



TEE TO GREEN

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Superintendents Association



President's Message

Black Sunday— and Other Season Highlights

Good Year, Bad Year. That about sums up the 1995 season so far. A mild winter made the spring relatively uneventful—not too many problems anywhere. The summer started off pretty well, with normal temperatures. And then, around mid-June, the humidity began to roll in, and suddenly, I realized it hadn't rained in four or five weeks. Roughs were dry and beginning to brown out. Weather forecasts—every night for weeks—called for thunderstorms, lightning, and rain.

For many of us, the rain never came. Others were inundated. I first realized these widely varied weather patterns at the Salem meeting. First of all, the roughs there weren't burned out like they were here at Westchester. And then, someone at the meeting started telling me how wet his course was and how he wished it would stop raining. I, of course, thought he was crazy. His course was less than 10 miles from me, and Westchester had barely seen a drop.

Another superintendent told me that in June and July, he'd gotten 9½ inches of rain. During that same period, I got only 1½ inches—and all in the span of about 20 minutes!

It only follows, then, that disease conditions have also varied pretty widely. Though we've all had the humidity to contend with, those courses that also got the rain were particu- *(continued on page 2)*

Special Feature

Associate Member Shares Successes With 'Back to Basics' Maintenance Approach

Country Club of Portland Superintendent Pat Lewis Opens the Book on His Grass Roots Maintenance Approach—From Selling Its Merits to Putting It Into Practice

The articles by Dr. Skogley and Sherwood Moore in the March/April issue of *Tee to Green* really hit home. They both touched on our modern golf course maintenance programs and questioned the long-term effects of overgrooming and treating our courses.

I've been superintendent at Portland Country Club here in Falmouth, ME, for eight years. For the past five, we've done everything possible to tend to the *long-term* health and welfare of our turf and soil—often at the expense of blemish-free and impeccably fast playing surfaces.

We decided to take this tack to try to restore the vigor of our turf, which every winter seemed to suffer severe ice damage. Some of our greens wouldn't survive at all, and the rest of the turf was tough to turn around—especially since, being on the Maine coast, our springs are cold and damp.

Fortunately, our "back to basics" maintenance approach seems to be paying off: I've seen the turf become much stronger—and better able to

recover from seasonal stresses—as each year passes. Most notable: For the past three years, all of our greens have come through the winter alive and well.

Setting the Stage

Granted, I realize, particularly in the Met area, that this approach is a hard sell. At Portland, I started by having a heart-to-heart with my Greens Committee and the board about my intentions and how I felt they would benefit both the club and the course down the road. At the time, we were known for having the fastest greens around; they were stimping at 9½ to 10 every day. But with the support of other clubs in the Portland area who also agreed to raise the heights of cut on their greens, I explained that:

- I would raise the height of cut on greens, upping green speed only for weekends and special events.
- We would rely less on chemicals and more on fertility requirements. That would mean accepting "a little less than perfect" conditions, but on the flip side, we could reduce our *(continued on page 4)*

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Black Sunday—and Other Season Highlights

larly susceptible to disease problems—and no doubt had to apply a fair amount of fungicides.

I, myself, had my share of challenges—particularly the last two weeks of July. No rain in eight weeks, then that 20-minute downpour. High humidity was followed, suddenly, by *no* humidity, gusty winds, shallow roots, and 95-degree temps. That was July 30—a day that has gone down in superintendents' record books as "Black Sunday." All the hoses, sprinklers, mist systems, and manpower could not keep up with the wilt that afternoon.

These varied conditions have, I'm sure, instigated much "grill room" conversation: "I played XYZ course, and the greens were really firm but thin and spotty." Or "I played ABC course, and the ball plugged on every shot, but it was nice and green."

If you're brought into one of these conversations, you'll, of course, want to point out these unusual weather pat-

terns—and that even when you take the weather out of the picture, it's tough to compare one course to another. Some are blessed with the key ingredients for success—relatively new courses with large greens, good drainage and soil mixes, and newer turfgrass varieties. For others, it's a constant battle. These, of course, are things *we* all know but few golfers understand. (But this is a whole separate story.)

