningful than hitting 100 balls just "trying to find it."
3. Hit shots at 60-70% of your normal speed just focusing on making solid contact. Also, hitting half and three-quarter shots can be extremely helpful in re-establishing your feel through the strike.

4. Watch where your ball is starting relative to your target. This can help you understand where the clubface is facing at impact, which is ultimately the most important thing.

Slumps are both psychological and physical. The psychological side can convince you that you've lost your game for good. That's when it's important to focus on your process rather than the result of any single swing. Physically, the answer is usually simpler than we think. It's rarely a complete breakdown of your golf swing. More often, it's a small deviation from the fundamentals that has slowly crept into your game.

At the end of the day, the sun will rise again, and



somewhere beneath those burnt scrambled eggs, the Eggs Benedict is still there waiting to reappear.

-CHRISTIAN



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BIRD BREAK - 'SOUNDS OF THE SOUTH'

These two are to me, the Sounds of the South. Long before we called it home, on visits here the songs and calls of just a few species made our visits complete. These are storied sounds from iconic birds and along with the odd bullfrog, peepers, cicadas and of course the occasional airboat, set so many sunrises firmly in memory.



The **Fish Crow** is the American Crow's shorter, snarkier cousin who moved to the coast and developed a superiority complex about it. Where the American Crow delivers a confident caw, the Fish Crow responds with what ornithologists diplomatically describe as "nasal" and everyone else describes as dismissive. It scavenges beaches, steals eggs, and loiters near fast food establishments with the unbothered energy of someone between career moves. It travels in loud, opinionated little gangs, raids nests without a shred of guilt, and will eat literally anything, including your lunch. It has no plans. It's nature's most perfectly outfitted skeptic. It's doing stand-up and doesn't even know it. It has the swagger of a bird that has never once doubted itself.

Song and Call: Its call, a nasal, doubting '**Nuh-uh!**' sounds precisely like a teenager who has already heard your explanation and remains unconvinced. Fish Crows are technically songbirds, true passerines with all the vocal equipment, but you'd never know it from listening to one; like the hawks, they skip the concert and stick to calls. The signature sound is a short, nasal, two-note "uh-uh" or "car-car," pinched and adenoidal, like the bird has a head cold it refuses to acknowledge. This is the single best way to separate it from the American Crow, whose call is a single, clear, open "caw": no nasal pinch, no second syllable. Listen for pairs and you've got a fish crow; one clean note and it's the common crow. Beyond that, they'll toss in rattles, clicks, and assorted croaks when squabbling over food, which, given the diet, is often. (See next month's 'corvid caper', 'Murder, She Wrote'!)

The **Carolina Chickadee** is the neighborhood's tiny, caffeinated optimist, a bird so small it seems assembled from spare parts, yet somehow the most confident thing in the yard. It flits in, inspects the feeder with the seriousness of a health inspector, grabs one seed, and vanishes to a branch to interrogate it in private. It has a black cap pulled down like a tiny beanie and a white cheek patch that gives it a permanent look of polite surprise. It travels in a loose entourage of nuthatches and titmice like it's running the group project, and it remembers thousands of seed-hiding spots better than you remember where you put your keys, and, being the southern branch of the family, it does all this without ever once complaining about the humidity.

Song and Call: The song is a clear, whistled "fee-bee-fee-bay," delivered briskly, almost like it's got somewhere to be. The call is the source of its name: a bright, scolding "chick-a-dee-dee-dee," and the number of "dee"s isn't random, more dees signal a higher threat level, so a lazy "chick-a-dee-dee" means "eh, whatever," while a frantic "chick-a-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee" means there's a hawk in the yard and the whole flock should panic accordingly. A built-in threat-level system, and honestly more organized than most 'Alert Clay' or Amber Alerts



Full disclosure: my thanks to Cornell Lab of Ornithology for their brilliant 'Merlin Bird ID' app, which uses your phone to identify the birds in your backyard by their calls! You gotta try this! The rest I noodled up on my own. You know, before coffee when I have some sense!



