

The USGA Green Section Record



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Fore The Golfer

Cattails - "Love 'Em And Leave 'Em"

by [James F. Moore](#), USGA Green Section



Cattails add a natural look to golf course water features and provide a variety of environmental benefits.

It's no secret that most golfers don't put cattails high on their list of favorite plants. In fact, when it comes to lakes and streams on the course, many players continue to demand the formal look of closely mown turf right to the water's edge. Unfortunately, while neat in appearance, this is a serious mistake environmentally and economically.

Common sense should tell us all that allowing vegetation to grow between the closely mown turf and the edge of the water will result in the interception and slowing of drainage runoff into the lake or stream. This runoff water has the potential to physically carry fertilizers and pesticides into non-target areas. This common sense theory has been substantiated through a great deal of scientific study. It just makes sense - allowing the turf to grow higher at the water's edge helps prevent environmental damage.

Buffer strips of higher mown turf can make a big difference. However, these areas do not do much to enhance bird and amphibian populations. That's where those cattails, willows, and other taller plants come in. In addition to helping to intercept fertilizers and pesticides, these plants provide food, safe cover, and habitat for many different creatures. Who would disagree with the beauty provided by the increased presence of Red-winged



Killdeer of all ages find safe cover and plenty of food in cattails.

Blackbirds, Killdeer, cranes, ducks and other birds? And how about more frogs, lizards, cicadas, fish and even the occasional snake? Bodies of water simply look healthier when they are populated with an abundance of living organisms. The ideal program is to utilize both methods. Mow the turf higher, creating buffer strips, and allow a variety of vegetation to grow along the banks and in the shallows of your course's streams and lakes.

Most golf course superintendents are aware of the benefits of buffer strips and aquatic vegetation. The hard part is convincing golfers that it is the right way to go. Note to golfers - consider one more not insignificant benefit - it is much cheaper to opt for the natural look! Supporting this program will allow your superintendent to concentrate available labor-hours and dollars where they can improve playing quality. This is certainly good news in these economic times.



A Red-winged Blackbird ventures from the nest to forage for insects in the nearby fairway.

So, to take a positive step environmentally, increase wildlife on your course, make the course more attractive, and save money in the process, put those weed whackers away!

For more on the advantages of naturalized golf course water features check out the links below.

[Best management practices to reduce pesticide runoff from turf](#)

[Using golf courses to bolster amphibian communities: University of Missouri scientists provide amphibian management guidelines for ecologically minded superintendents](#)

[Nutrient loss in runoff from turf: Effect on surface water quality](#)

[Getting through the winter: Helping frogs and salamanders survive](#)

[What goes up must come down: Innovation benefitting water and wildlife at The Villages of Sumter](#)

[Using buffer zones to promote amphibian populations](#)

[Golf course wetlands as refuges for turtles](#)

[Optimizing vegetative filter strips to treat runoff from turf](#)

[Protecting water quality on and off the golf course: Design features for filtering fertilizer nutrients](#)

[Buffer strips, runoff, and leachate: Research compares nutrient loading in runoff and leachate when buffer strips are used alongside golf course fairways](#)

[Mowing roughs to minimize runoff: Scientists at Oklahoma State University demonstrate the environmental protection value of multiple-height roughs](#)

[What is a buffer?](#)

Lesson One For Junior Golfers - "Care Of The Course"

The First Tee of Pittsburgh and the Greater Pittsburgh Golf Course Superintendents Association join together to teach young golfers etiquette and respect for the course.

by [Keith A. Happ](#), senior agronomist, USGA Green Section

The First Tee of Pittsburgh (FTP) and the Greater Pittsburgh Golf Course Superintendents Association (GPGCSA) joined to host a Pittsburgh Junior Golf Weekend on April 29 - May 1, 2011, at the Bob O'Connor Golf Course at Schenley Park, the home of the First Tee of Pittsburgh, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The course is situated in the heart of the city and overlooks the downtown area.

The primary purpose of the Junior Golf Weekend was to promote golf as a great activity for area youth and families while helping everyone learn about the FTP code of conduct: respect yourself, respect others, and respect your surroundings. More than 70 junior golfers participated in the event. The portion of the program centering on respecting your surroundings was presented by members of GPGCSA. Local superintendents educated the kids on proper golf course etiquette and also had an opportunity to explain and demonstrate the role of the golf course superintendent.

Representatives of GPGCSA conducted a free "Care of the Course" clinic. Association members Eric Wygant (superintendent at Shannopin Country Club) and Darrin Batisky (former superintendent at

Chartiers Country Club, currently a Helena representative) presented sessions on divot repair, divot filling, and ball mark repair. Each junior golfer received a free ball mark repair tool courtesy of GPGCSA. These future golfers learned that part of playing this great game is how you leave the course for those who play after your round is finished. They listened intently about how maintenance activities are conducted and how healthy grass is produced for the game of golf.