Well, fortunately, the weather has, once again, taken a turn for the better. On the 8th, I woke up to 51 degrees, and for the first time since late May, I wore a windbreaker. It's time to take a deep breath, look around, and realize it won't be long before everything will be green again. And then, it'll be time to start planning for 1996. I can't wait.

Hey, for those of you who read my May President's Message, tell me: How *are* those summer personalities doing?

JOE ALONZI, CGCS
President

News From the National

GCSAA Unveils New Conference and Show Schedule

The GCSAA recently approved a new format for the annual International Golf Course Conference and Show. It will now run Monday to Sunday, rather than Monday to Monday.

The reason for the tightened schedule is that research has shown that a large majority of registrants leave on Sunday, missing activities such as the final day of the trade show, the association's annual meeting, the USGA Green Section session, and the banquet and show. The annual meeting, for instance, will now run Saturday morning; the banquet, Saturday evening; and the USGA Green Section session on Sunday afternoon.

Says GCSAA President Garry Grigg, CGCS, of the change: "Now members can leave the conference and show on Sunday evening and not worry about missing anything."

This year's convention is scheduled for February 5 - 11, 1996 in Orlando, FL.

Upcoming Events

September MetGCSA Meeting

Tuesday, September 12
Metropolis Country Club
White Plains, NY
Final Round: Championship Qualifier
Host Superintendent: Tony Grasso

NYSTA Turf and Grounds Exposition

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MetGCSA Honors Eight Scholarship Recipients

Eight children of MetGCSA members were awarded scholarships from the association's scholarship fund, which this year totaled \$5,000.

Honored at the July 25 meeting at Salem Golf Club, the winners were chosen by the Scholarship Committee based on their maturity, academic history, ambition, extracurricular activities, and effort exhibited in completing their application.

Congratulations to the following recipients—and their parents:

- **Cassie Alonzi:** Cassie will be studying early childhood development at Iona College this fall. She is involved in Special Olympics and does community service for the Association for Retarded Citizens in Greenwich, CT. Cassie's parents are Kim and Bob Alonzi, superintendent at Winged Foot Golf Club.

- **Dana Alonzi:** Dana has completed her sophomore year at Elizabethtown College, where she is pursuing a degree

in occupational therapy. Her parents are Bob and Kim Alonzi.

- **Robert Carriere:** Robert will enter Penn State this fall, where he plans to pursue a bachelor's in turfgrass science. His parents are Rosemary and Bill Carriere of James Carriere & Sons, Inc.

- **Evan Maddocks:** Evan is entering his junior year at Vanderbilt University with a major in engineering science and applied physics. He is the son of Ekwanok Country Club superintendent Ted Maddocks and his wife, Adele.

- **Jeffrey May-Stahl:** Jeff will attend the University of Connecticut in the fall. He is pursuing a degree in environmental science, with an eye toward a career in environmental law. Jeff is the son of Joe Stahl of Metro Milorganite Inc. and his wife, Victoria.

- **Lisa Monteleone:** Lisa will be entering her senior year at Iona College as a finance major. She would like to further her education after graduating in 1996. Lisa is the daughter of Dom

Monteleone, an assistant superintendent at Winged Foot Golf Club, and his wife, Ann Marie.

- **Christina Pakkala:** Christina will be a sophomore at Penn State this fall. In addition to her studies, Christina enjoys charity work with her sorority. She is the daughter of Woodway Country Club superintendent Larry Pakkala and his wife, Carole.

- **Jason Wistrand:** Jason is the family's fourth generation to pursue a career in turfgrass management. He will attend Rutgers in the fall. Jason is the son of Betty and the late Craig Wistrand.

We urge you to continue your support to our Scholarship Fund. Most of the funds raised are from our annual Christmas Raffle, but personal donations also help to make our Scholarship Awards possible. And I think no one can deny that helping our young adults be their best is a worthy cause.

JOHN J. O'KEEFE, CGCS
Scholarship & Research Committee

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Associate Member Shares Successes With 'Back to Basics' Maintenance Approach

chemical budget and, as years went on, be able to apply these savings to other areas. (Right now, I'm putting some of those cost savings into labor.)

