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# What to expect this Spring

The early snow cover of December 1st was not anticipated and many of our clubs did not get the proper amounts of protective fungicides applied. This happens quite frequently when an early snow, of the depth that we experienced, comes and stays for several weeks.

Because of this untimely incident there will be heavy snow mold damage. We have noticed that many courses are already showing some damage but fortunately it seems to be superficial and a few mowings next spring will rid the turf of this blemish.

It was indeed unfortunate that the early snow remained on the ground for such a long period of time (of course it takes a long time for 19" of snow to melt).



Winter Damage — These areas appeared in a swale or valley. They were under water and the crowns were damaged when cold temperatures occurred.



Most clubs apply their protective chemicals on the greens during early December. Even if we get an early snow it usually melts in a short time and the application of the chemical can still be put down in time to protect the grass.

At least we shouldn't get much dessication this year which usually is more damaging than snow mold.

We also noticed some ice damage on fairways.

Let's keep our fingers crossed.



Winter Damage — Dead ring around a healthy green area was caused by melted edge of ice cover. Turf was saturated for a period of time and when temperatures fell there was crown damage.

# Reducing Energy Requirements for Maintenance of Turfgrass Areas

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Have you ever wondered how much money it will take to support the following work and research?

The Turfgrass Industry:

## *Functions:*

- provides a more healthy, aesthetic, quality environment for people to live in through: soil erosion control, sediment and dust stabilization, heat dissipation, noise abatement and control of visual pollution. These aspects are particularly important in high density urban areas.

- contributes to mental and physical health of people through its use as a recreational surface.

- functions as the primary surface for outdoor sports activities. Turfs possess the ability to recover from intense traffic damage without using non-renewable resources and provide a protective cushion against injury resulting from falls.

## *Size:*

- involves over 2.1 million acres in Michigan and an annual maintenance cost of more than \$500 million.

- includes home lawns, sport fields, parks, cemeteries, golf courses, roadsides, institutional grounds, industrial grounds, school grounds, airfields, ski slopes, recreational areas, sod growers, nurserymen, lawn care service companies, landscapers, seedsmen, chemical suppliers, and equipment suppliers.

## *Needs:*

- reduced mobility of people caused by increasing energy costs will result in an increased intensity of use (traffic) particularly in urban areas. This translates to greater turfgrass damage from wear and soil compaction plus more turf maintenance problems.

- need to develop grasses and cultural practices that will conserve energy, fertilizer, and water.

1. *Development of low cost, low maintenance cultural programs and establishment methods while maintaining a stress tolerant, functional turf.* The object is to maintain a moderate growth rate and color which will not require frequent mowing. The reduced nitrogen rates and mowing frequencies will reduce energy inputs necessary to maintain the turf. Alternative grass species not now in wide use need to be evaluated under low cost, low energy use maintenance systems. The use of growth inhibitors as a partial replacement for mowing is being pursued.

2. *Study of the mechanisms involved in stress tolerance.* In terms of long range needs, the ability to tolerate and survive heat, cold, drought, and related environmental stresses is best achieved through development of varieties possessing physiological tolerance. Currently these problems are minimized by high cost energy inputs of irrigation, fertility, and mowing to modify the external environment. Since this approach will be too costly in the future, research is needed concerning the mechanisms of stress injury and hardiness so that this information can be used in breeding stress tolerant grass varieties.

3. *Development through plant breeding of fine-leaved fescue varieties which possess low nitrogen and water requirements, quick establishment, a strong creeping habit, and Helminthosporium (leafspot) resistance.* The susceptibility of most low nitrogen requiring species and varieties to leafspot is very high. The result is severely reduced turfgrass quality and functionality during and following infection periods. Presently

Continued on Page 8

## Michigan Ranks 3rd in Nation with 9 CGCS's

Michigan now ranks third in the nation in the number of Certified Golf Course Superintendents.

