QUALITY TURF REQUIRES GOOD FERTILITY MANAGEMENT
By Dr. W. M. Stewart

People have used turfgrass for centuries to improve their environment and quality of life.

A few of the many practical benefits that turf provides include soil erosion control and dust prevention, surface water quality improvement, heat dissipation, noise abatement, and glare reduction. A critical component in the production and maintenance of dense and healthy turf is proper soil management and fertilization. Response of turfgrass to various fertilizer elements is generally measured in terms of color, density, uptake, and clipping yield.

Nitrogen is required in the largest quantities of all the plant essential mineral elements and is often the most limiting nutrient in turfgrass growth.

The most obvious result of nitrogen fertilization is a rapid green-up and increased shoot growth and overall turf density. Nitrogen nutrition also affects root growth, stress tolerance, recuperative potential, and weed encroachment.

Nitrogen fertilizers used on turf are classed as quick release or slow release.

Quick release sources like ammonium sulfate, urea, and ammonium nitrate tend to cause flushes of growth that last for only a few weeks. Therefore, the most effective way to apply quick release nitrogen is by “spoon feeding” in frequent applications. Slow release nitrogen sources like sulfur coated urea (PCSCU), IBDU, Ureaformaldehyde (UF), methylene ureas (Nutralene/Meth-Ex40), and Polyon provide a way to avoid the more erratic growth cycles encountered with quick release sources.

Phosphorus is an important component of turfgrass nutrition.

Sufficient phosphorous fertility of turfgrasses is associated with increased root growth and branching, increased tillering, hastened maturity, reduced encroachment of some weed species, and improved drought tolerance and recovery. Excessive phosphorous applications have in some cases been related to annual bluegrass (PoA annua) encroachment.

Turfgrass requires large amounts of potassium.

Potassium is second only to nitrogen in the amounts required by turfgrass plants. Soil potassium can be quickly depleted under turf. Therefore, frequent applications of potassium fertilizers are usually necessary to achieve optimum performance. The recommended rate of potash fertilizers can be as much as twice that of nitrogen in some cases. Proper potassium fertility management has been shown to be associated with increased disease resistance, increased heat and cold tolerance and improved overall ability to endure stressful conditions. Adequate potassium levels improve the winterhardiness of warm season grasses such as bermuda grass and the heat tolerance of cool season grasses such as bentgrasses. Satisfactory levels of potassium produce turf that is more likely to endure stressful conditions such as drought and excessive traffic.

Secondary and micronutrient fertilizer is often essential in the production of healthy turf.

For example, turfgrass color is often improved with foliar applications of iron. Balanced fertility management can reduce the risk of encountering many problems in turf production. Soil and tissue tests in conjunction with field observations should be used in determining the need for all nutrients.

In this issue.....

- What is the Allied?
- Questions of 25 years ago
- Preventing Patch Disease
President’s Message......

Winter kill! Old Man Winter left his mark on many of us here in Northeast PA. I, for one, now know what it is and how devastating it can be. Poor drainage after a heavy rain, to be followed by an ice storm, did me in on two greens, with damage done to several other greens and fairways. So the fun begins!

We started aerating, verticutting, overseeding, topdressing and fertilizing everything. We even overseeded the second and third time. Covering the greens with plastic to help with germination and getting the ground temperature up was done. Now we sit and wait. “Patience” is the key word in this case. Once you have done all you can, you must be patient. Mother Nature has got to do her part.

I called on some of our fellow supers who have dealt with this before, and who are dealing with it now for the first time, and we discussed ways of dealing with this. It’s nice to know your fellow superintendents are there to help out with advice and equipment. That is also what the P.T.G.A. is about – helping one another.

Membership dues should be in by now, giving us a solid number for our budget. We will give you some numbers next issue. No scholarship was awarded this year as we received no applications. The money allotted for this scholarship was put back in the education fund.

There will be a “Strategic Planning Meeting” held on May 21, 1999. Please plan to attend. Don Brethhauer from the GCSAA will be guest speaker. Ron Garrison will be gathering more information concerning this meeting.

There will be a few changes proposed in the Pocono Turfgrass by-laws. They will be announced at three different meetings and voted on at the annual meeting in the fall.

Hope to see everyone soon.

Jack Bird

From the Editor’s Desk......

As of this writing and traveling the highway and byways of the Poconos, the common thread of comments seems to be “We need some warm weather and where do you find good help or any help?”

The warm weather will come in time, but with the economic trend we are in and a burgeoning economy, the unemployment is down; so is the workforce pool.

