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THE CHALLENGE OF CARING FOR TURF AND TREES AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Erik Dihle, Chief of Horticulture; Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA

Arlington National Cemetery, the final resting place for over 275,000 Americans, is considered by many to be our nation's most sacred shrine. Overlooking the Potomac River, Arlington was established in 1802 by the step-grandson of George Washington and served as a Virginia plantation until the outbreak of the Civil War. Arlington changed forever in 1861 when long time occupant Robert E. Lee accepted command of the Army of Virginia, left Arlington, and never returned.

Union troops occupied the plantation's thousand-plus acres and used the mansion as both hospital and headquarters. By 1864 they began to bury their casualties on the grounds. Throughout the years the "field of the dead" increased in size, the forested land was cleared, "freedman's villages" rose and fell, and Arlington became what it is today: An active burial cemetery honoring both heroes and the common man (and woman).

Today Arlington conducts close to 6,000 funerals annually and performs another 3,000 ceremonies per year, such as wreathlayings at the Tomb of the Unknowns and head-of-state visits. Over five million tourists and next-of-kin walk the grounds of Arlington each year — making the cemetery one of the most visited sites in the Washington area.

The cemetery is maintained by a staff of just over 100 federal employees and an equal number of contracted employees. Historically, grounds care has been performed by in-house personnel. But with our current administration and Congress' renewed focus on partnership with the private sector, we are now transferring our most labor-intensive tasks to contractors. Most tree care and turf care, and all landscaping will be performed by private companies in 2001 - under government specifications and monitoring. Funerals and ceremonies are supported by elite units the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry — "The Old Guard."

The cemetery is comprised of 522 acres of turf and developed landscape. In total, Arlington is 637 acres in size — including undeveloped land,



roadways, etc. The turf is a cool season mixture of Kentucky bluegrass and fine fescues in our older burial sections, and in our newer areas tall fescue now predominates. Common bermuda grass - an unwanted guest — has invaded the grounds and is particularly heavy on the cemetery's southern slopes. Approximately 14,000 trees dot the

landscape, varying in age from "new in 2000" to "growing here in 1776." Shrub and garden beds are found throughout the grounds, but are concentrated in high-visibility areas such as our visitor center, Tomb of the Unknowns, and the presidential gravesites.

We are grateful for the kind words of visitors as they view our grounds, but I am most attentive to the occasional concerns raised by next-of-kin and friends of those buried in Arlington. Their number one concern, in a word, is "turf," and the number one factor affecting our turf quality is mechanical damage. The damage appears in various forms:

- a. Soil compaction. The backhoes and heavy earth-movers from 25 funerals a day will do that to you! The burials, by the way, are not confined to newer sections of the cemetery, but occur throughout all 522 acres, including old established burial sections.
- b. Tire and tractor-tread ruts. Soil compaction in its severest form — see above!
- c. Collapsed or otherwise sunken graves. In its mildest form this creates a 'corduroy-effect' as one walks or rides through a burial section. At its most dramatic, a grave can — literally overnight — turn into a chasm several feet deep.

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President's Message.....

Summer is here and it has come with a vengeance! Just a quick question: Did you imagine you would need to be watering so much in the beginning of May? We had to play a little catch up in that department. Boy, do I feel bad for everyone who aerified that week. Well, it looks as if we are going to catch a break, but frost. For anyone who has been complaining about the weather in Northeast PA (Like Me!), well guess what, spend a day in South Jersey when it is 55 degrees in Tobyhanna. You'll get a renewed appreciation for this area. Ahhhhhh the beautiful Poconos.

The Southmoore meeting last month was a great success and I think that all who attended had a great day. Kudos go out to Kelly Kressler and his staff.

I also want to give some much-deserved praise to Darrin Batsky and the Editorial Committee. I think *Chips & Putts* continues to get better and better. Good Job!

We also still have two Board positions open. So if you're interested, please contact someone on the board and let them know. Keep in mind, it's your association and it needs volunteers to help guide it along.

Till Next Month,

Gene Huelster

From the Editor's Desk.....