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## George Prieskorn Re-elected

The Directors of the Turf Foundation elected George Prieskorn for a second term and Jim Smith will serve his second year as Vice President.

George is the Superintendent of the Burroughs Farm Golf Club and Jim is with the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority.

The Executive Director will be James Standish III of the Golf Association of Michigan.

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## We forgot...

We failed to mention in the January edition that not only did Clarence Wolfrom and his wife receive recognition with the presentation of a beautiful wall plaque, but the thirteen men honoring Clarence also presented him and his wife, Viola, with beautiful gold wristwatches.

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## Energy Requirements Cont.

the fine-leaved fescue breeding program is half way toward the goal of releasing the initial variety (or varieties) possessing these desired properties. It is the only fescue breeding program in concentrating on leafspot disease resistance.

4. *Evaluation of traffic effects on intensively used turfs.* Species and cultivars presently utilized by the turfgrass industry must be evaluated for tolerance to intense traffic. Effects of cultural practices, such as fertilization (nitrogen rate, nutrient balance), watering, and mowing height, need to be determined as they affect wear tolerance of widely used grasses. The value of cultivation of established sods for relief of soil compaction caused by intensive use will be studied. Particular emphasis on these studies is needed for school athletic fields, recreational areas, and parks. The meadow fescue, developed at M.S.U., will be an important component in the studies.

5. *Development of pest management systems for turf.* The objective is to increase safety and reduce costs and rates of pesticides needed for the

control of diseases, nematodes, insects, and weeds. This involves the total management program. Included are the (a) standard cultural practices that affect susceptibility to these pests, (b) emphasis on forecasting the most effective timing of pesticide application, (c) evaluation of pesticides which could control more than one pest, and (d) use of resistant cultivars (varieties).

6. *Dissemination of information on maintaining low cost, low maintenance turfs to the general public.* As research results in reasonable means of reducing energy and fertilizer inputs required for the maintenance of lawns and recreational turfs, this must be disseminated promptly if the research is to be meaningful to the public in Michigan. There is a significant void in adult education and dissemination of information at the present time because a turfgrass extension specialist has not been established to assist Michigan citizens.

We need your support to accomplish this work. Contact your State Legislators now and use these figures to illustrate the need.

### Annual Research Budget Required to Pursue these Problems

1. Low energy cultural systems	12,000
2. Environmental stress hardiness	15,000
3. Breeding low maintenance disease resistant turfgrass	15,000
4. Traffic effects - wear and soil compaction	10,000
5. Low energy pest management programs	9,000
6. Research overhead	3,000
7. Turfgrass extension	33,000

Total \$97,000

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# Overgrooming is Overspending

by PAUL VOGKIN, Supt. Briarwood C.C.  
Deerfield, Illinois

During the last few recession years, North American golf courses, especially the private country clubs, have been in a serious financial situation because of skyrocketing operation costs. These operational costs have increased so much that many clubs are now having difficulty keeping their heads above water. Some, as you know, have sold out to home builders and high-rise developers. Others are desperately looking to fill their decreasing memberships and reluctantly lowering their application standards in order to exist. In the Chicago area, the situation is becoming gloomy. The overall economic picture is critical. Our Board of Directors and Management are working hard to find means of surviving for the future, without drastically cutting out the gracious living syndrome familiar to country clubs. Many concerned meetings have been held in our area and I am happy to announce that some have been productive in finding solutions to cut down operating costs. The first place they look, of course, has been where they always lose the most money — the Clubhouse. I have never known a large private club to ever come out in the black. The best managers at most are heroes when they can maintain or reduce operational costs lower than the neighboring private Country Clubs.

