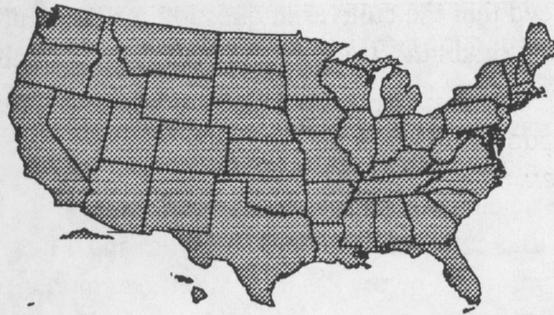


TurfComms



Vol. 9, I. 1

Nov. 16, '95

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

Al Radko Departs: As I'm sure you'll read or have already read, Alexander Radko passed away at the end of October. I would like only to say he was one of the greatest supervisors I had in my career. I'll greatly miss the occasional correspondence we had since he and I left the USGA. He was a supremely dedicated agronomist.

Readers of TurfComms: Who are they? As of the last issue 45 golf course superintendents, 42 other professionals in closely related fields or positions, 7 magazine or newsletter editors, 10 turf researchers, and 3 scattered family. Where from? 30 states and one outside of the U.S. Leading states in descending order are Texas, Arizona, Colorado, Maryland, Florida, Virginia, and Nebraska. The remaining 23 states have four readers or less. I try to do this summary to satisfy my own curiosity as much as anything, hope it gives you some idea of who your fellow readers are. By the way most of those "other professionals" are ex-superintendents.

We now have a fax line. It is (214) 519-9263

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ADVERTISEMENTS FOR CULTIVARS: I'd heard others grumble about how bad the advertisements were for various new cultivars. They love to quote National trials and you without a doubt have noticed that the cultivar in question is always at the top of whatever characteristic they wish to brag about. It didn't hit home to me how bad this had gotten until I requested material from one of the seed companies and got two brochures on new Kentucky bluegrass cultivars. Both gave the **Mean Turfgrass Quality Ratings of Kentucky Bluegrass Cultivars Grown Under Medium-high Maintenance at Seventeen Locations in the U.S. and Canada Est. 1990.** Then "selectively" listed 1991 - 1993 Means. In both case the cultivar the brochure was about listed that cultivar at the top of the list and 11 or 18 other cultivars below. The cultivar with 18 other cultivars below it had a 0.26 mean higher than the other. But the other was not listed on the long list below it. Wonder how many cultivars above they left out?

YELLOW BLUESTEM (*Bothriochloa isacheum*): When I first published a column on this nonnative warm season grass someone dropped me a line and said don't use it because it is aggressive and will invade desirable turf. Well I'm beginning to see quite a bit of it around in lawns here in the Plano, TX area on heavy clay soil. It is most aggressive on the unfertilized, dry lawns which are mowed irregularly. But, it is becoming quite common in lawns here.

DESERT WILLOW (*Chilopsis linearis*): A few years ago I discussed four trees that had been found to withstand a dry (15 inches/year + or -) climate and had a winter hardiness of at least zone six. One of those was the desert willow which is a close relative of the catalpa. The November issue of The Avant Gardener, a newsletter reviewing the literature for gardeners, had a half page column on this species. They report that an Arizona nurseryman is working with a blue-flowered cultivar. That the USDA Plant Materials Center in NM has developed three cultivars. One with white, a pink, and a purple-variegated flowered one; named respectively 'Hope', 'Barranco', and 'Regal'.

They also note that a cross with *Catalpa bignonioides* in Russia has produced a new species which has been named *Chitalpa tashkatensis*. Some of plants of this new species are now growing in the New York Botanical Garden. It is a rapid growing tree to 20 feet or more with "showy racemes of flowers, mainly in early summer but continuing sporadically until frost." Two cultivars are being released: 'Morning Cloud' and 'Pink Dawn'. This new species or hybrid seems to be hardy to -10°F, which would make it a zone 6 plant.

TREES AND SHRUBS FOR NORTHERN GOLF COURSES: Dr. Paul Cappiello or 5722 Deering Hall, the University of Maine, Orono, ME 04469-5722 just published an updated version of Bulletin #156 "Woody Landscape Plant Cold-Hardiness Ratings" which should be very appropriate for those in the hardiness zones 3, 4 and 5 from North Dakota south. I have just order my copy so at this time can only review the American Horticulturist's review.

High on his list of cold tolerant ornamentals are Hydrangea paniculata 'Grandiflora Dwarf', Magnolia 'Elizabeth', Magnolia stellata 'Centennial' a star magnolia, Stewartia koreana (Korean stewartia), and Weigela florida 'Red Prince'. For that wet site as a backup tall perennial for that flower bed is Eupatorium purpureum 'Atropurpureum' a purple cultivar of Joe-pye weed.

