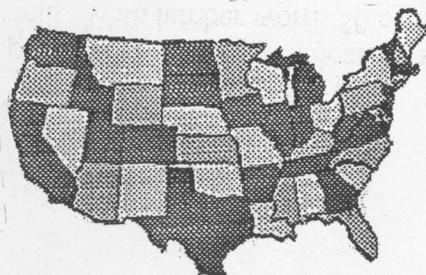


# TurfComms



V. 15, I.3

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

**NEW LIFE (and Profits) From Old Trees:** It was good to read this Tree Care Industry Oct. 2003 article and see that the 30 million cubic yards of logs from urban trees were no longer going completely to waste. There is approximately 3.8 billion board feet of lumber in tree logs from street trees that is just beginning to get used, at least in California.

The article covers the problem of imbedded objects in street trees and what to look for in a small (\$50,000) saw mill. With lumber worth 50 cents/brd. ft. and the ability to produce 800 brd. ft./day from such a mill, with two men you have a potential to get your investment back and do away with some dumping fees.

**TREES AGAIN:** This time the article is in the November issue of Tree Care Industry and it concentrates on the soil problems with street and landscape trees. The article gives a lot of ways to keep a tree alive in an area where rooting is going to be greatly restricted. The first, is to plant a tree that at maturity is not very large. Another is being sure the soil the roots are going to be required to grow in is a mix of relatively uniform soil and **not layers!** Of course ropes and wire baskets need to be removed, along with synthetic burlap, before you plant the tree.

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**PHOSPHORUS:** There is a good article on use of this nutrient and soil test levels in *The Perfect Lie*, Nov. 2003, by Dr. Koski, Colorado State U. *The Perfect Lie* is the publication for the Peaks and Prairies GCSA.

Dr. Koski first points out the myth that high soil phosphorus levels resulted in high amounts of *Poa annua*. I will confess to having done much to perpetuate that myth. It started back when arsenic materials were being used to control *Poa annua*. The grass plant pulls in more of the arsenic when soil phosphorus levels are low. In fact one remedy for an over-application of arsenic was to apply more phosphorus.

He also points out that where clippings are removed from the turf you need to apply about one pound of phosphorus per 1000 sq. ft./year to maintain soil levels. Where not, a ½ pound will do. This is a good rule-of-thumb in the West where calcium ties up phosphorus rapidly in the soil. Superintendents that are irrigating with moderate levels of calcium in their water and pHs above 7 need to be very concerned about dropping phosphorus levels.

**GCSAA LEADERSHIP SURVEY – 2003:** As some of you will remember I have spoken out against the validity of the GCSAA survey in the past. This year by labeling it as a leadership survey and by the questions they ask they have made the Survey worth reading.

Question one asked: What is the single greatest challenge to the continued improvement of golf course conditions in the next five years? As is to be expected **Budgetary issues** was first with 50%, while **Water issues** was a clear second at 21%. As the population grows, and with it the number of golf courses, superintendents are finding themselves growing turf with poorer and poorer quality water and/or less water.

2. Which one of these popular new turfgrasses do you think will have the biggest impact on your profession as a whole (not just limited to your facility) in the next decade? Roundup Ready Creeping Bentgrass got 50%. Paspalum was second with 18%. Buffalograss which 20 years ago was going to take the turf world by storm was at 2%. I think they got Roundup Ready Creeping Bentgrass at too high a level of importance. But find the percentage given to Paspalum in line with the high percentage they gave **Water issues** in the above question. The Southern superintendent with salty water has been given a nice tool with the new paspalums on the market.

They have also asked two important questions on Spanish and two on trees. I found more interesting the moderate level of importance of **Personal computers**, and **Radios** and **Cellular phones**. Where radios used to be very important to superintendents, more and more are carrying cell phones with them on the golf course.

Question 12 shows that GCSAA Leaders almost all now have email access either at home or work, but a very clear majority have access at both places.

Question 14 shows that GCSAA Leaders too have a problem staying in shape, and more importantly they realize it. I once told a superintendent I was going to write in the report that he needed to work on losing weight; and I told another former student of mine and past GCSAA President to get out and walk his golf course every day, He too had a weight problem; and so do I!

Question 16 shows that GCSAA Leaders do not, in my opinion, play enough golf; with only 27 percent playing more than 25 times/year.

If you haven't yet seen this survey you should find it at <http://www.gcsaa.org/pr/pr.asp>

**Why Teachers Matter:** This is a review of an article called "Crowd Control" by West and Woessmann, in *Education Next*, Summer of 2003 issue. The review, in the Autumn issue of *Wilson Quarterly* points out that the authors found in their research that class size is most important where teacher quality is poor. Which, to my way of thinking, makes it mandatory that school systems start new teachers off with small class size and increase class size as the teacher matures. Thus better paid, experienced teachers earn their money by teaching more students. Check your school system out. You will find new teachers often teaching more, not less, students than experienced teachers. Seventh thru 10<sup>th</sup> grades are usually the hardest to manage, so be more vigilant there.

**ZOYSIAGRASS, SALT GLANDS, AND SALT TOLERANCE:** If you were looking for data on the number of salt glands per given leaf surface area and couldn't find it in the USGA Record article you weren't alone, but probably in the minority. To find that data you can go to the original article at <http://turf.lib.msu.edu/tero/v02/n14.pdf> For most of us the relative salt tolerance of various zoysia cultivars is the more important information and it is there in the article.

**CELEBRATION:** Got a colored flyer in the mail from a local sod grower about this new bermudagrass. My first reaction was "I've never heard of it; boy, I'm really getting out of touch." But, a check in various places including the TGIF at Michigan State U. showed that there were good reasons why I hadn't heard of this newest miracle grass. Its sold in Australia as Super Sport. Checks with two individuals there did produce some information. One in Australia claimed to grow it in his lawn. He was able to reduce mowings to 5 or 6 times/year. But, claimed it was very susceptible to spider mites, prone to thatch if fertilized too much, and didn't retain color well in the winter. The susceptibility to mites was emphasized also by the second individual. This latter individual did note its shade tolerance, and good herbicide tolerance but he does not recommend it.

Dr. Engelke had 3 plots in a National Bermudagrass Trial. It looked satisfactory when viewed November 25<sup>th</sup> 2003. It had been in for 16 months at that time.

Michigan State had no scientific references on file for this grass. I suggest you wait at least five years before purchasing this cultivar for anything unless it is for a small trial. In the shade one of the zoysias would be a better choice, so its use should best be in a lawn where you are willing to tolerate mites, for the convenience of much less mowing in my estimation.

**Synthetically Coated Sand Makes Debut** is the title of an article in the Nov. issue of Grounds Maintenance that caught my eye. I have no trouble agreeing that the advantages of coated sand are those that the author claims. It is the long term disadvantages that scare me and should scare anybody going to the trouble of building a putting green to USGA or California suggestions.

As the author points out there are naturally coated sands and now on the market in Florida, apparently, are synthetically coated sands. In the West, naturally coated sands are very common with calcium carbonate and calcium sulfate being very common coatings. As long as these sands are used in the West where irrigation waters are alkaline, I do not feel there will be any problem. As sand is not often transported long distances any naturally coated sand will probably not be a problem if used close to its area or origin.

However, synthetically coated sand, specifically that coated with clay, should cause problems in the long run. As the resin used to coat the sand with clay breaks down the clay will migrate off the sand particle and plug the pores in the mix? I put a question mark at the end of that last statement because I have no idea whether that will indeed happen but it should be well tested before such sands are used in green construction.

Don't sacrifice your putting greens because you were concerned with the first two years of establishment.

*Happy Holidays*