



April 1979

Published monthly by the Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association

Vol. IX, No. 3

MGCSA MEETING NOTICE:

Date: Thursday, April 19
Place: Indian Hills Country Club
21 Breeze Hill Road
Ft. Salonga (Northport), N. Y. 11768
Host: David Marmelstein
Telephones: 516-261-5700 (Superintendent)
516-757-7718 (Golf Shop)
Golf: 12 noon Carts: \$12.00
Lunch: Available from 11:00 a.m.
Cocktails: 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Dinner: 7:30 p.m. \$14.00 (cash or sign)
Program: 6:00 p.m.—Speaker to be announced.
Note: One Turf related guest per member
Directions: **Throgs Neck Bridge to L.I. Expressway (East)** Exit off L.I.E. at Sunken Meadow Pkwy. (North-Exit#53) Go North on S.M. Pkwy. to last exit west before toll which will be Rt. #25 A West. Take Rt. #25A west for approx. 2 miles until Shell Gas Station. Turn right on Fresh Pond Rd. and then take 2nd left onto Breeze Hill Rd. Club is on Left at top of hill.

COMING EVENTS:

April 19 MGCSA/LIGCSA Joint Meeting,
Indian Hills C. C.
May 24 MGCSA Monthly Meeting, Westchester C. C.
May 29-June 3 Golden Lights Tournament, Wykagyl C. C.
June 7 MGCSA Monthly Meeting, Mt. Kisco C. C.
July 9-15 1979 U.S. Women's Open, Brooklawn C. C.
(for info. call 203-334-5116)
July 19 MGCSA Monthly Meeting, Innis Arden G. C.
July 25 Univ./Mass. Annual Turf Field Day
August 16-19 Westchester Classic
August 20 Family Picnic—Woodway C. C.
August 22 Univ./Rhode Island Turfgrass Field Day
September 20 MGCSA Invitational, Ridgeway C. C.

MGCSA NEWS:

Our March meeting held at Westchester Hills Golf Club on March 15th was well attended. Mr. Stanley Zontek, Eastern Director of the U.S.G.A. Green Section gave an excellent presentation on "What's New for 1979."

We would like to thank Steve Puvogel of Winged Foot Golf Club for the following summary of Stan Zontek's presentation:

A new fungicide, RP 26019, has been released this spring

by Rhodia. This product is reported to be effective for 2-3 weeks. This was the first new turf fungicide to come along in 9 years.

Winter injury does not appear to be serious at this time. Holding off on the irrigation as long as possible was *recommended* to allow the turf to toughen, especially poa annua. This also encourages deeper root penetration to help prepare the plants for summer stress. "Spoon Feed" water when necessary.

The amounts of new turf varieties is forever increasing. This permits the selection of a grass that meets any number of requirements. Care should be taken in selecting a new variety because they are said to be "regional grasses." A look at new varieties at local university field days should be helpful in determining a particular varieties adaptability.

Penn Eagle, a new bent grass that is a five line cross is being released. Seed availability this year appears to be questionable. Penn Eagle is reported to look particularly good on fairways. It also competes well with poa annua.

Should frost damage be a problem, the application of a wetting agent in late fall was suggested. It seems the wetting agents help to fight frost buildup on greens.

A new insecticide has been released. Its name is Ethoprop and its chief advantage is its ability to penetrate through thatch layers. Suggestions to improve the effectiveness of insecticide applications targeted to soil born insects are to water turf first, apply insecticide in evening, and then water material in. With surface insects, don't water first.



MGCSA President Bob Alonzi presenting Past Presidents Plaque to Ted Horton.



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Not copyrighted. If there is good here, we want to share it with all chapters - unless author states otherwise.

Dennis Flynn reported that the Golden Lights Tournament will be held at Wykagyl Country Club, May 29 through June 3rd. Dennis has arranged for M.G.C.S.A. members to be admitted free with membership card.

At the Board of Directors meeting held at Westchester Hills C.C. on March 14, 1979, Joseph Lack of Bruce Memorial Golf Course was voted a Class A member. Ron Boydston, Thomas Grywalski and Louis Santucci were voted Life members.

