

Stephen Cox, Spray Technician

“I love seeing the product of a good day’s work.”

The U.S. Army trained Stephen Cox as a cavalry scout, someone who would be the “eyes and ears of the commander” on the battlefield. He never deployed so he didn’t have to put what he’d learned into practice. When he left the military, Cox took those keen observational skills with him.

Now, as a member of the groundskeeping crew on the Deer Creek golf course, he’s “always watching, looking for things that need attention” and relaying what he sees back to Superintendent Pace Anderson and Assistant Superintendent Linsey Eckles.

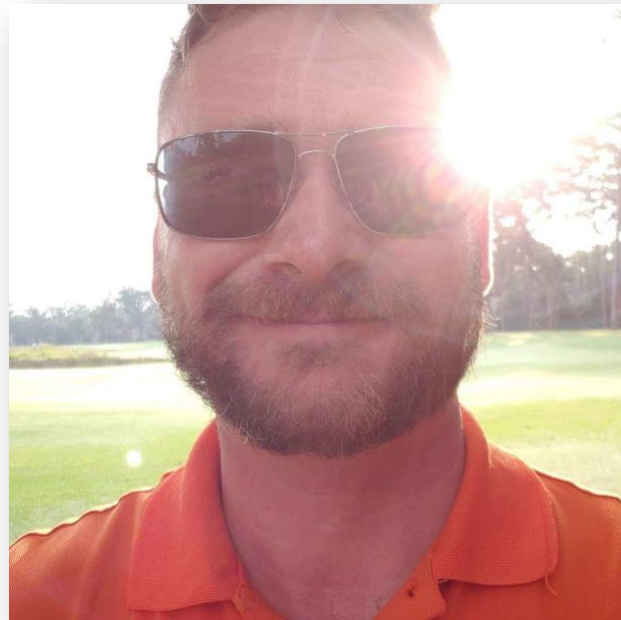
It might be mole damage, a tree limb damaged by lightning, an irruption of mushrooms, or a fairy ring, a fungus that appears as a perfect, expanding circle of yellow grass, or myriad other issues.

When Cox hired on, he didn’t know anything about golf course maintenance. He started out learning to rake bunkers. “They start you small,” he says of his managers, “but then they let you do something else and something else; they build you up and now there’s not anything I can’t operate.”

About a year after he started at The Landings Golf & Athletic Club, the position of spray technician opened up and Matt Jones, who was then at Deer Creek but is now superintendent of the Palmetto courses, told him he had noticed Cox’s eye for detail and encouraged him to study for the required licensing tests. Cox had to learn how to diagnose problems, handle chemicals safely, calculate the amounts to use to achieve optimal results, and minimize any negative effects on the environment. He says that, under Pace Anderson, he’s continuing to learn. “He enjoys teaching and I enjoy learning,” Cox says of Anderson.

Cox, 35, grew up in Hampton Roads, Virginia, worked in an auto repair shop for seven years, then joined the Army and was stationed at Ft. Stewart. He fell in love with the city as well as his girlfriend, Chelsea Roberts, a financing manager with an auto dealership in South Carolina. When they’re not working, the couple enjoys going on tours and learning about the history of an area. Cox says he’s a history buff and enjoys watching documentaries, especially about early American history.

One of the things he’s learned through his explorations is that Skidaway Island was an important part of the Underground Railroad, the network of safe houses and volunteers who helped



enslaved people escape to the North. In fact, the stream to the left of the 17th green on Deer Creek was once known as Runaway Creek.

Although he's a spray technician, Cox fills in wherever he's needed. "It's 100 percent a team effort to make it what it is," he says of the golf course.

For example, Cox had noticed that cedar trees along the marsh that runs the length of the par 4 9th hole and the par 5 18th hole all the way to the 17th green had become overgrown. Other, more immediate tasks took priority though. However, last winter, during a slow period, Cox took a chainsaw and worked with the crew for many days to clean up the excess growth along that entire stretch.

"I was out there the other day, driving down 18 and I looked out there, and I was proud because of what we did," he said. "I love seeing the final product of a good day's work."

By Rick Colvin, a member whose career as a journalist included 12 years with the Los Angeles Times.