Now what about the superintendent's situation? What about the golf course? Though I have always stated that a clubhouse, without a golf course, is nothing more than a roadside inn, with other gourmet restaurants in the area as good or better, the officials of our country clubs are also looking in our direction with a frugal eye. They are looking and saying to us: *What can you*

*as golf course superintendents do to cut down expenditures? It's your turn now.*

Gentlemen, it's been our turn since I got into this profession twenty years ago. But this time the situation is obviously different and their concern is even more grave. Though we have always tried to be conservative and have held tight reins on our expenditures for many years, we too have been caught up in this inflation and have had to increase our budgets annually in order to keep up with higher wages and accelerating maintenance costs. But ironically in spite of bigger and better budgets, we are being short changed by the economy. We are getting less for the club dollar in every way. Our labor staffs have been reduced. The parts for our machinery are more expensive and sad to say less durable. Equipment and supplies are getting costlier every year and deliveries are slow. Another additional expense that has come upon us suddenly in Illinois is the new law stating that we can't burn anymore, but must haul away our dead leaves and trees to state-approved dumping areas. But all the time without any let up in sight the demand for agronomic perfection and achievement keeps hammering at us. And, in spite of all these drawbacks, we have nobly succeeded with fantastic results. Our golf courses are meticulously groomed and maintained. So well in fact, that here in the mid-west we are called the major league of the golf courses and have the reputation of being the best in the nation, and perhaps the world. But this continuing pressure on grooming and spotless maintenance of our superb golf courses, and trying to keep up with the inflated dollar, has increased our budgets to alarming proportions.

Continued on Page 13

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Or you may contact the next golf course supplier who calls on you and give him the information needed for application.

## Overgrooming Cont.

*We are in a serious rut, and gentlemen, I have a startling fact to reveal. You superintendents are responsible. You, whom I have admired too much and tried to emulate, have brought us to this predicament. The best among you are to blame for the situation we are in. You have set the standards too high. Let me explain quickly what I am talking about and what I think the problem is before I get shot by a friend or teacher. The problem, as I see it, is over-grooming our golf courses. We do too much of it. The desire to improve and excel in the maintenance of our golf courses has been carried to a ridiculous and costly extreme. My contention is that if we did less grooming, the country clubs could save money and have a more challenging golf course with fewer headaches. Let me also say, at the same time, that I definitely do not advocate reverting to the European type of maintenance which really is cow pasture grooming by North American standards. However, many golfers who travel overseas are*

crazy about them and think they have arrived at Mecca even though they do much less grooming over there. And this fact, gentlemen, supports my arguments today. Please also understand I am not in any way talking about reducing the upkeep and management of our greens and fairways, I am talking only about possibly reducing the cost of grooming in other areas that we do so diligently maintain now. In my opinion we can let some of the areas grow a little shaggy, a little hippy so to speak and still have a great golf course.

At Briarwood, we mow our greens at a tight 3/16 of an inch and our wide bent collars at 1/2 inch or less. Our sloping aprons that meet the fairways in the front are cut at 3/4 of an inch and then we use a triplex mower to mow around the traps and the back mounds of the green. This is all accomplished before we even come to the rough which is also mowed too short and too frequently, but my members love it that way. The fairways are mowed from 5/8 to 3/4 inch with a

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## Overgrooming Cont.

strip or two outside our fairways which we call intermediate rough. On a couple of holes, especially for the ladies, I mow even lower from tee to fairway because the ladies' tees on on those particular holes are too far away from the "nice grass." Next example are our tees which, except to be level, are really not that important. They are mowed too frequently, seeded, sodded, and fertilized too often. The tee banks are also mowed constantly so as not to look shabby. The precarious mowing of fairway bunkers and the laborious hand mowing around all trees on the golf course also devour a lot of time and expense. At my club this never stops and missing a day or two, because of a steady rain, gets me into a nervous dither.