The lead article was chosen to honor all that have served our country as we celebrate Memorial Day this month. The article for me was of particular interest as I had the honor of visiting Arlington National Cemetery this spring. If you have the chance to visit I would recommend it.

So as far as golf we (the PTGA) have had one meeting so far this year and it was successful. Kelly Kressler and his staff at Southmoore did a nice job of readying the course for us. Thank you, Kelly.

Yes Gene, I was one of those guys who aerated that week. I thought it was going to be "hero city". Aerate, topdress, brush and fertilize, then wait for the rain to wash everything in. We waited for about three weeks for the rain. Well, actually we didn't wait too long as we had to irrigate the day after aeration; and the next day and the next ... Well, I guess this type of thing is what keeps all of our jobs interesting.

See you at the meetings,

Darrin Batsky



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Certainly other factors affect our turf quality: pedestrian traffic, the natural thinning and bunching of certain turf species, weed encroachment (a particular challenge in our mechanically damaged areas), and drought. (No more than 20 acres of Arlington's turf contains functional irrigation systems.)

Corrective action for poor turf quality follows the commonsense approach followed by most managers. Primary components of our turf care program are as follows:

- a. Adjust pH levels to maximize nutrient uptake. Up to 200 tons of pelleted dolomitic limestone are applied annually.
- b. Between 2.75 and 3.00 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet are applied annually to all turf areas in three feedings — up to 0.75 lbs. in late May, 1.25 lbs. in September, and one pound in late fall to build-up carbohydrate reserves. A slow-release poly and/or sulfur coated material is used in the first two feedings, and an agricultural grade fertilizer — high in phosphorous and potash — is used in late fall. Additional feedings, depending on the visual appearance of turf and lab analysis, may occur in high-visibility areas.
- c. Core-aerate all turf areas twice yearly.
- d. Apply liquid broadleaf weed control to all turf in the fall, and again in spring — as needed. Narrowleaf weed control (primarily for crab and goosegrass) occurs on approximately 190 acres in a granular formulation.
- e. Apply insect and disease control to specific areas — based upon a weekly regimen of monitoring. Usually this will not exceed 20 acres per year.
- f. Mow high. I still maintain this is the number one form of weed control for cool season turf. We specify a mowing height of three inches. At five inches (generally once a week), it's mowed again. Each individual headstone is trimmed weekly with a string trimmer. This keeps quite a large trimming crew busy full-time (!).
- g. Renovate the poorest 25 acres of turf each year: Apply glyphosate, then dethatch, core aerate, aerate/slit-seed, fertilize, broadcast with additional seed, and drag with a flexible-tine harrow. We begin the sunny areas in late August and the heavily shaded areas are renovated in late winter.
- h. Particularly severe areas of damage — approximately seventy 3,000 square foot areas per year — are rototilled, leveled, and hydroseeded.
- i. In addition, we install fresh sod on both new and old gravesites. 60,000 square yards of sod will be laid in 2001. The locations are scattered throughout Arlington's entire acreage, and the sodded gravesites are established through a series of visits from water tank vehicles varying in capacity from 200 to 2,000 gallons. We only purchase sod grown under the Maryland or Virginia sod certification program.

A final comment and warning on caring for turf in a cemetery setting — particularly one of Arlington's size (and this is something difficult to convince others of until they experience it firsthand): There are a lot of headstones blocking your path, the terrain can be very rough, and all those funerals can slow you down! Never bid a cemetery job by looking at it on paper! Throw away your usual formulas for estimating labor and equipment! A patch of cemetery turf is not an industrial park, it's not a school ground, it's not a golf course. It's an obstacle course of up to 200,000 headstones; dips, dives, and slopes; and millions of impervious tourists watching what may seem to be never-ending funerals and ceremonies! A regular boom sprayer won't apply your chemicals (remember all those headstones), nor will a regular walking pattern with a hose-end applicator. Come visit, and be prepared to modify!