• We could insure, in decades to come, that reconstruction needs would not be a result of poor soil management practices—as they so often are.

The results? Well, as far as the members go, there are those who still prefer putting surfaces that resemble a tiled floor, but the truth is that the majority enjoy an 8 to 8½ green speed. And we've found that the increased turf density has produced a fine roll of the ball—and even more notable for our part of Maine, excellent spring golf conditions.

Another positive outcome: We've cut our chemical expenditures by 50 percent.

And when fungicides are necessary, we need less to achieve the desired control.

The figures: In year one, we spent \$18,000 on fungicides; now we come in at around \$5,500. Insecticides in year one totaled \$3,000; now we spend about \$1,000. Our herbicide budget is about \$1,000 and has changed very little, since crabgrass is not as prevalent in Maine as it is in the Met area.

Steps to Healthy—Not Picture-Perfect—Turf
Here's what I both practice and "preach" for encouraging healthier turf:

• *Relearn pest and disease cycles.* We generally apply chemicals to cure—rather than prevent—turf problems, keeping a vigilant eye on the course to spot prob-

lems before they get out of hand.

We also closely chart when—and where—various problems typically occur to help us minimize our applications. For instance, we're going out now to chart crabgrass growth so we can spot spray those areas next spring. Our charts also show that our fairways are generally hit with dollar spot in August, so we try to plan a fertilizer application early in the month since a good N boost keeps it in check.

Mid-June we were hit with dollar spot because I was trying to hold back growth and didn't fertilize. So I *did* have to apply a fungicide on the fairways this year. But aside from that, the only chemicals we've applied were on our greens: once for leaf spot, another time

Portland Country Club Breathes New Life Into Its Ailing Ponds

In 1989, Portland (Maine) Country Club's three ponds were essentially barren. "They stunk and were being taken over by cattails," says Pat Lewis, a MetGCSA Associate member and the club's superintendent for the past eight years. "Fortunately, one of our members had heard of a firm in Columbus, OH, that specialized in cleaning up polluted waters," he says.

Called Lambda Systems (614-278-2600), the firm has successfully treated both eutrophication and a laundry list of more dangerous pollutants, including heavy metals, hydrocarbons, pesticides, herbicides, and, as Lambda's Jo Davison puts it, "Just about anything but snake venom."

When Davison got to Portland, she found what Pat Lewis had suspected: The ponds were so heavily contaminated with heavy metals and other pollutants that the microecological population was almost completely gone.

Microorganisms native to the site had the inherent capacity to clean up these toxins, according to Davison. But the rapid accumulation of high levels of pollutants had killed off these microbes

before they could do their work.

Lambda's approach to this problem was to restore the compromised ecosystem by improving existing microbes. "You've got to bring the bugs up to a higher level of competence where they can degrade these things," says Davison.

Davison's work at the club began with a seven-month evaluation period. She took numerous soil and water samples back to her lab in Ohio and painstakingly identified the microorganisms that make up the area's microecology.

Once identified, these microorganisms—300 to 400 in all—were grown in the presence of gradually increasing levels of contaminants. This allowed the microbes to become acclimated, increasing their natural capacity to resist and degrade pollutants.

"This is a natural process that would happen on its own," says Davison. "We just work with the natural ecosystem to speed its evolution up by about 75 to 100 years. The bugs are harmless when we get them, and they're harmless when we put them back. They're just more efficient."

Once acclimated, the microbes are

reintroduced to the site. "Davison shipped us about 40 drums filled with burlap sacks of activated charcoal loaded with the microorganisms," says Pat.

Distributed among the three ponds, these "bioreactors" sat at the ponds' bottoms while the microbes did their work.

A total of \$35,000 was spent on the cleanup project, which fortunately reaped positive results: After a month, levels of lead, mercury, and other toxins were reduced to drinking-water standards. "The bugs have repopulated the ponds, and they can continually clean up pollutants that wash in," says Davison.

"We're very happy," says Pat. "The water quality is excellent, and the wildlife has returned: fish, ducks, blue herons, night herons."