Other comments heard have been “Why is the cost of meetings so expensive?” Well, if you compare the cost of other association meetings that can run as high as $100.00 plus per day, we aren’t so bad. I beseech each and every one of you to poll your own facility and cost out a day of golf, carts, lunch, dinner, prizes, etc. In other words, a day you would be proud to showcase your facility to your fellow members. THEN offer your facility to our disposal. Otherwise, we will pursue the way things are!!

And while we are on this subject, some of the amenities we enjoyed at Silver Creek would not have been possible (at that cost) without the generous contribution from NOVARTIS and John Fowler. In other words, we could not have had such a BANNER day with PRIMO amenities. It would have been a more SUBDUED affair.

Jim MacLaren
# Chips & Putts

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May 25, 1999  Great Bear Golf & C.C.  Keith Snyder, CGCS
June 22, 1999  C. C. at Woodloch Springs  Mark Eisele
July 20, 1999  Skytop Lodge  Tom Williams
August 16, 1999  Pocono Farms C.C. (Clam Bake)  Gene Huelster
September 20, 1999  Eagle Rock Resort  Doug Witcraft
October 19, 1999  Bethlehem Golf Club  Tom Wilchak

1999 MEETING NOTICES

PESTICIDE TRAINING
Pool Update & Exams
May 19, 1999 & June 2, 1999
814-863-1948
Core offered.

Weed Science
May 21, 1999
610-388-1000

Plant Disease
June 11, 1999
610-388-1000

COMING EVENTS
Vietnam Memorial Wall
August 17-22, 1999
Tannersville Elementary School

FINANCIAL REPORT
The PTGA continues to operate within a comfortable range of our budget. Due to the $10 increase approved last season, we now have in excess of $8,000 in our Scholarship and Research Fund. We still have a long way to go until this fund is self-sufficient, but we are progressing very nicely now.

Tony Grieco,
Secretary/Treasurer

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Questions posed 25 years ago by:
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(Probably should have one!)

Would I think twice about staying overnight in my maintenance facility?

Could I offer the restroom facilities in my building to anyone without fearing the possibility of being embarrassed?

Is there a clear path from one end of the building to the other?

Is my building a firetrap?

Could I wear a suit in my building without fear of having it soiled or permanently damaged?

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Editor’s Note:
Sounds like a casting call for “Caddy Shack!”

More Quotable Quotes:

Every man of action has a strong does of egotism, pride, hardness, and cunning. But all those things will be regarded as high qualities if he can make them the means to achieve great ends.
KNOW YOUR SOIL TEST REPORTS
By Dr. T. Scott Murrell

Soil testing is an essential part of a fertility program.
How much fertilizer should you apply this fall? Your answer may be “The same amount I always have.” But are your fertilizer applications efficient and profitable?
Universities dedicate many resources to develop profitable recommendations based upon soil test levels. Soil testing is inexpensive and effective and will provide you with the knowledge you need to make wise decisions. However, it is useful only if you are able to understand the reports generated from a laboratory.

Soil test levels.
Soil testing laboratories often report the levels of nutrients in units of parts per million (ppm) or pounds per acre. If the sample represents soil cores taken to a depth of 6-2/3 inches, you can convert ppm to pounds per acre by multiplying ppm by two. For instance, a soil test of 15 ppm nitrate is equal to 30#/acre. For nitrate and chloride, these numbers indicate the amount actually in the soil. However, for the remaining nutrients, the amount reported represents only a portion of the total amount present. For instance, a soil test report with a value of 300# per acre of potassium does not mean the soil contains 300# of potassium per acre. Instead, the value is an index of the availability of potassium to crops. The number itself is meaningless unless it has been related to yield response. Universities have developed databases that relate soil test results to appropriate fertilizer rates. Lower soil test levels require higher amounts of fertilizers.

Soil pH and buffer pH
Soil pH is a measure of soil acidity. The pH scale ranges from 0 – 14. A pH of 7 is neutral. Values less than 7 are acidic, while values greater than 7 are basic. The availability of soil nutrients depends greatly upon soil pH. The pH range optimum for production varies by crop. At low soil pH values, typically less than 5, aluminum and manganese may be soluble enough to become toxic to some crops. Lime is used to increase soil pH. The amount of lime to apply depends upon the buffer pH value. Buffer pH is an indicator of the soil’s ability to resist pH changes. Generally, soils with a higher buffer pH require more lime. Universities and certified soil testing laboratories have databases that relate buffer pH to lime requirements.