Factors affecting the health of trees overlap with the challenges faced in turf culture (again, mechanical damage): Branches hooked by equipment are broken, trunks are scraped, root flares are hit by string trimmers, soil is compacted, and roots are severed during interment operations. As we conduct a burial, adjacent trees — most of which are irreplaceable in our lifetime — experience up to a 33 percent root

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loss or more. No wonder I see crown dieback when called to find out what's wrong at the gravesite of the General buried "under the shade of the old oak tree." Arlington is in a sense an arboretum, a beautiful shrine to those interred long ago. But it is also first and foremost a place of active burials, and it is an unfortunate fact Arlington's trees are sometimes the victim in this twofold mission.

A rundown of our annual care for trees, shrubs, and gardens:

- a. A small in-house tree crew provides minor shade tree and woody ornamental pruning. This is inadequate for course for Arlington's 14,000 trees, so we supplement by contracting local tree maintenance firms (to the extent our limited funding permits). Our goal is to eventually achieve a five rotational pruning cycle for all our trees. We also 'rely upon the kindness of strangers,' as noted in the final paragraph of this paper.
- b. We deep-root fertilize our trees eight to ten months of the year, and in addition we water approximately 500 young trees throughout their growing season. Vertical mulching is planned for the more compacted areas under our larger shade trees.
- c. Ground pruning of suckers, deadwood, and ivy removal is performed by two teams of personnel throughout the year. Eight to ten thousand linear feet of hedges and shrubs are pruned annually.
- d. Pest control is performed as needed. Cosmetically, our worst insect problems have been holly leafminers (Arlington has an impressive collection of old American hollies), boxwood psyllids, and tent caterpillars. Our potentially fatal attacks include scale insects (obscure scale on oaks — they love stressed trees) and, of course, gypsy moth. An integrated pest management monitoring system and control strategies are implemented whenever possible.
- e. Over 2,000 tree basins and all shrub beds are mulched, weeded, and edged throughout the year.
- f. Although loss exceeds gain, we are replacing approximately 100 trees and 300-plus shrubs annually. Our goal by fiscal year 2003 is to achieve a one-for-one replacement policy, plus a replanting of trees lost years ago.
- g. Our most significant improvement in tree care is our recent recruitment of a full-time urban forester. I have tasked him with establishing a comprehensive tree inventory (using a GIS mapping system), and working with our interment operations to minimize tree damage.

h. Up to 20,000 square feet of perennial and annual flower beds are planted spring and fall. There is also a small flower bed and vegetable garden next to the Arlington House which mimics Mrs. Lee's garden of 1860. Specialty work on such items as the planting of sedum between the granite rocks at the eternal flame of President Kennedy is performed on an as-needed basis.

i. New landscapes usually are associated with expansion and construction projects within the cemetery, and are performed in cooperation with the Army Corps of Engineers. I am asked questions about Arlington that are non-horticultural in nature, which is fine with me. "Who can be buried here?" (Military persons who died while on active duty, service members receiving certain commendations, career military personnel — and their spouses and minor children. Write us for more details!) "When will you run out of grave space?" (As it stands now, in the year 2025. However, we are in the process of acquiring adjacent land.)

My favorite question, though, is this: "Who takes care of Arlington National Cemetery?" The answer is, "We all do." It's our cemetery and our tax dollars. The cemetery falls under the Department of Army, but it enters the hearts of millions of Americans who care very deeply about those who served our nation. Just two recent examples: Both the Professional Lawn Care Association of America and the National Arborist Association have been donating "national days of service" to Arlington. Many hundreds of turf care specialists and arborists have come together from around the country to spend a day at Arlington — to contribute their labor and expertise to the American people. When these green industry representatives arrive, they see the same thing we all see when we first visit Arlington: That the cemetery is a busy place — that it must be a 'challenge' to care for — but that it is a challenge worth facing. The Old Guard troops who provide the honors for our funerals and ceremonies call Arlington "The Garden." It is a garden that must always be worthy of those who rest within and beneath its landscape. 🌿



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How to Write More Powerful "Help Wanted" Ads

Thomas R. Maloney
Cornell University Turfgrass Team



The goal of any sound employee recruiting effort is to attract a pool of applicants which will include at least several highly qualified people. Historically, turf managers have used employee referrals and word of mouth as other recruiting methods fail to generate enough applicants. Employers often resort to writing help wanted ads and placing them in a local newspaper to help attract job applicants.