Further proof of the program's merit: In 1994, four years after the original application and with no further intervention, the ponds were certified as Audubon wildlife sites.

This piece was adapted from "Bioremediation, Combined With Aeration, Gains Practical Acclaim," which appeared in the April 1995 issue of Golf Course News.

for anthracnose, and again for brown patch.

- *Monitor the weather closely.* We watch the weather—and course—closely to avoid unnecessary watering, which aside from being a waste of a valuable resource can also encourage disease.

- *Use the HydroJect or Verti-Drain to encourage healthier root systems and better*

At Portland, we've had an aggressive aeration program, primarily because we have old (the course was built in 1921), soil-based greens that have a history of compaction problems. When I took over in 1988, we also had two to three inches of thatch on our greens.

So for the first two years, we used conventional coring once each year; then in '89, '90, and '91, we used the Verti-Drain once a year. In '92 we HydroJected five times, and in '93 we cored once and HydroJected another five times. In '94, we HydroJected four times and then backed off this year, HydroJecting once in July. In September, we also plan to use the Verti-Drain.

I can definitely say that, as a result of this program, our greens now drain well and have a much better root system.

- *Syringe after any type of aerifying.* Watering immediately after aerifying seems to speed the healing process.

- *Take soil samples at least every other year to chart—and then maintain the proper—pH and nutrient levels on greens, tees, and fairways.* Our most notable nutrient problem showed up my first year here. Our tests showed we had dangerously low levels of potassium in the soil, so we, of course, went for a fertilizer with a relatively high ratio of potassium.

- *Raise mower heights.* We raised our height of cut from $\frac{1}{8}$ " to $\frac{11}{64}$ " for two years to allow the bentgrass we were overseeding with to gain a foothold. Then, we went to our current height of cut: $\frac{5}{32}$ ". This gives us about 8 to 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ on the stimpeter.

To get green speed up for tournaments—and weekends—we might topdress to firm up the greens, particularly in the

spring when greens are soft (we never topdress in summer), or we'll roll the greens or double cut them. But our typical maintenance schedule is like this: We single cut five times a week and double cut once a week, generally Thursdays. We roll twice a week, usually Fridays and Saturdays or for a special event. What we do to up green speed, however, does vary with the weather.

- *Find ways to reduce mechanical stress on turf.* Some things we've found effective: Avoid verticutting when the weather is not optimum for recovery. Hand-water dry spots, reserving the irrigation system for deep watering. Work in topdressing with the smooth side of a metal rake rather than a brush behind a golf cart. We topdress lightly with a Lely Topdresser and water in our lightest applications. When we topdress a little heavier, we push rake it in, which takes two crew members three to four hours.

- *Put a premium on sharp cutting units.* We grind our greens mowers twice during the season, once during the winter.

- *Remove trees that inhibit sunlight, and prune roots that are growing into fine turf areas.* We've taken down trees that prevented morning sun from reaching many of our greens, and we've root-pruned from tee to green the whole side of three fairways. We used a trencher to cut the roots, rototilled the soil, brought in recycled loam, and now these areas are lush and green—and require less water to keep them that way.

- *Use organic fertilizers as much as possible to help rejuvenate your soil.* We use a combination of organics and synthetics. Here's our basic program:

On greens (2.5 acres): Over the past few years, we've spoon-fed greens with an organic fertilizer—either Ringer or Sustane—and we've put down a total of 1 to 2 lbs. of N per 1,000 sq. ft.

In synthetics, we apply a total of 2 to 3 lbs. of N a year and 3 to 6 lbs. of potassium a year.

On tees (1.3 acres): This year, we've gone 100 percent organic on our tees.

So far, we've applied Sustane—2 lbs. of N per 1,000 square feet—and by the end of this year, we'll have applied another pound.

On fairways (22 acres): In '93 and '94, we applied 400 bags of Pro-Gro—1 lb. of N—each year to amend the soil. It was kind of like composting the soil. It's livened it up, making the grass visibly more healthy. In addition, over the past two years, we applied 2 to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of N and 3 to 4 lbs. of potassium.