Cation exchange capacity.
Cations have a positive charge. Plant nutrients that are cations include ammonium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, copper, iron, manganese, and zinc. Soils generally have a negative charge, so they are able to hold cations and keep them from being leached away with water. The ability of soils to hold cations is measured by the cation exchange capacity (CEC). The units used by soil test laboratories for CEC are millequivalents per 100 grams of oven-dry soil (meq/100g) or centimoles of positive charge per kilogram of oven-dry soil (emol(+)/kg). Both units are a measure of the positive charge that can be held by the soil. The units are equivalent, so 20 meq/100g is the same as 20 emol(+)/kg. Soils with a higher CEC are generally more fertile, since they are capable of providing more nutrients to crops. Soils with a CEC less than 6 meq/100g should not be fertilized in the fall, since they are unable to keep ammonium, nitrogen or potassium from being leached away with winter and spring precipitation. CEC is also needed for following label restrictions on pesticides.

Percent base saturation.
In addition to many plant nutrient cations, soils hold aluminum and hydrogen, which are also cations. Hydrogen and aluminum reduce soil pH and are therefore considered acidic cations. Soils with a low pH may have high levels of hydrogen and aluminum, causing plant growth problems. However, in soils with pH levels that are slightly acidic or basic, cations such as potassium, calcium, magnesium, and sodium are more abundant. These cations are therefore considered basic. The percent of soil’s CEC that is occupied by basic cations is termed the percent base saturation.

Soil testing is essential to profitable crop production.
However, the work doesn’t stop when the soil is sent into the laboratory. Spend the time to learn what your soil test report means. Only then can wise management decisions be made.

Preserving trout bait!
In order to preserve our earthworm populations avoid using the following products that affected the worm population two-three weeks after treatment, and up to 20 weeks.

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<th>Concentration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dursban 4E</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Triumph 4E</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thiophanate-methyl</td>
<td>88%</td>
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<td>Fonofos</td>
<td>96%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turcam 2.5G</td>
<td>99%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diazinon 14G</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benomyl</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sevin SL</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mocap</td>
<td>96.8%</td>
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TUESDAY

Went in at daylight – the air feels like a police dog’s breath. Got the sprayer working. Can’t figure out why the chemical companies package dusty chemicals in bags that are impossible to open without getting it all over yourself and the sprayer, not to mention breathing it. The cheapest cereal on the market is packaged in easy to open and easy to close containers. We should all go with granules; that would snap their eyes open. Fairway tractor is stuck in a wet spot the crew calls Iran. Why are there so many cars in the parking lot? The pro shop says it’s a ladies’ member-guest that transferred from another club that had a fire in their kitchen. I think I’ll set one in ours so they have to eat at Burger King. Got home early, power napped through dinner. Wife mad again – too tired to be mad. Mowed rough ‘til dark. Showered, ate cold supper. Felt sexy, wife still mad from last evening. Lost interest.

Biography of Jason Barndt
Berwick Country Club
Director of PTGA

I was born and raised in Hellertown, PA. I spent my summers in high school working at the Silver Creek Country Club for Bill Yob. Upon graduating high school I attended flight school. With school loans piling up, I needed to work. My brother talked me into working construction on a new golf course that was being built. I then went to work for Ron and Kelly at The Center Valley Club. I was fortunate to see the last stages of construction, followed by the highly anticipated opening day. At this time the aviation industry was hurting, and I was enjoying the golf course business so much, I decided to attend the two year turf program at Rutgers’ University. After my first year at Rutgers, Mel hired me as his assistant at Brookside C.C. After two years at Brookside in March 1997, I attained the Superintendent’s position at the Berwick Golf Club.

I have been married for almost three years to my wife, Melissa, who gave birth to our first child, Alexis, on St. Patty’s Day. In my free time I like to golf, play ice hockey, water and snow ski, and I try not to change dirty diapers.
What is the Allied Golf Course Superintendents of Pennsylvania?

The Allied was established (in conjunction with the GCSAA) for the purpose of fostering the highest standards of professionalism and integrity in the golf turf industry, promoting public understanding and recognition of the profession of the golf course superintendents, promoting fraternal and professional contacts between golf turf professionals, and acting as an advocate in furthering the aims, objectives, and concerns of the organization and the golf turf industry.