Last month's survey results concerning directions for Tee to Green contents was disappointing. Many MGCSA members failed to respond. Could it be that our publication is so well written that no improvements or changes are necessary? I don't think so. On the brighter side, of the MGCSA members who responded, most wanted to see more articles on irrigation and local superintendent experiences. If you have something you wish to share to benefit our association, please jot it down and send it in.

This month's survey will deal with the Canadian Geese problem.

Every member of the MGCSA should be very proud of our booth at the Westchester Lawn and Garden Show held at the County Center March 16 - 18. The professionalism exhibited at the booth certainly is an asset to MGCSA. Here is Peter Rappoccio's report:

The annual Westchester Lawn and Garden Show was held March 16, 17, and 18, 1979, at the Westchester County Center. Over 35 exhibitors participated in this year's program. Some of the exhibitors included, the Professional Grounds Management Society, the Westchester County Extension Service, New York Turf and Landscape Association, the Wildcliff Museum, and many lawn and garden centers from the Westchester area.

An educational program was included in this year's show.

Films on vegetable gardening, pruning, planting and transplanting along with lectures on house plant care, care of roses, home landscaping, preserving, canning and underground sprinkler systems were available to those interested.

As we had in the past, M.G.C.S.A. placed a booth in this year's show. This year's booth was co-chaired by Dennis Flynn and Peter Rappoccio. The MGCSA's booth consisted of information for the homeowner on problems that may arise in the home lawn. Thanks are to be given to O.M. Scotts, Tuco, and Dupont, who provided educational materials used in the display. Thanks should also be given to Emanuel Shemin Nurseries who provided plant material used to add color to the booth.

A big hit to all those who viewed the booth, was a small putting green, complete with sand traps and a tough pin placement.

Many thanks to Bob Alonzi, Mary and Mark Millett, Sherwood Moore, Jim Kaczinski, Mike Caravella, Mike Maffei, and Dennis Flynn, who helped tend the booth during the 26 show hours.

Mr. Bob Martin is the new County Agent in Westchester in the position vacated by Tom Nally.

Please be sure to note that the program for our joint meeting with LIGCSA will begin at 6 P.M. This format will enable the meeting to be concluded immediately after dinner, allowing everyone ample time to get home. Let's be sure MGCSA is well represented at this meeting.

At this writing (March 30) it appears that Mother Nature has been good to us so far. Excellent drying weather with a few nighttime showers to keep things moist. Look's like we're off to a good start.

Pat Lucas

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SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT . . .

We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while
others judge us by what we have already done.

— Longfellow

Turfgrass Slide Sets Available

Two 35 mm. slide sets, one of diseases of turfgrass and the other on insects of turfgrass in the northeast, are now available from the N.Y. State Turfgrass Association. These slide sets are a useful tool in the identification and control of diseases and insects of turf and are of educational value to universities, extension agencies and management and maintenance personnel at parks and recreational facilities, golf courses, cemeteries and other green industry facilities.

The 66-slide set on diseases of turfgrass, compiled by Dr. Richard Smiley of Cornell University, pictures the symptoms and effects of snow mold, leaf spot, dollar spot, rust, red thread, slime mold, striped smut, mildew, fairy rings, brown patch, melting-out, fusarium and pythium on turfgrasses. The 76-slide set on insects of turfgrass in the northeast, compiled by Dr. Haruo Tashiro of Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, pictures a variety of beetles, chafers, sod webworms, chinch bugs and other insects and the damage they do to turf.

Either slide set is \$20 for New York State residents and \$25 for out-of-Staters. The price includes postage, handling and a written key to the slides. Kindly send checks made payable to the N.Y. State Turfgrass Association to Ann Reilly, N.Y.S.T.A. Executive Secretary, 210 Cartwright Blvd., Massapequa Park, N.Y. 11762. Please specify which set you are interested in.

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Editor's Note: Our thanks to John Weistrand for forwarding this article to us.

