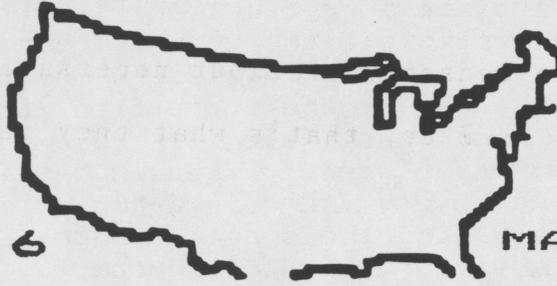


# TURFCOMMS



V. 5, I. 6

MAY 26, '90

**PURPOSE:** To pass on what we learn willingly and happily to others in the profession so as to improve turf conditions around the country.

Note: the last issue was mistakenly labeled V.6, I.5, it should have been V. 5, I. 5.

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**TEXAS TURF CONFERENCE - DEC. 1989 - SAN ANTONIO** There I learned that liquids and gases can be solid waste. Forget what you learned in physics or what the dictionary tells you, according to Texas Law "A solid waste may be liquid, solid, semisolid or gas."

Jim Moore, the Mid-Continent Region Agronomist for the USGA Green Section, got up and gave a talk that I thought took a lot of guts. In a talk labeled, Is Your Course Chemically Dependent he started off in essence saying that only 10% of golf course superintendents are good managers in that they have an excellent feel and knowledge of the grass's requirements for growth and survival.

He went on to say that this was at least in part due to the fact that the emphasis was now on hiring superintendents that were excellent people handlers (those good at public relations). The old time grass growers or gardeners are mostly gone from the business. I felt he was absolutely correct from my experiences 10% is probably a good estimate of the percentage of those superintendents very strong in understanding the grass's requirements.

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It is very critical that superintendents concentrate on PR for job security. Whether "they have an excellent feel and knowledge of the grass's requirements for growth and survival" is not critical to job security, although it sure helps. The best "grass growers" are often found in the transition zone where that need is more necessary for survival. It is in this region perhaps more than others where like in ancient history "sacrifices" are made whenever there is a "crop" failure. The "sacrifices" referred to being the superintendent's job and the "crop" failures in this region are all too common.

Mr. Moore went on to note that the golf courses with unlimited budgets are those where the fungicide and insecticide resistant pests are most often found. He predicted that superintendents may very shortly have to close the course for 24 hours every time they spray a pesticide. This he felt may force many superintendents to spray their course every monday on a preventative basis, resulting in a greater chemical dependency.

Jim called the Vertidrain a preventative fungicide, in that by providing drainage it prevented disease. Dr. Robert Carrow carried that theme further in the next talk stressing the need to develop a good cultivation program for healthy turf. Those new aerifiers sure make that a lot easier.

Wallace Menn gave a talk on SPRING TRANSITION of bermudagrass greens that rewrote the book. LOWERING THE MOWING HEIGHT AND INCREASING NITROGEN FERTILIZATION AT GREENUP GIVES A BETTER TRANSITION THAN the reverse procedure that had been believed, practiced and preached in the past. This startling suggestion is based upon only one year's data but was apparently clear cut.

When do you start vertical mowing to thin out the perennial rye? His data says the best time last year was when the four inch soil temperature went above 62°F and stayed there, April 17th at College Station. Doing it before this increased not decreased the ryegrass percentage in the stand.

Advice from Shull Vance, superintendent of the C.C. of Mobile, Alabama, was for superintendents to remember they are in the entertainment field and need to make people happy. "Take all day to tell somebody no." Negotiate! was his advice.

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SOUTHERN TURFGRASSES: Their Management and Use - a disappointment! This new book by Dr. Richard L. Duble, Extension Turfgrass Specialist at Texas A&M Univ. adds little to what has already been written. I was hoping it would have much more information on the southern grasses than it did. However, I did find it a useful supplement to Beard's 1973, Turfgrass: Science and Culture when writing lectures on the warm season grasses.

NATURAL DISASTERS: Acts of God or Acts of Man? by Wijkman and Timberlake: This Earthscan book of New Society Publishers should be required reading for all agronomist and environmentalist. After reading this book you may have some better answers for friends that ask questions about the need to send relief to third world countries suffering from droughts or floods. It may also help you appreciate the need to conserve soil here in the U.S. Only a 143 pages of easy reading text.