In today's labor market, it's important to sell your position. Aggressive marketing of open positions can pay off handsomely if done carefully.

However, it is not unusual to pick up a local newspaper and find an ad that reads, "Landscape worker wanted, call 333-4444." This approach is hardly one which sells the position or provides the applicant with enough information to make a decision about whether to apply. In a prospective applicant's mind, it doesn't create an appealing image of the job they may be applying for.

To recruit the best applicants, a want ad must sell the position and provide information important to the applicant. A little time and creativity will go a long way toward improving the quality and attractiveness of your ad.

Recruitment advertising has many advantages: it can focus on the positive aspects of the business; it can create interest among people who otherwise would not be contemplating a job change and it can help overcome the effects of some other employers recruiting efforts.

A good "help wanted" ad is not a panacea. It won't make poor working conditions or a deserved bad reputation of an employer disappear. There are no guarantees of how many applicants will respond or how qualified they will be.

To help ensure success, write and place the ad carefully. The ad-writing checklist on this page provides a step-by-step approach. Using this checklist in preparation to writing an ad will help stimulate your thinking and creativity and improve your ability to write an ad that will sell both the business and the job.

The objective of writing effective help wanted ads that sell the positions is to generate the best pool of applicants possible. Extra time spent in this process can have a big payoff in terms of future performance and reduced turnover.

The following checklist is a guide for preparing an effective "help wanted" ad. Respond to the following points regarding the vacant position when writing a balanced, attractive ad. Also refer to the job description if one has been developed.

Ad Writing Checklist

1. **Give the job title, if appropriate.** Examples include landscape crew managers, assistant golf course superintendent, lawn maintenance technician, and so on. Note: job titles are not required; use them only if they are helpful.
2. **List as many positive things about your business as you can.** The ad not only should sell the job, it should promote your business. Example phrases may include growing family business, line of new equipment, modern facilities, progressive practices, fourth-generation business and so on.
3. **Describe the job.** The ad should specifically describe the work to be done. Examples: Lawn mower operation, tree and shrub pruning, tree and shrub installation, turf maintenance, pest control and so on.
4. **List as many positive working conditions as you can.** Attractive working conditions can make a big difference to potential employees. Examples: flexible hours, opportunity to work independently, use of modern equipment, opportunity to work with a committed successful team, opportunity to learn and grow with the business and so on.
5. **Provide information on wages and benefits if appropriate.** Highlight parts of the wage and benefit package that you feel are particularly attractive. Examples include: seasonal bonus, medical insurance, retirement plan and use of business vehicle. Use phrases such as attractive benefits and competitive wages, for example.
6. **Indicate how to apply.** A manager who would prefer to screen applicants over the phone may wish to provide a phone number. Another option is to direct recruits to come by and fill out an application during business hours or have applicants apply to a blind post office box.

— Adapted for Cornell University Turfgrass Times; Volume Nine, Number One

(The author is the co-author of: Human Resource Management for the Golf Course Superintendent. And a GCSAA seminar instructor of: Managing People for Peak Performance and Job Satisfaction.)



May Meeting Superintendent Profile ...

Eric Reed - Valley Country Club

Eric Reed, an Ohio native, is embarking on his fourth season at the Valley Country Club. Valley, an A.W. Tillinghast original design, is located in Conyngham, Pennsylvania. Eric's golf course has recently completed a two-year renovation project under a master plan produced by Ron Forse. Valley Country Club is recognized in Northeastern Pennsylvania as an excellent track, which is easily supported by its strong and enthusiastic membership of 380 members. The course statistics are equally impressive and will provide a great golfing experience. The course yardage measures slightly over 6,100 yards and plays to an enjoyable par of 72. During peak growing season months, Eric is assisted by a staff of 14 individuals, which allows for meticulous manicuring of the course. The golf course has ryegrass fairways and a blend of bluegrass, ryegrass, and fescue roughs, that only add to this serene setting and challenging layout.

