

# NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1973



## Golf Course Superintendents Association

OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

Sponsors and administrators of the Lawrence S. Dickinson Scholarship Fund — Awarded yearly to deserving Turf Management Students.

### THE BIG HEAT

Boy . . . was it hot (and it could be yet). But that set of sultry days back there last month knocked man, beast and plant life for a cockeyed loop which could mark the golf season of '73 a notable bust.

Most of us look upon high temperatures and soaring humidity as a sadistic slayer of mankind. Yet, uncomfortable as it may have seemed to the man in the choking apartment or the worker on the steaming lathe, the brunt of the weather's effect was borne by the plant.

"Look at it this way", one superintendent offered. "You're a human being living in a cave for, say, two weeks. The conditions there are most livable . . . cool temperatures and low humidity. Then, all of a sudden, you emerge from this veritable Garden of Eden. A 95-degree sun hits you and it is accompanied by a high and oppressive humidity. What would you do? More than likely, you would wilt under the unbearable conditions."

That's what the plant was exposed to during the big heat of June and July. What happened was disastrous. "We had dry wilt one day and wet wilt the next", the same super observed. "For in addition to the scorching heat there were thunderstorms of the unbelievable type. Some places felt the assault of three inches of rain within one hour. This, coupled with the sporadic high temperatures, caused the plant to yield without a fight."

Unlike man, the plant is defenseless. "It must depend on what we can do to counteract the elements", the super continued. "And at the basis of it all lies nature. There is just so much outside agencies can contribute to the living powers of the plant. Once nature decides that she will unleash her wrath on things, there is nothing anyone can do about it."

What it boils down to is the ability to cope with the vagaries of nature. The superintendent must be able to take advantage of nature when the opportunity arises. If the balance of sunlight and rainfall happens to occur at the time when it is needed, he has to exploit this situation to its richest returns; the fact ever present that as helpful as nature might appear at

one stage, the more harmful it can be at the next.

How, then, can the superintendent challenge the might of nature? Well, for one thing, he can take precautionary measures. "There is this kind of unfounded success status that many country club members assume", a super advises. "For some reason, they believe that 'playing the ball down or as it lies' is the hallmark of a super-honed golf course. And in many cases they insist that no preferred lies be taken . . . even when the plant is being drained of its sit-up properties."

A note of caution seems appropriate here. When wilt of any kind is prevalent, golfers should play preferred lies. "This is so important", the super insists. "With the plant taking on the appearance of a bowl of marshmallow fluff, it is sheer lunacy to have golfers digging through the plant to get at the ball. Invariably, they will take divots the size of their hats; whereas they would lessen this probability considerably if they move the ball up where they can see it."

Discipline also should be the order of the day in cutting both the greens-tees area and the fairways when wilt is moving onto the scene. "We can easily alter our cutting methods", the super states. "Instead of mowing the greens every day, we can push the schedule back to every other day. The same applies with the fairways. What we are hoping to do here is avoid contact with the plant. Mowers can damage the plant just as much as anything."

Other safeguards against the wilt — caused by a combination of oppressive heat and excessive rainfall — include extra care in the driving of golf carts, putting out on the greens instead of tramping back and forth over them in staggered putting and a general awareness by all of the fear that the plant is a precious thing to be pampered instead of pummeled.

The heat is something over which man has no control. However, he can temper his behavior in times when the heat acts as a catalyst for the death and destruction of a golf course. Nature is not something to be conquered. It is something to be tolerated.

— Gerry Finn

### NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the GCSA of N. E. will be Thursday, August 9, 1973 at the Crestview Country Club, Agawam, Mass. This will be a joint meeting with the New England, Connecticut and the Northeast Golf Course Superintendent Associations. Dave Clement is the very capable super in charge of the Crestview layout. Golf can be played any time after 8:30 a. m. No tee time between 12 and 1 p. m. If you want a starting time or a golf cart, call Frank Kringle in the Pro Shop at 1-413-786-0917.

Cocktails will be served at 6 p.m. and dinner will be



Dave Clement

at 7 p. m. sharp. Dinner, golf and tournament will be \$15.00.

There will be a GCSA of N. E. meeting at 5 p. m. at the Crestview Club House for all N. E. members.

Directions: Mass. Pike to Route 291, exit 6, this will bring you to 91 by Springfield. Take the Agawam Exit 3 and go over the South End Bridge. At the end of the bridge bear right, go half way around the traffic circle, take Route 57 West, 2 miles to the Bradley Field Exit (Rte. 75). Follow Route 75 2.5 miles to Gas Land Station on the left. You turn right onto Shoemaker Lane, Crestview is 1/2 mile on the left.

Tournament results at Ferncroft from the July meeting:	
Super Champion — Bill Carter	77
Super Senior Champion — Phil Cassidy	83



# Golf Course Superintendents Association

## THE NEW WORLD OF SHORTAGES

Real . . . fabricated . . . contrived . . . or imagined, there definitely are signs of power shortages in this brave new world of ours. And, as over-reacted as it may sound, the superintendent has to come to a point in his planning to combat the situation.

