



Jose A. Palma, Jr, putts a golf ball on his own private putting green on his Busti Avenue front lawn. (Mark Mulville/Buffalo News)

Meet Jose Palma, the Buffalo man with a putting green in his front yard

By [Jane Kwiatkowski Radlich](#) | Published July 21, 2018 | Updated July 21, 2018

Like many people in Western New York, Jose A. Palma Jr. is sweating it out this summer. Unlike most, Palma's concerns revolve around keeping his putting green free from grubs, slugs and other organisms. "You're constantly fighting something, whether it's the grubs or diseases," he said. "That's the thing with short grass. You see everything when grass is cut so low." When he refers to his creation four years in the making, Palma uses pronouns like "she" and "her." He has thousands of digital photos chronicling its growth.

Palma's putting green and the flowers that surround it will be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. July 28 and 29 during Garden Walk Buffalo. Palma resides across Busti Avenue from Front Park with its signature 5-foot white hydrangeas prospering along the promenade.

Surprisingly, despite favoring a duffer's garb of knickers and an argyle vest, Palma golfs at best once a year. The five hours it takes from his day would be better spent tending to the green and his perfectly mowed lawn. "It's all about perfect lines," he said, pointing to the front-mounted caster wheels on one of his two mowers. The greens mower was purchased at an auction when Westwood Country Club was sold, he said. "I picked it up for \$200."

Truckloads of sand cover a 6-inch layer of pea pebbles. Palma keeps his putting green cut to 3/16 of an inch, an eighth of an inch over the regulation height set by the U.S. Golf Association, according to Jason Marble, a golf professional at Buffalo Tournament Club in Lancaster.



"You're constantly fighting something, whether it's the grubs or diseases," said Jose A. Palma Jr. , who had spent four years perfecting his putting green on the front lawn of his Busti Avenue property across from Front Park. (Mark Mulville/Buffalo News)

Bentgrass is a common component of golf greens, said Marble. "It's a creeping grass that does not get very long. The leaf is very fine, and it bends over to create a root. That entire growth process creates a thatch that helps to prevent disease," Marble said. During summer months, Palma waters the green at 6 p.m. daily. He regularly keeps watch for dry spots. "Actually, she's still got a bit of dew on her, so she'll be hydrated for the next few hours," he said on a recent morning. "She'll start to dry out around 3 p.m. I'll give her a quick sprinkle."

Palma's duplex has six bedrooms, four bathrooms and provides approximately 2,604 square feet of living space. Built in 1937, the structure has been part of the Palma family for more than two decades. Today an Airbnb rental called Oasis Kentucky occupies the second floor residence. Palma and his girlfriend live on the first floor.

Palma was raised on 20 acres in Grand Island, where he learned he liked to landscape. His father's interest in real estate led Palma to buy Riverstone Grill, a restaurant on Grand Island, after he earned his MBA from Canisius College. Palma discovered golf after a devastating car accident forced the former soccer athlete to take up a non-contact sport.

"My neurosurgeon told me head shots were out of the question," Palma said. "I liked going out on the golf courses because they were the best maintained park. You could hang out with your friends and enjoy the scenery. That's what got me out at first." During college, Palma would invite his golf buddies over to practice 20-foot chip shots into the fountain at the center of the property's front lawn. The double lot has no back yard.

At times during a recent conversation, Palma's voice was drowned out by the sound of a lawn trimmer coming from his neighbor's front yard garden. Mark Mitskovski, an energy consultant, is the other half of the "Dueling Castles," a slogan Palma coined to pique interest in the two unusual properties on Busti. Visitors to Garden Walk will see the signs Palma made at each of the Garden Walk's visitor's centers.

The signs feature a low drone shot of the two parcels and a drawing of two men dueling with swords. Palma, concerned over the lack of visitors to his masterpiece putting green, wanted to make sure people know about the "westernmost dot" on the Garden Walk map. Mitskovski opted out of this year's Garden Walk because he is upgrading the stone facade on his "castle" home. But visitors can pay a visit to the house next door and even ask the owner how he does it. Not that he necessarily has an answer. "There's definitely no manual for building a putting green on your front lawn," Palma said.