I am not going to mention other numerous areas of grooming that I do at Briarwood but I think you get the idea. I am sure there are many of you here who have to contend with other time consuming jobs, like mowing high creek banks and cultivating shrubs around tees, over edging of traps, pruning too high under low branched trees, and perhaps raking traps that don't come into play, mulching every leaf that drops in Autumn and mowing out of the way areas that really don't have to be groomed at all. I found this out a couple of years ago when I left unmowed all season, two acres on the remote west side of my course. No one complained. In fact no one even noticed - except the birds, rabbits, and butterflies. They loved the wild

preservation we left untouched for them and even a few wild flowers came up. This year I was bolder. I left approximately 10 acres unmowed in the rough and this time everyone noticed and commented on the wild jungle-like elephant grass. The only way out was with a sand wedge. There were some complaints even though most of the wild rough was remote from the playing area and the player deserved a penalty if he got into it. In the end I think they rather admired my bold move and Briarwood's new dimension. The membership was especially proud to show this unusual hazard to guests whose remarks often were, "What the hell is that?" I won't repeat their comments when their golf balls got lost in it.

Gentlemen, what I am saying is that it's becoming too expensive to maintain 160 acres like our own backyards. The machines are going constantly from morning to night. And now I want to correct once and for all the chronic complaint by us superintendents that the membership is playing too much golf and are interfering with our work. No so. It's the other way around: we are the ones who are interfering with their play. We have spoiled the golfer rotten with expensive around-the-clock grooming. Now we have the high-cost monster looking over our shoulder with hungry fangs, and we can't afford him for a pet anymore.

Let me give you an analogy. Remember when we used to go to a barbershop to get a plain ordinary haircut? But now, it's a different

Continued on Page 16

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## Overgrooming Cont.

story. We have a thing called hair-styling. In order to look even nicer, we have our hair rinsed with a little coloring, then razor cut, styled with a hot-air blower and set with a hair net and finally perfumed with men's hair spray. All this orgy is created by a hairstylist who, instead of recommending more use of a hair comb, recommends a special electric brush and stud hairspray. And instead of talking mostly about hockey in reply to our questions, tells us about hair shampoo and men's body deodorants, and even advises us that perhaps a moustache would look so-o-o nice. And we love this attention because all of us are vain to some degree or other; especially as we get older. However, all this extra grooming costs money and it's alright as long as we can afford it, but once we can't then overgrooming is over-spending. And that applies to our golf courses.

Now the first important question you will ask is, how much will this save? Here's what I did. I went over

my time sheet from April to October 1973 and came up with these figures. Mowing rough at \$3.50 per hour, 700 hours - \$2,450.00. Mowing with a "Professional" around greens and some tees, plus the practice tee, comes to 350 hours and \$1,225.00. Triplex around tees, and green and fairway traps comes to 400 hours times \$3.50 equals \$1,400.00. Rotaries around trees comes to 250 hours which is \$875.00. Total grooming cost is \$6,000.00. I only chose these items because they are four maintenance items which I feel I could reduce by 50% or by about \$3,000.00. It would still give the membership a presentable, but slightly tougher and a definitely more interesting golf course.

Some of you, perhaps, are not too impressed by a meagre savings of \$3,000.00. That doesn't sound like much. But gentlemen, the point is, in a tough ball game, every run counts and besides, we can accomplish other important savings, for example, in machinery. I know I could save an

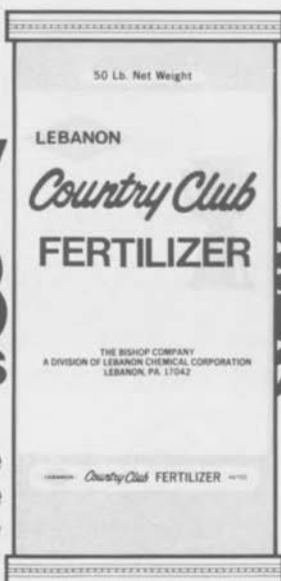


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### Overgrooming Cont.

impressive amount on this item of machinery over the years because, instead of having my present two or more pieces of equipment for the four jobs that I mentioned - rotaries, triplex, rough and pro, I could get along with one piece of machinery in each category because of less demand for grooming. There is \$5,000.00 more saved right there. Not to speak of saving in mechanical upkeep and gasoline. Also, there would be a substantial saving in having to use less fertilizer and pesticides, because the grass would be longer and therefore be stronger and better able to cope with the elements with less attention. Traffic damage by carts would definitely decrease. And keep in mind please, the fact that I chose only four items that I can reduce easily by a full 50%. There are many other maintenance aspects that can be reduced by perhaps 40%, 30%, or 20%. It all depends on how far you want to go and still have a presentable golf course.