Pray tell, the country club member will do a loop-de-loop when he reads this and possibly could call for a saliva test on his individual superintendent; but the maintenance of golf courses may have to come under reassessment.

The current gas shortage may not be for real, but one has to take a second look at it when gas stations are closing down because they have nothing to sell while others institute a rationing schedule. Whatever the reason for such drastic conditions, the fact remains that the superintendent has to plan for the worst.

With much of his equipment gas-powered, the super might very well have to cut down on the use of same. He could resort to bringing the course back to its natural state, something which obviously will incur the disfavor of the golfer who has become accustomed to playing on a manicured playground.

"If the shortages continue to mount as they have in recent months, I don't know how I can keep to my present mowing schedule", a superintendent offers. "I am about to suggest to my chairman that we restrict our mowing to the heart of the fairways on a regular basis and catch up with the rest of them as my supply of power dictates."

This could be a blessing in disguise, especially for the purists of the superintendent fraternity who have advocated for years that the natural state of the golf course should be preserved rather than altered to suit the condition demands of the golfer.

"It might wind up that we will go back to the British method of course maintenance", the super warns. "Over there, and

I'm talking about the golf courses where major tournaments are played, roughs are treated as such. In almost every instance the rough is allowed to grow as it wishes. In that way it becomes the hazard it was intended to be."

One of the no-nos among members in regard to a cut-down of what has become a golf course luxury is the proposal that certain restrictions be placed on the use of the golf cart. In recent years the golf cart has taken over as the sole means of transporting golfer and clubs through the 18-hole round.

"There is a distinct possibility that our sources of energy in the carts (gas and electric) will be limited so as to create a crisis in the use of them", the super remarks. "There is no way a country club can make the power companies believe that it should be allowed to provide limitless power for its carts while the housewife at home is required to cut down on the use of her appliances."

The same goes for fuel to operate mowers and other equipment. Since the game of golf falls under the category of recreation and not in the more demanding category of a necessity, it makes little sense to vision greens, fairways and roughs being cut on a regular basis while home lawns and farm lands go begging for the power to maintain them.

A definite possibility arises, then, that the golf course could be changing its appearance in the not too distant future. Power shortages may end at the drop of a hat or they could continue along an acute path that could make it necessary for supers to change their ways. Whatever the future brings, the golf course comes under the effect of what the power plants, oil companies and the like have in store for their consumers. By this time next season you could be playing in knee-high rough and putting over angora-haired greens. It may sound absurd but it's a distinct possibility . . . so don't say we didn't tell you so.

— Gerry Finn

## Difficult Years For Growing Fine Turfgrasses

By Joseph Troll, Professor, Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts

Some areas in New England in 1972 were affected by heavy rainfall but to date, July 1973, almost all of New England has received excessive amounts of precipitation and periods of extremely high temperatures.

Prolonged wet weather places a great deal of stress on the grass plant. It causes shallow rooting, very succulent top growth and provides favorable conditions for germination, growth and infection of turfgrasses by disease causing fungi.

When periods of very high air temperatures follow large amounts of rain, a further stress is placed on the shallow-rooted plant. Most often this additional stress, termed scald, results in death of turf.

On site observations of fairway, tee and greens, turf on several golf courses in Western and mid-Western Massachusetts showed that they are experiencing the above problems. In addition, a number of injured turf samples from courses located in different areas of Massachusetts and other New England States have been diagnosed as having been caused by similar agents.

In retrospect, what we have found is as follows:

- (1) Prolonged excessive moisture has induced shallow rooting.
- (2) Excessive moisture followed by periods of high temperature caused scalding of turf. Scald was found in fairways and especially on collars and edges of greens where the turning of mowers can bruise turf and further aggravate the situation.
- (3) Excess moisture and favorable temperatures on the already weakened turf resulting in disease caused by Helminthosporium, Leaf Spot; Sclerotinia, Dollar Spot; Rhizoctonia,

Brown Patch; Fusarium, Blight; and even Pythium, Grease Spot. Each of the above diseases is related to a certain range of temperatures and moisture.

(4) There is a possibility that parasitic nematodes have further debilitated an already weakened plant.

What can be done to offset these problems? If any of the above diseases are anticipated, follow a preventive or curative fungicide program. Spray the appropriate fungicide for the control of a specific fungus. Raise the height of cut if possible.

Because of shallow roots brought about by increased rainfall do not water unless needed. Water when the plants begin to wilt or syringe — whichever is necessary. Do not fertilize turf areas that don't require it and never fertilize water succulent turf with nitrogen. If you must fertilize, particularly greens, use a natural organic or ureaform material and then apply only small amounts. The use of a salt fertilizer may further aggravate your problem. High amounts of nitrogen applied to water succulent turf can increase scald and disease.

Very little, if anything, can be done to increase root depth at this time of the year, especially when soil temperatures are high. Depending on the grass species root systems exhibit a seasonal period of growth and death. However, most cool season grass species initiated root growth during the cooler fall and spring seasons when soil temperatures are 50°F and below. Because of this fact it is suggested that you aerify and fertilize in the fall or spring. It is further suggested that you experiment on one-half of your fairways with winter fertilization. Fertilize prior to the freezing of the soil. Encourage root growth and penetration when the plant is initiating its root growth. Above all, let us hope that the elements for growing healthy turf are with us next year.