To expand golf's role in the sustainable use of environmental resources, the USGA Turfgrass and Environmental Research Program continues its 80+ years of funding research to develop turfgrasses with lower water and pesticide use. One project at Oklahoma State University focused on new bermudagrass cultivars that used less water and pesticides in the summer while greening up earlier in the spring.

[Read the rest of this article.](#)



Junior golfers learned the importance of course care, not only when they play, but also for those who play behind them. The future golfers were quite interested to learn how to fix a ball mark. Darrin Batisky demonstrated the proper technique.

The First Green Foundation Environmental Education Outreach In Action

Most primary grade teachers and students have never been on a golf course. In the state of Washington, this is changing.

by [Derf Soller](#), agronomist, USGA Green Section

On a cool fall day, Kristen Larson's Advanced Placement science class walks from nearby Sammamish High to Glendale Country Club in Bellevue, Wash., near Seattle. When they arrive, they grab clipboards, waders, and an orange. They head to Kelsey Creek, a stream that traverses the golf course, where the students will test the stream's water quality and oxygen level. They also will calculate the stream's volumetric flow rate, but first they must measure the stream's dimensions and its velocity (that's where the orange comes into play). Before the trip to Glendale is over, the students will have learned about the golf course property, some of the maintenance and management programs for course care, and, most likely, even tried their hand at putting, many for the first time.

Golf courses provide real-world examples for all subject areas. Steve Kealy, superintendent at Glendale, has worked with Lynn McKay's advanced horticulture students and the City of Bellevue to restore a portion of the Kelsey Creek streambed, an active salmon spawning stream, when a big storm tore through the course. Lynn's students designed the plantings and planted them at the course when Glendale received the city grant. In Spokane, Wash., approximately 10 classes come to Spokane Country Club each year on Planting Day. The students help grow some of the plants beforehand, and when they all arrive at the course, they put in the plants, enjoy a BBQ hosted by golf course superintendent Jeff Gullikson, CGCS, and even learn some golf course etiquette on the putting green. [Read the rest of this article.](#)



Steve Kealy, superintendent at Glendale C.C., helps measure stream dimensions for determining water flow measurements.

Regional Updates



Southeast Region

Two Pest Surprises in the Southeast Region

by [Patrick O'Brien](#) and [Chris Hartwiger](#), agronomists, USGA Green Section



(L) Spring dead spot appeared on a Diamond zoysiagrass fairway outside of Atlanta, GA this spring. It was the first reported case on a Zoysia matrella cultivar. (R) This is one of the first episodes of annual bluegrass weevil damage appearing in North Carolina.

Recent Turf Advisory Service visits in the Southeast Region found two unwanted turfgrass pests. It sure took us by surprise to see these new pests in North Carolina and Georgia.

The first pest was a fungus that commonly occurs on bermudagrass, called spring dead spot (SDS). An unusually high number of outbreaks occurred this year on bermudagrass tees, fairways, and

roughs. However, the surprise was to see this disease on zoysiagrass fairways in Georgia.

Another shocker happened in the Western Carolina Mountains at an elevation of 4,000 feet. The annual bluegrass weevil, often called the *Hyperodes* weevil, was observed feeding on *Poa annua* adjacent to a tee. This insect pest has been identified in 22 states, but this was perhaps one of the first confirmations in North Carolina.

[**Read the rest of this update.**](#)



North Central Region The Heat Is On

by [R.A. \(Bob\) Brame](#), director, USGA Green Section



(L) Waitea Patch has been a frequent sighting in the North Central Region and has pulled down the Poa annua canopy to the point where ball roll has been compromised. (R) A Proxy-Primo tank mix has significantly reduced Poa annua seedhead production.

The record-setting wet spring has left its mark throughout the lower North Central Region. Most courses have had to move forward with mowing under less-than-ideal conditions. Rutting has occurred, which will likely require rolling when things dry out, but on most sites the primary blemish has been mud tracking and clipping clumps. The next rainfall usually takes care of it, and blowing has helped improve clipping dispersion.

Now the heat is on, and, unfortunately, a significant number of courses did not complete their planned spring aeration. If we happen to move into another tough summer, the missed aeration could cause turf weakening and decline. Small-diameter solid tines on a conventional putting green aerator can help mitigate the vulnerability. Even though it is no substitute for core aeration, this method of opening and venting the soil ensures positive oxygen and water movement and can make a difference. The ideal frequency will vary, but every two weeks is not uncommon, especially when spring coring was missed.

Disease issues have increased over the last few days. Dollar spot, Microdochium Patch, red thread, *Pythium* root dysfunction and Waitea Patch have all been part of the mix.

[**Read the rest of this update.**](#)

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