Now the question is: Why don't I do less grooming? My reply is that unless other outstanding golf courses in my area agree to follow suit, I wouldn't try it without a solid agreement from my club. I would be afraid, I think, that unless I had it in black and white I might jeopardize my job. I am not exaggerating. The accent on quality grooming in my area is that important. I don't dare do less maintenance. The problem is also compounded by 200 other greenskeepers at my club who play other country clubs in the area and then come back and tell me what great shape your golf courses are in. They unfairly always compare the golf course grooming but give no thought to or have any knowledge of local conditions such as drainage, soil problems, water source, and work force and also overlook other important variables such as budgets, equipment and size of golf course. They sadly forget the more acreage, the more grooming is required.

But I stand by what I have said here today. In the near future we just may have to sit down with our chair-

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## Overgrooming Cont.

men and board of directors and show them with cost charts, that grooming everything meticulously to the point of almost pricing ourselves right out of the game, is ridiculous. And we may have to further explain that letting the grass grow a little longer and become a little more like old St. Andrews will actually make the game a little more challenging and more enjoyable. And the way golf should be - the way it was meant to be. Every other sport, such as hockey, baseball, tennis, football, etc. have regulations for size. The playing areas are the same for everyone, hard or easy depending upon your ability. Golf is the only accepted game where we can make an established area easier or difficult by maintenance procedures and techniques. We have spoiled the golfer to the point where he is possessed with always having the ball in play. It started with the touring pro, and now the member is possessed also. The playing trend has swung from accuracy to an emphasis on long ball hitting and never landing in trouble. It's time we started back the other way. I believe the paramount objective of the founders and architects of this wonderful game was not the idea of present day "hairstyling" conditions and excessive grooming factors that are pricing us right out of the game. If they were here now, they would say to us, "Do less grooming - Put skill back into the game." Our criteria should be more on how a golf course responds to par and not so much on expensive grooming.

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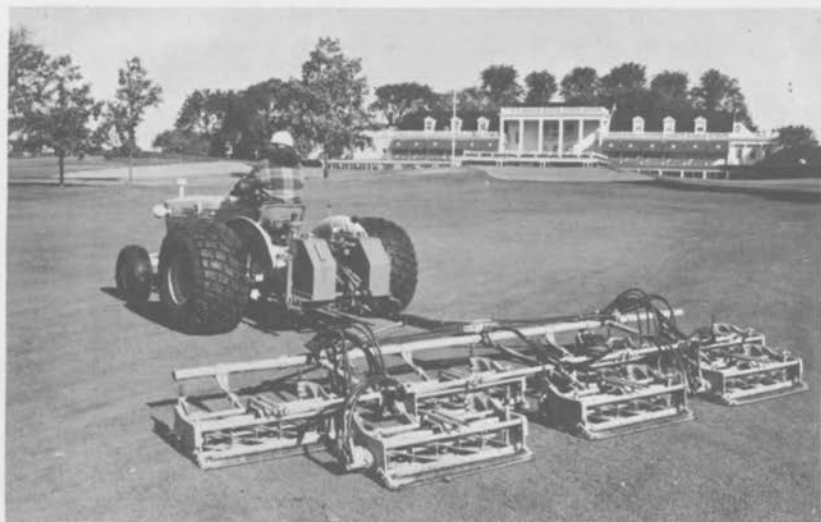
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30" per unit. Cutting swath varies for 3, 4, 5 & 6 mowers with maximum of 15' for 7 gang.

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