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## SOUND OFF!!!!

*(It's that time once again to hand the mighty pen to the reader and let him swipe with it where he will. This is Sound Off, the special feature of our monthly memo which gives you, the people, the chance to talk back, praise or plain comment concerning any golf subject. The ground rules are simple. All contributors are asked to sign their letters and same will be withheld upon request. Letters should be sent to Newsletter Mail Bag, 25 Riverview Drive, Newbury, Mass. 01950. The Newsletter reserves the right to comment on all published letters.)*

"With the weather the way it has been for most of the summer, here in the Northeast, I think it a sensible idea that the golf course superintendent think seriously of taking a course in meteorology.

"I don't mean that you people should get into the business of predicting the weather. There are enough of those weather seers around to keep us guessing the rest of our lives. On the contrary, the course just might contribute to the superintendent's knowledge of what to expect from certain weather patterns, air flows, etc.

"At our golf course, more than ever, the weather this summer has been the dominating factor in determining the condition of it. Perhaps a basic acquaintance with meteorology might help the superintendent to better prepare for certain weather conditions. I'm sure there are short-term courses offered at many universities."

SAM SCHULMAN Bayshore, L. I.

Good thought, Sam. The super has to live with the weather anyway . . . so why not get on speaking terms with it?

"This is a complaint and a touchy subject added on. That's why I am asking you to withhold my name and club.

"My gripe (and that's putting it mildly) erupts from an experience with a salesman who apparently thinks more of making a sale than keeping his valued customers.

"It has to do with some chemicals I purchased and subsequently used in a mixture with others. The result was complete disaster. I had several brown spots appear on my greens and am at my wit's end trying to repair the damage as our club's big tournament approaches.

"I say it is not enough for the label on the can or box to state, 'do not use with most chemicals.' The instructions should be specific. Generalizing makes the situation a game of hit or miss; and in our case we don't have the time or patience to play games in the middle of the busiest season of the year.

"This should serve as a warning to my fellow superintendents. Make sure who you're dealing with and don't be bulldozed into a sale by fast talk and tall tales. I believe a salesman has an obligation to the buyer and this should continue right through the use of the product."

NAME WITHHELD Club Withheld

This guy reminds me of a used car salesman I used to know. That's "used to know." He'll never hit me with another lemon!

"While nature sometimes can be beautiful, I am convinced that it is a form of beast . . . to be feared by all.

"For example, most talk about the weather is on the negative side. Oh, on occasion during the summer, people will remark that it's a beautiful day with the sun shining, et al. But let that sun stay out for three or four days and the

sweetness turns to sour with people complaining that 'it's too darn hot' or whatever way they choose to express themselves.

"The winter is even worse. If you're not a skier, the snowstorms come at you like some type of nuclear fallout. How often have you heard someone get ecstatic when he looks out the window in the morning and is welcomed by the presence of a blizzard?

"Here in New England we do have two seasons of the year when it is possible for the population to have more good than bad things to say about the weather. This would be the fall and spring.

And, while writing this, I wonder how the superintendent reacts to my theory. He, like the farmer, often is caught in the furor of what nature plans for his particular day. I'd have to say that he thinks of her as a beast also."

THAD CROCKER Birches, Vt.

A fickle beast to be sure, Thad.

"The idea of the next meeting of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New England really is one of the best we've had in some time . . . the combined session with the Northeast and Connecticut groups.

"Since the affair will be at my club, I am taking this opportunity to invite one and all to Crestview for what I think will be a most enjoyable and rewarding day.

"I am looking forward to sharing experiences and thoughts with other members of our region. I think that exchange of ideas could be one of the most effective forms of education a superintendent can bring to his job and with the unusual conditions of this year, that exchange might very well be instrumental in personal success.

"Therefore, once again I am happy to be a part of this program where attendance makes for a better super. Please have a good time, enjoy the course and the company."

DAVE CLEMENT Crestview Country Club

Can't think of a better answer than to advise . . . "y'awl come . . . ya hear?"

"I wondered if it would be appropriate to ask through the Newsletter if anyone was offered the sale of a Sod Cutter No. 37077 which was picked up on May 25th from our Shop by someone named Roger Moore, who apparently must have worked at a golf course because he knew the trade name, all the specifications, the size that he wanted, including the size of blades, etc. We were paid by a check that bounced and there is no such person living at the address which was on his driver's license. If anyone in the organization did purchase the above Sod Cutter, either through Moore or any other source of supply, it would be interesting to have that information. If anyone recognized the name as having worked on a golf course, we would be interested in knowing because frankly the only possible users would be a golf club or a professional landscaper. It also might alert someone that might have one offered to them for sale.

Chester Sawtelle SAWTELLE BROTHERS, INC.

Good Luck, Chet. We hope that this does some good for you!

*(And that's our cue to get on out of here. Keep those cards and letters coming to the Newsletter Mail Bag. You make this column what it is and we need more of you for continued success.)*

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