The Allied consists of seven golf course superintendent’s associations in Pennsylvania. They are: Central PA, Greater Pittsburgh, Keystone, Mountain Valley, Northwestern PA, Philadelphia, and Pocono Turfgrass. Each chapter assigns two of its members to serve on the Board of the Allied for two-year terms. The current Pocono liaisons to the Allied are Mark Monahan and Gene Huelster. The current president of the Allied is John Shaw from the Greater Pittsburgh Association.

The Allied Board recently met on March 25, 1999 at the Elks Club in State College, PA. The Board is in the process of formulating a readiness program in which all chapters will participate. This program will prepare us to take immediate action in the event that a statewide or even a regional problem pertaining to our profession would occur; such as, further regulating products and/or procedures necessary to our livelihood. A schedule of mailings will be organized in order for each chapter to contact the state Senators and Representatives from their area. The larger the voice, the better the chance to be heard.

The allied also discussed the hospitality suite which is held in conjunction with the Annual GCSAA Conference & Trade Show. The suite enables us to represent the Pennsylvania Superintendents on a national level, socialize with fellow superintendents and our suppliers (who sponsor the funding of the room), and show our support when one of our fellow superintendents is running for national office. Over the past ten years, Pennsylvania has been successful in having two of our fellow superintendents ascend to the presidency of the GCSAA. Currently, Sam Snyder, CGCS, is serving his second term as GCSAA director. The Allied will continue to support the annual hospitality suite and seek the support of the statewide suppliers who have generously supported us in the past.

The Allied Golf Course Superintendents of Pennsylvania is alive and well, and is prepared to serve its constituents.

Mark Monahan, CGCS

Preventing Patch Diseases

The best way to control patch diseases is to prevent them from occurring in the first place. The trouble is, many of your cultural practices may actually be stimulating the development of disease organisms. For example, low mowing enhances symptom expression. And heavy use of nitrate-based fertilizers can also encourage the growth of patch diseases.

A balanced IPM program incorporates all available methods to help you maintain the quality and beauty of your golf course. In addition to fungicide applications, cultural practices designed to alleviate stress and promote root development should be part of your IPM program. This can help weak turf become strong enough to resist disease.

By incorporating the following IPM practices into your turf management program, you will reduce your risk to patch diseases:

- Minimize environmental stress to turf.
- Encourage turf growth to reduce disease risk.
- Enrich the soil and fertilize for proper nutrition.
- Remove standing water from your turf and promote good soil drainage.
- Plant disease-resistant turfgrass cultivars.
- Prune shrubs and trees to improve air circulation and reduce shaded areas.
- Topdress, core aerify, or verticut to prevent thatch buildup. (This allows fungicides to penetrate the soil for more effective control of patch disease pathogens.)
- Raise mowing heights in late summer and periods of high heat stress. Low mowing enhances the severity of patch disease symptoms.
- Integrate into your program a broad spectrum fungicide for year-round control.
- Fertilize with 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. per month to encourage fill-in of infected areas.
- Re-seed to encourage fill-in of areas where disease has attacked.
- Use light, frequent irrigation for shallow rooted turf. Light, frequent irrigation helps cool plants and provides water for short root systems.
- Irrigate deeply and infrequently when normal turfgrass root systems are present.

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep you mind young.
MEETING NOTES

The meeting this month will be held at Great Bear Golf and Country Club, and our host will be Keith Snyder, Superintendent.

Great Bear Golf and Country Club is a Jack Nicklaus Signature Course which opened for play in the summer of 1997. Greens, tees and fairways are southshore Bentgrass. The course is Par 71 and the length varies from 5,000 yards at the forward tees to 7,000 yards at the back tees.

Keith Snyder started in golf course maintenance at Water Gap Country Club and Tamiment in the early 1970's. He graduated from the two-year Turfgrass Management Program at Penn State in 1975. Keith worked 20 years at DuPont Country Club in Wilmington, Delaware, before returning to the Poconos in the fall of 1995 at the start of construction for Great Bear. He lives in Marshalls Creek, PA, with his wife Judy and daughters Jennifer and Jessica.

NEW MEMBERS

The Pocono Turfgrass Association would like to welcome the following new members:

Michael C. Condur, C. C. of the Poconos, Class B
Shaun A. Henry, Wyoming Valley C.C., Class B
Derrick E. Hudson, Wyoming Valley C.C., Class C
William A. McCausland, C.C. of the Poconos, Class C
Michael J. Paff, Woodstone Golf Club, Class C

ROSTER BOOKS

The 1999 Roster Books should be out shortly. All data listed in the book is based on our records as of March 31, 1999.

Quotable Quote

When you reach for the stars, you may not quite get one, but you won't get a handful of mud, either.