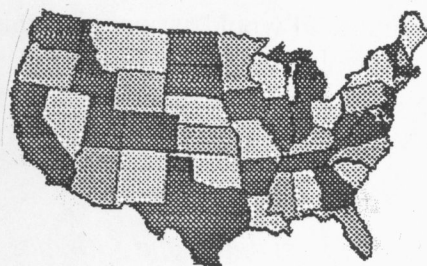


TurfComms



V. 15, I.7

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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.

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM, by Mr. Landreth, U. of Ark. In March 2004, Grounds Maintenance. I read this article 2 and ½ times and put it aside. My mind was troubled by it but couldn't say why in a good clear manner. I may have trouble now. Over my lifetime I have read a hundred or more semi-technical and scientific articles on aerification and related practices with the goal of reducing thatch or to just study the effects of these practices on thatch, roots, water penetration, etc.

This research is looking at Penn G2 creeping bentgrass, USGA putting greens, Toro greens aerator, and the Graden verticutter. The problem he is trying to control is the "accumulation of excessive organic matter near the putting surface" and the problems this causes. He notes that use of water under high pressure or solid-tine aerification devices can be used to punch holes in this to provide temporary channels for oxygen and water penetration. However, as he correctly points out they do not remove any organic matter. He then notes, and here is one place I disagree with him, "The only way to be rid of this nuisance is to mechanically remove it using core aerification or aggressive verticutting."

I feel he is neglecting biological oxidation assisted by topdressing and aerification; perhaps not. His approach is different in that he measures the amounts of material removed by these operations and then the amount of this material that is organic matter. He also topdressed the turf after aerification and verticutting, but here I am not clear on his procedure. It does appear that although more sand was removed by verticutting than

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by aerification; less was put back after the verticutting because it was not reasonable to incorporate any more than they did.

His conclusions seemed to be that verticutting was too hard on the grass and it recovered too slowly compared to under aerification practices. I would assume that this is absolutely correct where the verticutting machine removes more material than the aerifier, which it did in this study. This report is apparently only the first summer's data. I'd like to see the final results, and a more complete explanation of some of the procedures.

CHANGING THE CHANNEL: I was reading *Longitudes and Attitudes* by Thomas L. Friedman so as to prepare myself for a panel discussion on *Terrorism, Islam and The Mind of the Terrorist*. This book of his is written with the expressed purpose of understanding 9/11. In it is his N.Y. Times column of April 21, 2002 that has this title. It tells of all the reasons he and Jim Bouton, the former Yankees pitcher and author of *Ball Four*, thought up as to why to switch to the Golf Channel when Middle East stories come on the TV. It is very positive for Golf. For those who have spent even a small amount of time studying the Middle East Problem and also play golf you will greatly appreciate it. If you have trouble finding it, give me a buzz and I'll make a copy of my copy.

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER: One of the nice things about retirement is being able to take the time to watch mother nature at work. I looked out my window on April the 19th and saw a pair of these woodpeckers starting to turn a dead stub on a Black Willow into the entrance to a nesting cavity. It is Friday April the 23rd now and they are still at it. But now the woodpecker whose turn it is to work on the cavity goes down into it to appear every once in a while with a bill full of wood chips. Nature had pruned this willow leaving a three inch diameter stub about 15 to 20 feet above the ground.

Further notes: The woodpeckers had probably started work on the 18th. Friday evening turned rainy and by 8 A.M. on the 24th I had 2 inches in the rain gauge. We had another 0.6 inches on Sat. evening. On Tuesday the 27th I saw a Starling spend about 3 minutes at the hole. He went in and out of it three times and flew off. I saw him visit again later on in the month or early in May but did not see the Red-bellied woodpeckers until the afternoon of May 12th when I saw one relieve the other at the entrance to the nesting cavity. The entrance is not as visible as it was in mid-April because the leaves on the Black willow are more fully open.

May 13-15 saw Red-bellied woodpeckers trying to drive off Starlings. Starlings must have won because on the 15th I only saw starlings going in and out of hole and it has been that way through to the end of May. No Red-bellied woodpeckers in sight.

RICE HULL COMPOST: Did you catch the research article in the May issue of GCM that showed how silicon in bermudagrass contributed to disease resistance? Did

you take that one step further and wish that the organic matter in your putting greens mix was rice hull compost? When I was working with McMaster's Rice Hull Compost the high weight of ash left after burning was used against us by those selling peat moss. That high ash was due to the organic silicas that rice naturally accumulates in its hulls.