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CURB DROP



EDITOR





DEAR MISS PUDDLES



Letter #6 - "Our Koi Spits on People"

Our koi gather at the side of the pond every afternoon and stare at us until they are fed. We have accepted this, the way one accepts weather. The problem is that one particular koi, Awa ("Bubbles"), has developed a habit of singling out certain people and giving them a well-aimed spritz of water directly from its mouth, with what I can only describe as intent.

She does not do this to everyone. My sister has been sprayed many times. My husband has been sprayed hundreds of times and now approaches the pond sideways, like a man defusing a device. Our neighbor has never been sprayed once and is now unbearably smug about it, wandering past the pond in dry sunglasses like he owns the place. Is Awa choosing her victims?

— Watched, and Occasionally Spritzed, by Koi

Dear Watched,
You have koi. They have a pond. At least one has discovered projectile technology, and, apparently, a sense of humor. You have been selected. Koi can learn to associate people with feeding and may gather when a familiar person approaches. They can also learn that certain behaviors reliably produce attention, chaos, or a snack, and Awa, by all accounts, has learned this exceptionally well.

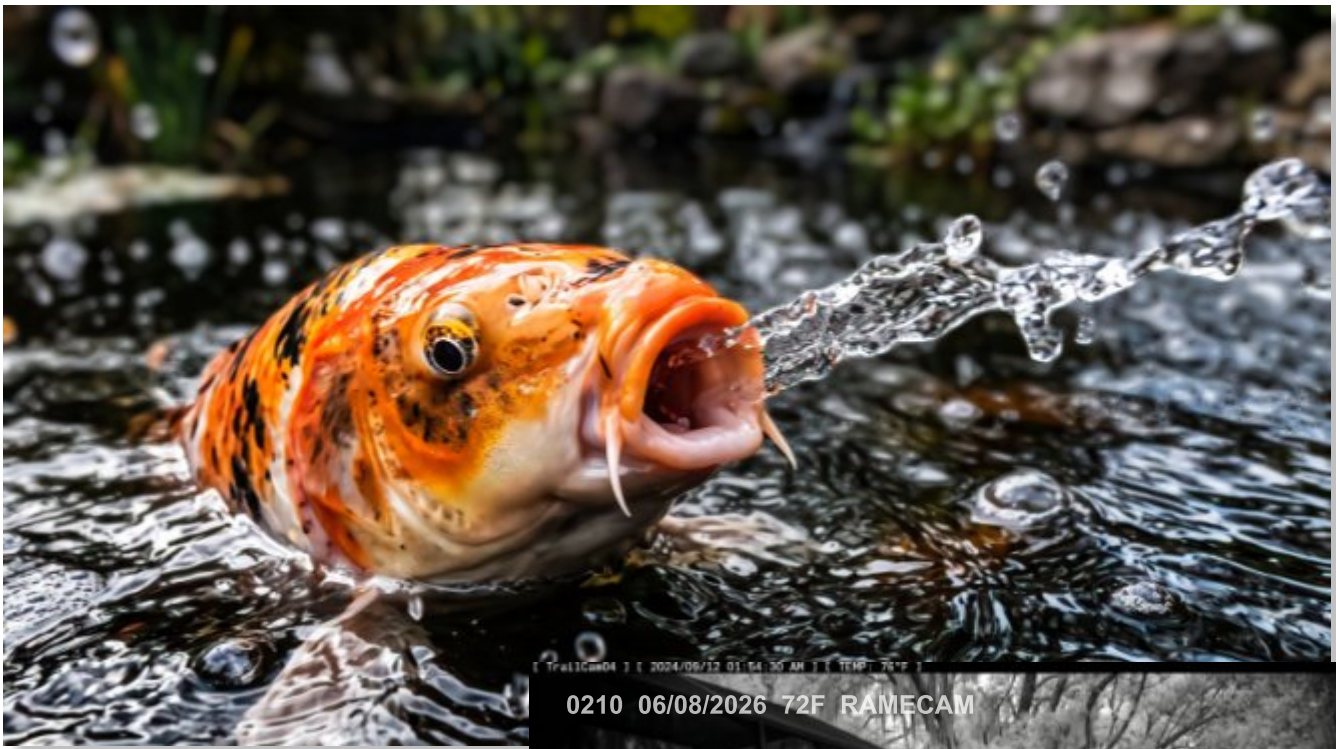
In Japan, a koi's expectoration is highly valued, the '*Kōfuku na Tsuba*' of this revered fish; specimens capable of these projections, the '*Supitto Ninja*', are prized, and these koi and their offspring are felt to enrich the legacy not only of entire families, but the property on which they are tended. 'Koi Water' is bottled and sold worldwide, and wait lists can stretch for years.

