



## Tips Weed Popper

DARREN J. DAVIS

*Golf Course Superintendent  
Olde Florida Golf Club*

**I**PM, Integrated Pest Management, or Integrated Plant Management is a buzzword in the industry that lately golf course superintendents have been bombarded with almost daily. Golf course superintendents know that IPM has been employed on golf courses for years.

Although the definitions for IPM vary, one key component in a well-accepted IPM program is the reduction of pesticide use. Hand-removal of weeds is one method to decrease the use of herbicides. Some may feel this practice is too time-consuming and the benefit is not worthwhile.

If you run the numbers, the result may surprise you. For example, let's assume you have a 20-person staff. If 20 people take the time to hand-pull 10 weeds a day, five days a week (take the weekends off!), these 20 people would remove 52,000 weeds annually without one ounce of herbicide.

You be the judge: is it practical? In addition to the obvious benefit of fewer weeds and less herbicide, would your golfers rather see employees removing weeds while waiting for the golfers to play out of the way? Or would they rather see the employees sitting on their rear ends?

Golf course superintendents are well aware that hiring and keeping quality staff members can be a challenge. Too often, employees would prefer to perform duties that afford them the ability to sit on their butts all day.

Well, that topic is a different, complicated issue that each superintendent has to overcome. One way to motivate staff members to pull weeds by hand is to install "weed poppers" on the equipment.

From our experience, employees are much more likely to accomplish the goal of 10 weeds a day if they do not have to get their hands dirty.

To assist in this challenge we purchased a supply of "weed poppers" from a local vendor and our head equipment technician installed clips on the equip-



*Mounting the weed tool on vehicles (above) keeps them handy and eliminates forgetfulness. Former assistant superintendent Russ Mollberg (right) is shown popping one of his quota of 10 weeds a day. A crew of 20 can harvest 52,000 in a year. Photos by Darren Davis.*

ment to secure the tool in place. With the tool provided in a location that does not allow the employee to "forget it at the shop," we feel the goal of 52,000 weeds a year is obtainable.

Can this help your operation? That is for you to analyze. Has it reduced the amount of herbicides that we have used? Absolutely! In fact not one ounce of post-emergent herbicide for goosegrass or crabgrass has been applied to our greens, tees or fairways in over four years.

## Tree/Boom Guard

As the assistant superintendent at Boca Grove, I like to do a lot of the spraying—especially the herbicides—so I know how and where the applications are done.

We have more than 1800 orange trees remaining from the original grove on the property. When I have to spray near the trees, even though we have break-away



booms on our Hahn sprayer, the fittings on the booms can nick the trees and leave small and unattractive scars on the bark.

I had an idea to create a tree (or boom) guard to create a neutral, flat surface that wouldn't cut the bark. From our mechanic, I got a couple of used Toro bedknives that were being discarded. I secured the bedknives to the ends of the outrigger booms with a couple of hose clamps. Now these flat surfaces recoil harmlessly off the trees without leaving any scars whatsoever.

*Jeffrey Roth, AGCS  
Boca Grove Golf & Tennis Club*



*The installation of a used bedknife on the leading edge of the breakaway boom on the spray rig protects the trunks of trees from nicks and cuts by the bolts and fittings on the boom. Photo by Jeffrey Roth.*