Avoid the Temptation of Sand Topdressing

John R. Hall, III
Extension Specialist, Turf

Many golf course superintendents are observing with great interest the experimental practice of frequent sand topdressing of golf greens. The cheaper cost of straight sand topdressing is certainly tempting when compared with some of our more commonly used topdressing material. The choice of a topdressing mixture is no less important to the quality of a putting green than the choice of soil mixtures for new green construction. Bad decisions in either instance can lead to golf greens which are costly to manage at best or impossible to keep alive in the summer, at worst. The most expensively constructed greens, utilizing mixes specified by laboratory tests can be ruined by the improper choice of topdressing material.

Topdressing of bentgrass greens has as its primary function the "Truning" of greens by stabilizing the puffy thatch layer that normally develops in a bentgrass turf. It has come to be realized that topdressing also encourages stolon rooting aids, in thatch decomposition, stimulates new shoot growth, provides micro-organisms antagonistic to parasitic fungi and provides nutrients to the turf. In winter overseeding of bermuda it serves to improve seed-soil contact and enhance germination. In vegetative establishment with stolons or sprigs, it aids in rooting. In northern climates topdressing is utilized to protect against winter dessication. In situations where the existing greens soil is inadequate, frequent, heavy topdressing is utilized to actually "rebuild" or modify the existing golf green soil.

John Madison and William B. Davis of the University of California have conducted topdressing research utilizing sand materials common to the west coast and produced desirable results. The University of California guidelines suggest utilizing sand materials common to the west coast and produced desirable results. The University of California guidelines suggest utilizing sand particles between 0.25 and 1.0 mm in

diameter and using 1/9 cubic yard of topdressing per 1000 sq. ft. of green (about 1/30" thick) at each topdressing (1). Topdressing frequency is dependent upon the growth rate of the bentgrass, but for calculation purposes, three week intervals between topdressings appear to be normal in their region. Pesticides, nutrients and bentgrass seed are added to the topdressing as pressures dictate. The system is apparently working well under California's environmental conditions.

There are several areas of concern that come to mind when one contemplates a change in topdressing mixtures from the traditional sand-soil-peat or weblite-soil-peat to straight sand. Some of the more obvious questions arise from our current observation of sand-peat greens and from what we know to be the characteristics of sand as a growing medium. We must assume that the end result of long term use of the light, frequent sand topdressing is a bentgrass green growing in a layer of sand. Straight sand or sand-peat mixtures have been noted to exhibit the following characteristics:

1. excessive water infiltration
2. excessive nutrient leaching
3. lower microbial activity
4. hydrophobic drying
5. lack of moisture reservoir
6. susceptibility to layering

Excessive water infiltration—The idea of improving water infiltration rates with sand topdressing is valid but one must ask where is the water going? If the 2 or 3 inch layer of sand is finally achieved after 5 or 6 years of sand topdressing, it is likely the rapidly infiltrating water is going to build up at the interface between the newly applied sand and the old soil. Will this zone become anaerobic causing death of roots in midsummer? Obviously, this is not a problem in western states where rainfall seldom exceeds 8 inches per year and irrigation is the primary source of water. On the east coast, however, we receive 40 to 55 inches of rainfall per year and it often comes in excessive spurts. Our two most popular topdressing mixtures (70% sand-20% peat-10% soil and 65% weblite-15% soil-20% peat) are providing infiltration rates around 8" per hour. A sample lab analysis of a straight sand

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with 95.8% of the particles between 0.25 to 1.0 mm, 1.5% silt and 0.3% clay exhibited an infiltration rate of 88.7" per hour. On the east coast where water is provided in uncontrollable amounts perhaps we are better off not having the infiltration that would come with a 3" layer of sand on top of an existing greens mixture with a considerable slower infiltration rate. Our excessive moisture is now moving off primarily as surface drainage. In situations where surface drainage is inadequate, sand topdressing is not going to solve the problem.