One has to assume that when rice hull compost is used as the organic matter in a putting green mix, it will over time release a lot of silicon and thus help your putting green turf resist diseases. But, what about all that quartz sand? Won't that release silicon? Yes, but rather slowly under most conditions.

Dr. CARROW DOES IT AGAIN: Read his article in the May 2004 issue of GCM. He does an excellent job of showing why with bermudagrass greens during the summer months you need a vigorous program of aerification and topdressing. In fact between this article and an article in the May-June USGA Record you have all you need to know to have great greens this summer - **CONTROL ORGANIC MATTER IN THE SOIL SURFACE!**

AERIFICATION: Writing the above paragraph urging a greater summer need for aerification and topdressing on bermudagrass greens reminded me of a visit to a Western U.S. Air Force Base golf course where the golf director was acting as superintendent. He had forced the superintendent that left shortly before I got there not to aerify for a whole year. He realized that the greens did need aerification and now that he was responsible directly for their maintenance decided he would aerify them. But so as not to disturb the surface too much he aerified with 3/8 inch tines on four inch centers. I told him that wasn't worth s____. He was not very appreciative of my remark, especially when I put it in the report also.

MERCURY: I'm not sure why the GCSAA isn't doing more about the mercury situation? After all the EPA took our mercury away a long time ago and the mercury in the fish your children eat is not doing them any good. That mercury comes from a lot of different places. One of those is coal burning power plants, a second is old chlorine producing plants. Both do a much better job of polluting the environment than golf courses ever did with mercury.

A month ago the Chairman of the Texas Clean Coal Technology Council wrote a letter to the editor of the Dallas Morning News that got published. Today I learned why he came out poh-pohing those of us that are a little concerned that one branch of the government tells us to stop eating fish because of the mercury content and another branch of the government says they are going to back off on mercury emissions control plans for power plants. It just so happens that four of the top 10 mercury-emitting power plants are in Texas. I would guess that Texas soft coal is just loaded with mercury. And Mr. Michael Williams doesn't want Texas power plants to have to clean up their act. Why he just might look bad as Chairman of the Texas Clean Coal Technology Council.

And today (May 31) I read that **Mercury releases concern EPA** in The Dallas Morning News. It appears old chlorine producing plants “cannot account for 65 tons of the toxic substance that may be escaping into the environment annually.” If you live in AL, DE, GA, LA, OH, TN, WV, or WI the mercury poisoning your children may be coming from one of these plants rather than old coal burning power plants.

“TERRORISM is not the enemy. It is a method. You cannot, and you do not, make war on a method. War is made on an identified – and identifiable – enemy.

In the here and now, that enemy is militant Islam – a very particular practice and interpretation of a very particular set of religious, political and social principles.” Andrew McCarthy, pg. 31A The Dallas Morning News, May 22, 2004, adapted from a speech he gave at a Univ. of Vir. Conf. on suicide terrorism. “McCarthy is the former chief assistant U.S. attorney who led the 1995 terrorism prosecution against Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman and 11 others.”

He goes on to write that, “Militant Islam is our enemy. It seeks to destroy us; we cannot coexist with it. We need to defeat it utterly.”

I, your editor, agree 100%. But, let us be clear militant Islam is not Iraq, or Iran; for a short while it was Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia has done much to foster the spread of militant Islam. 11 of the hijackers involved in 9/11 were Saudi citizens. Why did we not attack Saudi Arabia?

SOUND SCIENCE: Beware this new buzz word is not the opposite of “junk science”. In fact both phrases are being used by the current administration and supporters to scramble your thinking. Perhaps it doesn’t make any difference. I learned today (5/15/04) that we are facing a shortage of scientists. Being a lawyer is more glamorous I guess.

U.S. WANTS ATHLETES ON BEST BEHAVIOR, reads the headlines in May 28 issue of The Dallas Morning News. Subheadline is “Americans brace for Olympic backlash”. I ask you, if Bush’s government hadn’t so badly screwed up and created such a hostile environment to the U.S. of A. in the world wouldn’t our athletes be allowed to relax and act a little normally? President Bush has done a better and more permanent job of upsetting the world than I am doing by publishing this complaint.

SLEEPING WITH THE DEVIL: How Washington Sold Our Soul for Saudi Crude by Robert Baer copyright 2003. You can learn how we are funding Islamic extremist by buying Saudi crude, and why Saudi Arabia is coming apart.

SUPERFUND: Why does the Sierra Club think that George W. Bush and the Republican Party are going to support the idea and legislation that makes the polluters contributing to this fund? How are they going to get Party contributions if the chemical companies are all paying into the Superfund?

END