- *Minimize the use of herbicides.* We never use herbicides on greens. There, we handpick the weeds or cut them out with a cup cutter and replace the plug with turf from our nursery. In other areas, we wait until weeds—like clover or plantain—appear and then spot spray them with a post-emergent, rather than blanket entire fairways or tees with a herbicide. For crabgrass, we do use a preemergent, but only where the weed is typically most prevalent.

- *Encourage wildlife.* Inviting wildlife is part of restoring nature's balance to the land. The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary program offers some of the best guidelines around. We're currently certified in four of the six categories, with Food Enhancement and Public Involvement the only two areas where we haven't met all the requirements.

One of the largest improvements we made as part of this program was to enhance the water quality of our three ponds, which we found were contaminated with heavy metals and a variety of other pollutants. (See article on page 4 for cleanup story.)

Now our ponds not only meet drinking water standards, but also support a host of wildlife. We don't do anything to our ponds. They're sustainable, balanced systems that work.

We hope to say the same about the entire golf course one day. We're on the way, but as the old adage goes: "Good things take time"—and in this case, a lot of patience and persistence on the part of the superintendent.

PATRICK E. LEWIS, CGCS
Portland Country Club

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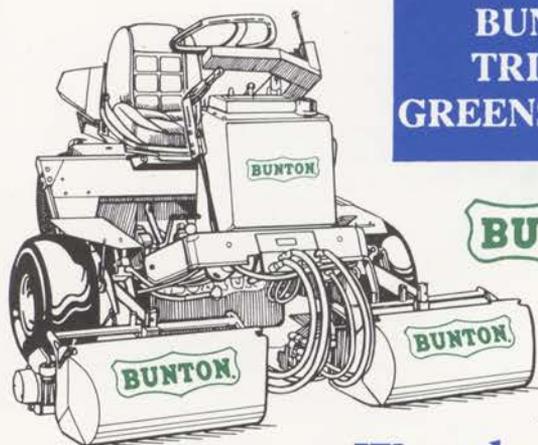
For the Fall Session, which runs October 2 through December 8, 1995, applications were due August 4.

For the Winter Session, however, you still have time. Applications are due October 6, and the session runs from January 3 through March 8, 1996.

Anyone interested in learning—or fine-tuning—the technical, as well as management skills required of golf course superintendents should contact the Cook College Office of Continuing Professional Education, P.O. Box 231, New Brunswick, NJ 08903-0231, 908-932-9271.