Another Earthscan book, Africa in Crisis by Lloyd Timberlake was also read this winter because I had a niece doing an undergraduate special project in Kenya and an old friend, former secretary Diane, over there as a missionary's wife in Swaziland. This book starts with the following quote from a relief worker in the Sahel, "Starve the city dwellers and they riot; starve the peasants and they die. If you were a politician, which would you choose?"

It ends in an equally depressing note, "This book has tried to describe the environmental bankruptcy which is spreading insidiously across Africa," {it succeeds all to well}. It goes on to say "Bankrupt environments lead to bankrupt economies and bankrupt nations, and could ultimately lead to a bankrupt continent. But environmental bankruptcy is manmade, caused by unwise governments and foolish aid and development policies. Environmental bankruptcy has NOT been caused by the stupid African peasant...On the contrary, it is the African peasant who...is the key to rebuilding their continent."

If you have an interest in the Africa problem read it, otherwise forget this depressing book.

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BRAD BAXTER, the author on the last page, describes himself as a semi-free-lance journalist from Ft. Worth, who now resides in the quaint hamlet of Pottsboro, TX. He is a graduate of The University of Texas with a B.A. in literature. He is an unpublished songwriter, overworked nurseryman and a self-taught 32 handicap golfer. But he never sleeps late.

I met Brad at the nursery where he works and figured with his dry, biting humor and college training he could add something worthwhile reading to this newsletter. So I commissioned him to write a couple of articles. I'll let you be the final judge of his ability. Let me hear your comments.

This first one must have been written during our Christmas freeze. It went down to 10 below in North Texas. Killed St. Augustine lawns, bermudagrass greens for the third time in seven years and a whole mess of trees and shrubs that are better off not planted this far north in the first place.

## Heat Of The Season

by

Brad Baxter

Well, it's the middle of winter again. Wind chill in my little North Texas town is about twenty below. My dog's at home by a lit stove, my wife's at work in a heated office, (with a blazing computer), and I'm about to wheel and deal with two elderly gentlemen, outside, where only fools, unsold fruit trees and nursery people brave the elements.

It's a nasty setting. We're all frozen half to death, our skin is dried out blue, our teeth (or dentures) make strange clicking sounds, like a worn out projector... but there's still a strange gleam in our cold eyes.

"Now's definitely the best time to plant 'em," says one of the old prospectors.

"Oh hell yes," says the other, about to break apart into so many frozen pieces.

"Let's see; you want two Elberta peaches, one Pineapple pear and one Methelley plum." My eyes were too glazed over to ask if they wanted anything else, and I secretly hoped they weren't as nutty as I'd been all these years. But I guess that strange, horticultural craving always ran deep, and to hell with the elements, at any age.

"You got anything new from A&M?" Can you beat that? The older of the two asked the question as if to tease me with his warm-blooded, cool-headed nursery prowess.

"No, but I've got a new catalog inside." Please, please, please.

A&M groupies sometimes infuriate me, all curious and fawning. I cursed all Aggies, especially now, with their fifty degree College Station weather, and their heated classrooms. Couldn't we all just plant Idaho potatoes and wait to thaw?

The wind cut through the three of us like a sharp-shooter in North Dakota tundra. And as I detrenched their icy, bare-rooted trees, then bedded them into warm, freshly moistened sawdust, I glanced up long enough to hear the old boys mumbling and chattering between themselves.

"Those are the sweetest peaches I ever ate."

"Ya boy."

"Don't forget to cut 'em back at least a third. And if you don't get 'em planted today, at least keep 'em warm and wet." I knew they knew, but I had to say it anyway, showing a bit of my own prowess, and my filial duty.

After a slight pause in the revelry and pain, I heard the older one say, "Let's go inside and look at that catalog... we might find something else we need." God bless that frozen old fart.

We all went inside for fifteen minutes, looked at the new catalog, their newest acquisitions and the working heater.

And if this happens ten times a day, or a thousand times a year, it still seems better to see a set or two of inquisitive eyes, or to hear the wonder in a cold breathless voice; and to know that some of us can face another frozen planting season... without necessarily sitting behind a heated computer.

Well, you know as well as I do, that's what they're doing right now at College Station.

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