Suggestions

- Do not reward the attack. If the koi sprays and everyone screams, laughs, points, runs for a towel, and immediately feeds it, the fish has received an extraordinary jackpot. From the Awa's perspective: Spritz → Chaos → Dinner.
- Establish predictable feeding times. Feed appropriate amounts on a consistent schedule rather than allowing the pond to become a 24-hour aquatic drive-through with a very aggressive drive-through attendant.
- Stand farther back. If someone has become the official target, increasing the distance from the pond edge may prevent the koi from practicing its marksmanship. A small umbrella is also perfectly acceptable. Dignity is optional, and, at this point, largely theoretical.
- Avoid theatrical reactions. This may be difficult, especially if the koi catches you directly in the glasses at close range and with what appears to be excellent aim for a creature with no visible arms. But try.
- Never retaliate against the fish. Do not splash it. Do not wag your finger. Do not tell it that you are "very disappointed." Do not mention "fish sticks" or any other breaded, grilled, or raw aquatic or marine life within

Continued





earshot of the pond. Koi cannot understand English, but they can understand tone, have a 'thing' for criticism of any kind And they hold grudges!

Miss Puddles' Bonus Holistic Tips:

- A healthy koi pond is an ecosystem, not an ornamental fish bowl, and certainly not a hostage negotiation, however it may feel by Tuesday.
- Keep an eye on water quality, filtration, oxygenation, shade, temperature, and overall fish condition. Avoid overfeeding simply because the residents of the pond appear to be staging a hunger strike. They are not starving. They are negotiating. And they are very, very good at it.
- If fish show unusual behavior accompanied by poor appetite, lethargy, gasping, sores, or other signs of illness, seek advice from a qualified aquatic veterinarian or koi professional rather than relying on neighborhood folklore, however confidently it is delivered at the mailbox.



EXTRA BONUS - Field Notes:

Dear 'Watched', I reviewed your trailcam footage. My observations: a fox trotting the property line one evening paused to consider the koi as a buffet and received a spritz directly between the ears from roughly four feet out. The fox left. It has not returned. Word travels fast in the fox circles and beyond in Magnolia Point. A raccoon, undeterred by reputation, attempted a late-night raid and was met with what witnesses describe as sustained aquatic fire from Awa and at least one deputized colleague. It retreated up the nearest tree to reconsider several of its life choices. On another occasion, a feral cat approached with the studied casualness of an animal pretending it wasn't interested, and was corrected mid-saunter. It has not returned, though it has been seen watching the pond from a safe distance, visibly holding a grudge. And even the neighbor's terrier, a dog with no respect for property lines, made one exploratory visit to the pond's edge and left considerably wetter and noticeably more thoughtful. And has never returned.

What the household and visitors have perhaps failed to appreciate is that Awa does not spray residents purely for sport. She also serves, unofficially and without pay, as Head of Pond Security, a role she takes with tremendous seriousness and zero jurisdiction.

- STORY, PHOTOS: EDITOR





BECKY HINSON