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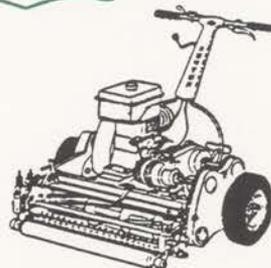
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- ☆ **Glenmore Landscape Service**
Glenn S. Moore
98 Hackgreen Rd., Pound Ridge, NY 10576
914-764-4348
- ☆ **Grass Roots Turf Products Inc.**
Ken Kubik
P.O. Box 336, Mt. Freedom, NJ 07970
201-361-5943
- ☆ **Greenacres Company**
Irrigation Contractor
266 Newtown Tpke., Redding, CT 06896
Dave Pijnenburg: 203-938-8618
- ☆ **Hawthorne Bros. Tree Service Inc.**
John Hawthorne/Charles Siemers
5 Center St., Bedford Hills, NY 10507
800-235-7035
- James Barrett Associates, Inc.**
Golf Course Irrigation Design & Consulting
Jim Barrett: 201-744-8237
Montclair, NJ
- ☆ **James Carriere & Sons, Inc.**
Bill and Joe Carriere
7 Cottage St., Port Chester, NY 10573
914-937-2136
- ☆ **LESCO, Inc.**
Seed, Fertilizer, Control Products, Equipment
Greg Moran: 914-331-4869
800-321-5325
- ☆ **Loft's International Golf Development Division**
John Farrell
2202 Hangar Rd., Ste. 170, Allentown, PA 18103
201-267-8358
- ☆ **Metro Milorganite Inc.**
Rick Appar/Scott Appar/Joe Stahl
365 Adams St., Bedford Hills, NY 10507
914-666-3171, FAX 914-666-9183
- ☆ **Mid Westchester Landscaping, Inc.**
Greg Porteus: 914-739-5800
Excavation, Blacktop, Hydroseeding,
Wet Well Installations
- Montco/Surf-Side/Zap!**
Surfactants & Defoamers
Box 404, Ambler, PA 19002
Bob Oechsle: 215-836-4992, FAX 215-836-2418
- ☆ **Nassau Suffolk Turf Services, Inc.**
Frank Marra
Turf Supplies & Equipment Rentals
516-286-1052, PAGER 516-278-4766
- Partac Golf Course Top-Dressing**
Kelsey Park, Great Meadows, NJ 07838
Jim Kelsey: 800-247-2326/908-637-4191
Bill & Joe Carriere: 914-937-2136
- ☆ **Pro-Lawn Products, Inc.**
Richard Cooke
Turf & Ornamental Products
914-883-5881, FAX 914-883-5943
- ☆ **Rhone-Poulenc Co./CHIPCO**
Greg Hutch
877 Yellowbank Rd., Toms River, NJ 08753
908-929-4657
- SAV-A-TREE**
Thomas Marino
360 Adams St., Bedford Hills, NY 10507
914-666-8202
- ☆ **Shemin Nurseries Inc.**
Horticultural-Irrigation Supplies
Jim Hesse: 203-531-7352
1081 King St., Greenwich, CT 06831
- ☆ **Stephen Kay, Golf Course Architects**
Renovation, Master Planning, New Golf Courses
495 New Rochelle Rd., Office 2B
Bronxville, NY 10708, 914-699-4437
- ☆ **Steven Willand, Inc.**
Bruce Pye
23 Route 206, Augusta, NJ 07822
201-579-5656
- ☆ **Tee and Green Sod, Inc.**
Bentgrass, Fescue, Rye, Sod Blends, Washed Sod
P.O. Box 418, Exeter, RI 02822
Owen Regan/David Wallace: 401-789-8177
- ☆ **The Cardinals, Inc.**
John E. Callahan
166 River Rd., Unionville, CT 06085
203-673-3699
- ☆ **The Scotts Company**
Steve DiVito: 203-723-5190
Tom Marmelstein: 516-679-1961
- ☆ **The Terre Company of NJ, Inc.**
Byron Johnson Jr.
206 Delawanna Ave., Clifton, NJ 07014
Office: 201-473-3393 Home: 203-748-5069
- ☆ **TurfNet Associates, Inc.**
Peter L. McCormick
21 Brandywine Rd., Skillman, NJ 08558
800-314-7929, FAX 908-359-3389
- ☆ **Turf Products Corp./TORO**
George Gorton, Irrigation/Al Tretera, Equipment
P.O. Box 1200, Enfield, CT 06083
800-243-4355/203-763-3581
- ☆ **Turf Products Corporation**
Ernie Rizzio
47 Howell Rd., P.O. Box 296
Mountain Lakes, NJ 07046, 201-263-1234
- ☆ **Valley View Wholesale Greenhouse**
Frank Amodio
229 Smithridge Rd., So. Salem, NY 10590
914-533-2526, FAX 914-533-2050
- ☆ **Westchester Ford Tractor Inc.**
John Apple/Ray Beaudry
Meadow St., Goldens Bridge, NY 10526
914-232-7746
- ☆ **Westchester Turf Supply, Inc.**
Bob Lippman Sr./Bob Lippman Jr.
P.O. Box 198, Lincolndale, NY 10540
Office: 914-248-7476 Mobile: 914-649-0303
- ☆ **White Contractors**
Golf Course Construction & Renovation
P.O. Box 484, Old Greenwich, CT 06870-0484
James E. Morris Jr.: 203-869-8808/914-234-0092
- ☆ **Wilfred MacDonald, Inc.**
Dennis DeSanctis/Chris Santopietro
Rt. 17 & Terminal Rd., Lyndhurst, NJ 07071
201-804-1000