Mr. Reed is a graduate of the Two-Year Technical Program at Penn State and is definitely no stranger to providing a quality golf course with the practical experience he has compiled. He began his career at the Firestone Country Club, in Akron, Ohio, as a member of the crew, but quickly advanced into an Assistants position at the Aronimink Golf Club, in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. At Aronimink, he worked under a nationally known golf course superintendent, Steve Campbell, who is currently at Las Campanas in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Four years later, Eric returned to Ohio and supervised a golf course construction grow-in project, at a club named Roses Run. This course was uniquely named because the property originally served as a Kentucky Derby Horse Farm. After four years of hard work and dedication at Roses Run, Eric found himself returning to eastern Pennsylvania with his current position. His work philosophy promotes a team-oriented atmosphere while treating employees as equals and valuing their opinions.

When not maintaining the links, Eric's leisure activity includes sharpening his golf skills and playing golf. But more importantly, Eric has been very busy developing and maintaining a healthy family life with Becky, his wife of 8 years, and their two children. They have two beautiful daughters, Madison, who is 3 years old, and Meagan, who is 1. Their family bliss has recently been blessed with the announcement of a third child, which is due in December.

- by Jeff Koch

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A message from your golf course superintendent and GCSAA



Copper and Turf Growth

Copper is considered a minor element in plant nutrition because it is found in relatively low concentrations in plant tissue. However, while low levels might be required, it is considered an essential element that can become toxic to plants. Recently, the interest in using fertilizers containing copper and copper-based fungicides combined with the relative immobility and potential to accumulate in the soil, has raised questions regarding toxicity.

Researchers at Iowa State University investigated the influence of increasing copper concentrations supplied by cupric sulfate to sand rootzones of differing pH in the greenhouse. Creeping bentgrass clipping weights from plants growing in the calcareous sand (pH 7.3) was not inhibited at copper concentrations as high 600 ppm, as compared to plants growing in silica sand (pH 6.8) which were reduced 16%. Root growth decreased in both sands, but interestingly while a significant amount of copper was applied, less than 1% was taken up by the plant regardless of pH. Clearly, the inhibitory effect of copper is more evident in examining root growth as opposed to shoot growth.

The final aspect of the study was to evaluate the use of the DPTA-TEA extraction method for analyzing soil copper levels. The role of this test was to determine the amount of plant-available copper to indicate what a plant may absorb. The researchers concluded that based on the accumulation of copper in root tissue regardless of pH, the DPTA-TEA test did not provide an accurate assessment of the potential for copper availability. Therefore, as we continue to include more copper-based materials into turfgrass management, we must be aware of soil pH, root growth and root tissue content, and realize that current soil testing procedures may not accurately assess the risk for copper toxicity.

From: Faust, M.B. and N.E. Christians. 2000. Copper reduces shoot growth and root development of creeping bentgrass. Crop Science 40:498-502.



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POCONO ROUNDUP

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE POCONO TURFGRASS ASSOCIATION

Ryan Rockovits of White Tail GC has left to become the Director of Horticulture at the Allentown Airport. He is being replaced by **Jeremy Reph**, a graduate of Rutgers and 6 years experience at White Tail.

Steve Stranzl has left Green Acres GC to go to Twin Lakes GC in Allentown. New ownership and a new opportunity for Steve. His replacement is **Ryan Batz** who comes from Moraga CC in California. He is a 4 year graduate of Penn State.

New Superintendent at Eagle Rock Resort, **Ken Givens**, he comes to us from The Suburban GC in New Jersey.

We wish them all the best of luck !!



L. to R. Tony Grieco, CGCS; Gene Huelster and Jim MacLaren. Gene presents placques awarded for their service on the PTGA BOD.
THANKS TONY & JIM!!

PTGA Patterson Scholarship Winner



Congratulations to Dennis DeSanctis (right) for receiving the 2001 Patterson scholarship award. Dennis was awarded the scholarship at the April meeting, which was held at Southmoore G.C. Our president, Gene Huelster (left), presented the award.

Dennis made a fine candidate for the scholarship considering he is a graduate of Rutgers with a four-year degree in Plant Science. While in school he served as the Turf Club president for at least two years. Dennis interned at Metedeconk National Golf Club for Bruce Cadenelli. Dennis is also planning on attending graduate school. Good Luck Dennis!



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