METHYL BROMIDE: The title of the article on this that caught my eye read, "Methyl bromide doesn't stick around." It was in Science News, Oct. 28, 1995. As you are probably aware methyl bromide is being phased out by the year 2001. This study may help us keep it for a while longer as a soil sterilant.

Methyl bromide has been declared an ozone-depleting chemical. This study finds that soil adsorbs it quickly and the bacteria in the soil break it down rapidly. This assumes you haven't killed off the bacteria with a high rate such as is used for soil fumigation. Well, I said it may help.

HIGH pH IRRIGATION WATER: If this, or low pH water is troubling you there is an excellent article to read in the Nov. 1995 Golf Course Management. It is "Controlling Soil pH with Irrigation Water" by Tom Lubin.

SOIL TESTING: If interpreting the results of soil nutrient tests concern you Dr. Robert N. Carrow has written an article well worth reading in the Nov. 1995, Golf Course Management. It is "Soil Testing, for Fertilizer Recommendations".

NEEM OIL HOW SAFE? This newly much praised natural product of a tropical tree may not be quite as safe for users as some would have you believe. A report in World Press Review, Dec. 1995, says it may act as both a spermicide and a morning after remedy for women. The article notes that women in Madagascar have chewed the leaves to prevent pregnancy while women in Ghana and Gambia drink the juice of the leaves to induce abortion. Will routine use as an insecticide expose you to some of these properties? Possibly, especially if you're sloppy with it because its natural product label makes you feel safe.

BUFFALOGRASS: The most recent issue of California Turfgrass Culture (V. 45, I. 1&2) is just on this species (12 pages) including some of the research on it in California. The data from research at the Davis location showed California recent releases, Hilite 15 and Hilite 25 to have superior rates of spread, turf density, injury regrowth potential, and color and monthly quality ratings compared to Prairie and Texoka. The first three cultivars were equal on shade, drought, cold and heat tolerance. Hilite 15 was superior in salinity tolerance. Prairie was never far from the values for the Hilite cultivars except in color. Texoka was a clear third class cultivar in this and other tests I have seen.

GREEN INDUSTRY EXPO: I attended my first and the 84th Professional Grounds Maintenance Society Annual Conference this Nov. in Ft. Worth, TX. I much enjoyed running into old acquaintances and speakers I haven't seen at the various golf course conferences in a while.

Dr. Tom Watsche of Penn State gave a talk on pesticide movement from which I was surprised to learn that clippings from grass treated with Type II plant growth regulators (Cutless, TGR, and Primo) are capable of passing on a growth regulator affect to trees or shrubs the clippings might be spread or piled up underneath.

The most exciting talk to me, was that by Dr. John N. (Trey) Rogers of Michigan State Univ. it was about his graduate student's work with **crumb rubber** (ground up rubber tires). They obtained very positive results just topdressing it on the turf, much better results than incorporating it. This material is easy to apply, it appears to reduce soil compaction, and reduce wear. They looked at two particle sizes 1/4 and 10/20 mesh material. The latter did provide a little quicker affect, but in the long run both were equally as effective. They conclude it is going to take approximately 1/2 inch or more of the material on athletic fields to obtain a definite benefit.

The turf must be in good shape before topdressing and the height of cut needs to exceed one inch. If the turf is thin or shortly mowed there is some potential for the material to wash. They did obtain some reduction in shearvane strength the first season but rooting was better the second and third year. The material is of no benefit unless the turf is under heavy traffic stress. There may be a heating of the soil surface if the turf cover is gone. This would be of little problem, in fact might be helpful in bermudagrass but could be of some problem in cool season turfs.

They did look at micronutrient release from the rubber and found increased levels of zinc. Crumb rubber should be great for the center and goal areas of football and soccer fields, end of cart paths, areas between sand traps and other high traffic areas. He reported one golf course used it before a tournament and found great benefit in spectator walking areas during rainy/muddy conditions. This material (often sold as Rebound) is going to cost you between \$380 to \$480/ton and it takes a 1/2 ton/M to obtain 1/2 inch/M.

Dr. Rogers also gave a talk on **athletic field** improvements. During that he pointed out differences in wear tolerance of perennial ryegrass cultivars. **Most wear resistant in the Central Michigan area are: Dandy, Repell, Prelude, Strider, Palmer, Target, and Gator.** Least wear tolerant were: Charger, Medalist 8, Delray, Citation II, Troubadour, and (can't read my notes).

He also gave some information on Poa supina. This stoloniferous bluegrass may have some use on athletic fields in the North (Michigan and Canada). It looks great under low light intensity.

MORE ON THIS CONFERENCE AND THE EXPO IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

PLANNING NEXT YEAR'S BUDGET ? Hope you included some for a turf advisory visit.

\$650 for a half day

\$1100 for a full day

These rates assume that the visit is made during my normal travels around the country.