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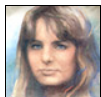
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
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Playing golf the green way

By [Rodney Page](#), Times Staff Writer
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Tuesday was Earth Day, but it is still officially Earth Week. More and more companies are looking at ways to become ecologically friendly, and the golf business is no exception.

Golf courses are looking at alternatives to pesticides. They are experimenting with a variety of turf, including some saltwater tolerant turf such as SeaDwarf, which use less water and don't require chemicals to stay green. Most golf carts used at courses are either electric or, in a rare cases, solar powered.

There are also ways golfers can do their part for the environment. Here are a few ideas that could make your next round a little greener.

Eco-friendly tees

It may be a little thing, but they make sense. They save wear and tear on mowers, and they save trees. Instead of using traditional wood tees that take years to biodegrade, why not try the myriad of eco-friendly ones available at most golf shops?

There are Eco Endurance tees that are made from natural resin and biodegrade in less than a year. It can cost 45 cents or less for a bag of 10-15 tees, depending on the number of bags ordered. They come in different lengths and earth-friendly bags.

Then there is the Eco tee, which uses not only resin, but natural starches, including corn. That supposedly makes the tee stronger, which means it lasts longer. It also biodegrades in about a year. The tee was used by golfers at last year's LPGA ADT Championship. Check out [ecogolf.com](#) for specifics.

Biodegradable balls


Remember the *Seinfeld* episode in which Kramer hits a ball into a whale's blow hole and almost kills it? It would not have happened had he been hitting a biodegradable ball. They are not meant to be played for 18 holes, but they work well as balls hit off cruise ships or into a water driving range.

Technically, the ball is made of 75 percent polyvinyl alcohol and 25 percent compound plasticizers and organic additive. Basically, the ball dissolves in water after about 24 hours. Makers claim it is safe to marine life. The only negative is that it flies about 75 percent the distance of a real ball. So the next time you're on a cruise ship whacking balls into the ocean, see if they're eco-friendly so you don't have to feel guilty.

Soft spike shoes

They have been the norm for a while, and most area courses are soft spike only. The reason

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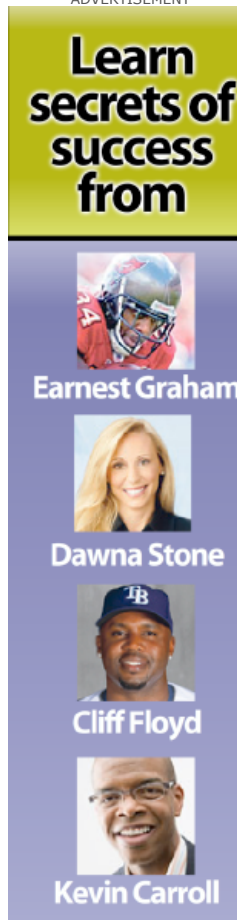
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is because metal spikes tear up the course, which means more maintenance. Just about every golf shoe company makes a spikeless version, with different types of soft spikes that screw on and off.

There is also a wide variety of plastic replacement spikes that can be found at most any golf shop.

Gas-free carts

Most courses already are on line with electric carts, which have replaced gas carts. But there is also a new wave of solar powered carts that have hit the market. A company called Cruise Car Inc. has marketed solar carts and solar panels for current electric carts in the past few years. Some are starting to pop up at the golf cart-crazy development The Villages, located in Central Florida. Many courses along South Carolina's Grand Strand area of Myrtle Beach have experimented with solar carts. When it's sunny, the carts can go all day. On a cloudy day, they can go for about three hours.

Ecologically friendly courses in Florida

Audubon International, which champions several environmental issues, has a list of certified courses committed to environmental issues. All of the courses on the current list are in South Florida.

- The Old Collier Golf Club, Naples
- Hammock Bay Golf and Country Club, Marco Island
- Old Palm Course, Palm Beach Gardens
- Pelican Preserve, Fort Myers
- Raptor Bay Golf Club, Bonita Springs
- Tuscan Reserve Golf Club, Naples
- Venetian Golf and River Club, Venice

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