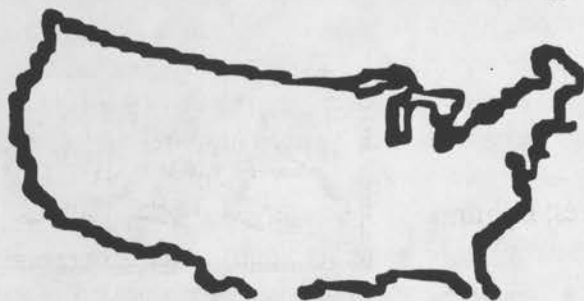


TURFCOMMS



V. 8, I. 2

Oct. 8, '94

PURPOSE: To pass on what we learn willingly and happily to others in the profession so as to improve turf conditions around the country.

AMERICAN SOCIETY for HORTICULTURAL SCIENCE: I attended their annual meeting early in August. One report presented there was on ISOLITE. The researchers from Georgia, growing impatiens found that Isolite did not sustain plant growth under reduced irrigation, nor increase plant survival during drought. Several studies on the new starch and /or polyacrylamide gels that hold so much water when wet, showed they were useful for helping new transplants get through the first week of transplant related stresses. There is also a new small evaporative pan being developed that if the price is right ought to be a useful teaching tool for us and our greens committees.

Corvallis, Oregon is a great place to be in early August. Had to put a jacket on by 8 P.M. one night.

The American Society for Hort. Sci. is not a place to hear a lot of turf talks but, I did learn related soil and horticulture things from various speakers. One such was John S. Selker of OSU's Bioresources Dept. He spoke about how water moves down through the soil in fingers. By fingers he meant that certain columns in the soil tended to transmit water much better than others. He elaborated on that some to note that these fingers tended to have a diameter of 3-6 cm. in coarse textured soils and up to 100 cm. in diameter in silty soils. He also said that it was pretty clear that these finger locations may persist for centuries in undisturbed soil. He was a good and interesting speaker but, looking back on it he left me with some unanswered questions. What causes these fingers to form in the first place? Why does the diameter of the fingers vary with the texture? And how is this going to allow me to grow better turf? It may help explain why two areas close together can vary so greatly in their salt concentrations.

IRON SULFATE: I have often recommended to my clients that they use more iron sulfate on fairways instead of nitrogen fertilizers. There has always been one large draw back to that recommendation and that is the difficulty of getting this material dissolved. While visiting Nellis AFB in Nevada, Ralph Gammons, superintendent and a regular iron (ferric) sulfate user, said that the product he used dissolves very easily. He still dissolves it in a separate container first. The material he

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uses is W M Deep Green 19 Ferrous Sulphate, sold by Wilson & George Meyer & Co., South San Francisco, CA 94080. Suggest you give it a try. Then went to Davis-Monthan AFB in Tucson, AZ and that superintendent, Greg Highhouse also used Deep Green 19, sold by a different distributor. He to claimed that it dissolved very readily although he used hot water to do it.

YARROW: When I was a very young man, even before any formal turf training, I can remember my father pointing out a patch of yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) to me and explaining that it could make a decent turf. Growing up in New England I remember seeing many large patches of yarrow but, since having left that land with its poor, acid soils the only yarrow I have seen to speak of has been as an ornamental where it is grown at least in part for its flower.

A check of the old texts finds it typically mentioned as a weed. The British text, Golf Courses: Design, Construction, and Upkeep gives it a favorable review stating that "On dry gravel or chalk soils it is sometimes useful for fairways, especially if the turf has to undergo hard wear."

One of the first set of plots I was shown by Tom Cook at the Oregon State University Turfgrass Research Plots were Low Input Lawn Trials. Yarrow was the main component separate or mixed with Elka perennial ryegrass, Strawberry Clover, Shamrock Clover, English Daisy, Baby Blue-Eyes and Sweet Alyssum. The yarrow by itself or in combination made an acceptable LOW INPUT TURF. He even had a close mowed (one inch) yarrow and Elka turf that would have been a half way acceptable fairway at many low budget golf courses. Something to remember in this time of disappearing pesticides.

The LAWN: A History of an American Obsession, by Virginia Scott Jenkins: A book **not** to read! This book is an attack on an American tradition. As editor of this newsletter I feel that it is part of my job to read books such as this. I started writing this article August 28th when I was only just a little more than half way through the book. My early start at writing this article was stimulated by an Associated Press article on the book by Harry F. Rosenthal which I read in the Arizona Republic.

If you wish to read the book as a history of the American lawn realize three things 1) it is written by a historian who can talk about an insect and a disease in the same paragraph (pg. 104) as if they were the same thing and uses the words herbicide and pesticide as if they were two different things, but then the latter is not uncommon in the industry. 2) she uses major popular magazine articles by garden editors and advertisements to build her history. 3) there is a lot of redundancy, which may be good from a historian's point of view.

Actually, you should read the book before you get in a plane to journey to the rest of the world. Because as the author writes "Looking around the world, only Americans have front lawns, nobody else does. Other people have gardens." I read this book mostly in Kingman, AZ and Las Vegas, NV neither cities very big on lawns. The book builds a very good case for how this American tradition got started but, the tone of the book is that of one making an attack with as many pins and needles as she can find. You can thank the Smithsonian Institution for this release. I assume they not only published it but probably funded the writing of it. Well, now I'll go read the last 70 pages.