Excessive nutrient leaching in the straight sand greens and sand-peat greens is consistently necessitating higher nitrogen and potassium fertilization levels except in those cases where undecomposed organic matter is used and nitrogen is released. Is building greens that require more nitrogen a move in the right direction, if we consider current and future fertilizer prices? The 1973-74 fertilizer-food shortage just gave us a "pre-shock" of things to come.

Lower microbial activity. Sand greens are likely to be less active microbiologically than mixtures containing soil. It's possible that urea formaldehyde products will be utilized with less efficiency on sand greens because of the requirements for microbiological breakdown of urea formaldehyde to plant utilizable nitrogen forms. Will thatch layers decompose slower with sand topdressing than with a mixture containing microbiologically active soil?

Hydrophobic drying has been a problem on some sand-peat greens. The formation of water repelling organic layers on sand particles in sand-peat mixes that have been allowed to dry out have created considerable headaches. The rewetting

of these hydrophobic areas is extremely difficult and has led to death of the bentgrass in some instances. Can we safely assume this won't happen in sand greens? It does not appear to be happening in conventional sand-soil-peat greens.

A lack of moisture reservoir in sand and sand-peat greens is a serious concern. Water delivery systems, as advanced as they are, still leave a lot to be desired in a 3 to 5 MPH breeze. With a sand or sand-peat green one literally has no margin of error. The sand green requires constant "babysitting" to insure uniform distribution and continued replenishment of the small moisture reservoir held by the sand.

Susceptibility to layering. Two things are certain—no two golf course superintendents will run a golf course the same way and very few will stay at any one golf course more than 20 years. This creates a potential for changes in topdressing mixtures that could be lethal, especially if a sand topdressing program has been used. If a new superintendent feels the sand topdressed greens are too droughty and switches to any topdressing that holds moisture under a greater tension than the layer of topdressed sand, a false water table effect is created. The new topdressing that holds more water at a greater tension will not release it into the sand layer until enough pressure (water) is present to release the water into the larger pore spaces of the sand layer. This same problem could arise on sand-peat greens where topdressing containing soil is utilized. Percolation through this interface will likely get worse with time as the soil topdressing layer gets thicker because it will tend to retain more moisture and the false water table depth will increase. Once the layer is deeper than the aeration tines, the only sure solution is to rebuild the

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green.

Obviously there are a lot of unanswered questions with regard to the use of sand topdressing. Common sense tells us that if you currently have a topdressing mixture that works—don't change. Once you switch to and topdressing, there is no turning back without considerable cost—agronomically and possibly financially.

Developing a topdressing mixture that has the right capillary and non-capillary pore space, infiltration rate, moisture retention, pH and bulk density is not an easy matter. It requires laboratory tests that are quite complicated. Commercially prepared topdressing mixtures meeting USGA specifications and complying with VPI&SU greens mixture recommendations are available. Yes, they do cost more than sand—but in the long run the cost of commercially prepared topdressing is inexpensive when compared with the costs associated with reconstructing a green or maintaining a green that has been abused with bad topdressing practices.

Credit: Tech Turf Topics, VPI&SU, August 1978

REFERENCE: Madison, J.H. and Davis, William B., 1977. *Problems or Progress*. Tee 2 Green Corp. 1212 W. 8th Street, Kansas City, Missouri, pp. 16



Welcome new members Phil Kolb, Byron Johnson & Don Baker.



Stan Zontek of USGA giving his presentation on "What's New For 1979" at March meeting.



Angelo DiRollo & Sam Shelton, Assistants at Westchester Hills G.C. with Superintendent Mark Millet.

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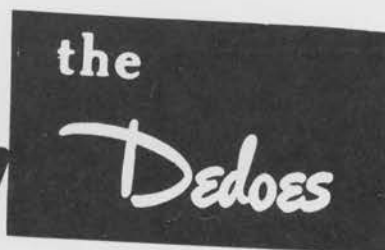


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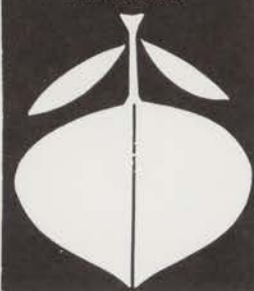
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