Damn, she's a sexist to! She writes on pg. 118, "From the male perspective, the front lawn is an area to be controlled and mastered. A good lawn has sharp edges and strict boundaries. No weeds or animal life should mar the manicured and manufactured perfection of the grass." That may well be

how some males feel but it is my wife who gives me hell if the front lawn doesn't have sharp edges and strict boundaries.

Some may think I'm picking on this lady and I am, so concerning the redundancy I will give a couple of examples and you can be sure there are many more. On pg. 102 she quotes Newsweek as writing, "filled with push-button power mowers, water sprinklers, seeders, edgers, pruners, sweeper, and cutter; cellars turned into arsenal of fungicides, herbicides and insecticides; home libraries sprouted manuals on plant chemistry and hydroponics; and mailboxes filled with bills." then on pg. 156 she uses it again pulling from the long quote a small portion, "turned into arsenals of fungicides, herbicides and insecticides." On pg. 150 she has Diamond Alkali Co. promoting Dacthal and then on pg. 151 has Swift and Co. doing the same thing. I got the feeling she had this really good 2000 word essay she was determined to make into a book. Her five page Conclusion with a few good examples would have done the job. I don't believe many people will read this book through to the end.

I wrote above that "the tone of the book is that of one making a attack", wouldn't you feel that way when you saw the Home Mechanix magazine as the source for this line, "runoff from suburban lawns carries pesticides and nitrogen fertilizer that polluted the water supplies into which they drained." For another "unbiased" source she goes to the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides. She appears never to go to the scientific literature although occasionally she will quote such turf experts such as Schery and Roberts of The Lawn Institute, Dr. Fred Grau when National Director of the USGA Green Section, Dr. William Daniels of Purdue, and Dr. Engel, the turf specialist at Rutgers. If you think she quotes them in a positive way then you need to read the book.

She constantly harps on the fact that the lawn literature talks of man's war with nature. I feel she lives in an apartment or condominium and certainly does not garden to the extent of producing eatable fruit. Makes you want to throw her out in the jungle for a few days to see how well she would survive.

Don't get me completely wrong she does make some valid points, like, "Both the idea of the lawn and lawn equipment were sold to the American public by appealing to a sense of status." So were our cars, diamond rings, furniture, etc. Well now go read it and see for yourself. It is only 187 pages of which 15 are pictures and some other pages are blank.

GCSAA: Dear Sirs: Where do you get the statistics that say that "more than 70 percent of the golf course superintendents have a two- or four- year college degree." pg. 117 of Golf Course Management / August 1994? From my vantage point I would say that might well be true of your membership or of those who attend your Conferences and Shows but, not of superintendents in the United States. Or do you wish to dismiss all those in charge of maintenance at nine hole golf courses and many 18 hole muni. and daily fee courses as not being superintendents? Sincerely, Douglas T. Hawes Member No. 015297 and Editor, TurfComms.

Got a reply to this by phone. "Yes, this is for GCSAA members not superintendents in general as it appeared to read!"

ENVIRONMENT (MicroClimate?): How can we communicate to golfers and or members that spend most of there lifes in temperature and sometimes humidity controlled environments the differences in environment and **its effect on the turf** between two seemingly close golf courses. The need for this is constant but it was brought to the fore again when I dropped by an old (forty plus

years) first rate country club in Arizona to see an old friend from Maryland days. He is out in the desert where you might expect seven percent humidity and a nice dry breeze. Not here, over the years they have planted numerous trees, the neighborhood is heavily developed and they are now paying the price. He is seriously talking of installing fans on several greens. The humidity on that course probably never goes down into single digit figures anymore and a gentle breeze blows across the greens **only** when there is a forty mile an hour wind up above tree top level.

Meanwhile his son is at a course 15 miles to the north and 2000 feet higher in elevation in an area that is presently undeveloped land with nothing higher than sage brush. Seven percent humidity and gentle breezes across the greens are very common here. An the old man's members what to know why their course can't look like the son's course. It is relatively easy to grow bentgrass greens with seven percent relative humidity, 100 degree days, 70 degree nights, constant sunlight and a gentle breeze. But make that 30 percent relative humidity, 80 degree nights and no breeze, - now you're in trouble!

COMPACTION AND AERATION: This was the title of a small article in the Noble Foundation's newsletter. I exchange mine for theirs. It was very easy to read this article and exchange golf course for farm and Kentucky bluegrass for plains bluestem to obtain an article that could have been written at many golf courses. The agronomist writing the article tells of visiting a farm (substitute golf course) where the growth of grass was much better in one section of a field (substitute fairway) than another section. A close examination of the soil in the poor growth area showed a platelike structure not present in the good area. Soil test results showed higher sodium in these areas. The sodium disperses the clay creating a very hard compacted soil impervious to air and water movement = poor grass growth.

Then he answers "What should be done to fix the problem?" Except for plowing yearly and thus going to annual crops the answers are the same as for turf. 1) more aeration, 2) "apply gypsum and/or organic matter." 3) "Change species of grasses." Which all goes to show that we're not far removed from the science of agriculture as some of those slick salesman will have you believe.

CARTOONIST: My printer told be about the cartoonist whose work is to the right. I love cartoons so I thought I'd expose you to his work at least this once and ask for your thoughts on continuing the like or expose you to something you might want to use in your publication. Please note this work is copywrited.

Yours for Better Turf,

Douglas T. Hawes, Editor.



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