The critical hire — superintendent — was omitted
To the Editor:
In the December 1990 issue of Golf Course News, the article “Golf Course Europe” contained comments by ASGCA (American Society of Golf Course Architects) President Dan Maples stating that “the key to a successful golf course development is assembling a professional team, which should include an experienced land planner, civil engineer, golf course architect, housing architect, attorney and financial consultant.”
I read that the golf course superintendent was omitted from his statement. Who is better qualified to assist in grass selection, determine initial start-up costs, labor requirements, maintainability and the necessary equipment, in addition to establishing budgetary demands?

Boberts: Answering tough questions

By Eliot C. Roberts

Reports of municipalities in the more densely populated parts of the country considering landscape restrictions and ordinances have become more common. To some degree, this is related to increasing interest in Xeriscaping, which emphasizes use of native vegetation with proposed reductions in water and energy use for maintenance. A back-to-nature or natural practices philosophy has appeal, particularly in densely populated regions where in recent years much of nature’s value has been tarnished by pollution of various sorts.

Of the many questions asked The Lawn Institute, seven are key to better understanding landscape quality and environmental relationships. These are:

1) Which are better, trees or grass, in certain degree, this is related to increasing interest in Xeriscaping, which emphasizes use of native vegetation with proposed reductions in water and energy use for maintenance. A back-to-nature or natural practices philosophy has appeal, particularly in densely populated regions where in recent years much of nature’s value has been tarnished by pollution of various sorts.

2) What does landscape sustainability have to do with landscape value?
3) What is really the goal of most new landscape ordinances?
4) How can we deal with landscape plans, regulations and specifications?
5) Are energy costs unreasonable in landscape maintenance?
6) How much idealism is behind demands for landscape change?
7) Why do we so often read in news stories that turfgrasses are an enemy?

Answers to these questions should help clarify some important issues.

Would new developments have an increased success rate if a qualified golf course superintendent were included as part of this professional team?

Could maintenance costs and construction problems be reduced while maintainability is increased?

Would developments be better prepared for the tremendous start-up costs of golf course construction and maintenance — primarily the first year, but certainly second and third years as well?

Food for thought, certainly.

Sincerely,
Mark J. Hoban, CGCS
President
Georgia GCSC

Not mixing irrigation with great architects

To the Editor:
In November’s issue were listed golf course architects headquartered in the United States. I was honored to be on the roster with such great people as Jay Morrish, Tom Fazio, Bob Cupp, Art Hills, Roger Packard and Scott Miller. The truth of the matter is, Larry Rodgers is an irrigation consultant to golf course architects, not a golf course architect, as you listed.

My only attempt at design was a three-hole course on a friend's ranch. It was this humble experience that taught me just how important selecting a quality golf course architect is. I am quite happy in my role as the irrigation designer on the many fine projects I have been involved with.

Thank you for putting my name in print in association with such great architects. My role in the golf course design field is an important one, but the art and strategy must come before the mechanics of golf course architecture.

Sincerely,
Larry Rodgers
Lakeview, Colo.

Comment

Continued from page 12

Many thousands of people who would no more Sundays with their families

Let's be golf-ologists and be a part of the solution.

Jerry Gelinas, vice president of marketing with Club Corporation of America, said potential club members “want benefits that fit their’s and their families’ needs. We’ve found a strong trend toward the entire family becoming part of the club environment.”

Gelinas said families offer a major opportunity and a more stable membership for a club.

So, businesswise — as well as good neighborwise and plain good citizenship-wise — getting entire families involved in golf is a positive for golf courses everywhere.

What can you do? Skier are finding success with one tactic: Giving “first-timers” the opportunity to ski free of charge (including skis, poles and boots in some instances) on a particular day. Other ski resorts are going teaching programs for very little money.

This is all geared to teach young and old alike the sport so that they can enjoy it to its fullest and return and keep returning.

Would this be difficult for golf courses to do? Courses could offer special family “green fee” discounts, or father-son discounts, husband-wife discounts... the list goes on. Biting the bullet today could mean eating a meal of success tomorrow.

Let’s give the many “golf widows” new life by bringing them out, showing them respect, and honestly illustrating that they are welcome.

Junior programs, women’s programs, teaching for the physically challenged... the opportunities are boundless, the undetected is endless.

Let’s be inventive. It will help our business, our society, and perhaps even our self-esteem.

Continued on page 54
The term is no better understood very meaningful. Agriculture today is accused of lacking sustainability. The line of AquaGro® features. The performance guarantee* and flexibility to "sustainability/' are technically not in the landscape is a complex concept. Most conventional farming practices contribute to a sustainable system. That is, they help crop production, promote yields at economic levels and help conserve soil and water. The same holds true for landscape construction and maintenance practices. Most of these being used today are the result of hundreds of millions of dollars spent the past 50 years for research. Commercial research dollars and public funding of Land Grant University Agricultural Experiment Stations have supported most of this research. The Current Research Information System of the U.S. Department of Agriculture identifies some 300 research projects on turfgrass alone. Often the issue of sustainability is linked with use of chemical fertilizers that are alleged to poison the soil and increase disease and insect problems of plants so that more pesticides are required. The proposed alternative is use of natural organic fertilizers and elimination of all pesticides. Agricultural Experiment Station research across the country has not demonstrated undue risk from normal use of chemical fertilizers. Nor is there evidence that use of natural organic fertilizers can reduce weed, insect and disease problems to the point where pesticides are no longer needed. Thus, sustainability is widely accepted in general agriculture and in landscape horticulture. This does not mean that there haven't been over-uses of fertilizers and pesticides in isolated instances. As with all excessive use, risk increases. Is the dose that makes the poison? A sustainable landscape promotes practices that conserve, recycle and reuse the resources invested in these landscapes. All landscapes should be designed and maintained to incorporate organic soil management practices. But inorganic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides must not be excluded. When properly used, risk to people, animals, plants and environment is not unreasonably increased.

It is interesting to speculate how effective programs to educate the public about ideas and benefits of sustainable landscapes will be. Awareness and behavior formation is so scarce. Perhaps it will be a matter of dis-education.

Q — What is really the goal of most new landscape ordinances? A — It's difficult to understand the meaning of many of them. The bottom line often seems to involve use of water, fuel for equipment, limited use of chemicals in the landscape construction and maintenance. Some group must feel there are excesses in one or more of these inputs. If this is so, landscape professionals should recommend changes. If policies and guidelines are left to the political system, the landscape quality of the community will surely suffer.

A successful landscape improves the functional and aesthetic environment. Cost/benefit studies may show some landscapes more efficiently than others, but what does this have to do with success as long as someone is willing to pay? Some people drive Lincolns, others Ford. The landscape creates and/or modifies space. It makes better places to live, work and play. Remove it and the inert environment of the central city is left.

Now, some people prefer this environment and live in areas devoid of interiorscapes or external landscaping. Most residential development favors a well-planned landscape. If a certain landscape imposes environmental costs, such as pollution, then it is ill-conceived. It is not helping the environment, although it may look good.

These landscapes require modification so the functional environment is improved. Often this means sound soil-plant management and not elimination of water, fertilizer, pesticides, fuels or labor.

Many times it seems the community plans "to throw out the baby with the bath water." It is worth emphasizing "this ordinance must involve and combine larger issues if the environmental foundation for landscape development is to be integrated into cultural, political, aesthetic and economic factors of positive urban development." The landscape enhances the aesthetic and functional life for people, animals and plants. This is environmental health.

However, there are limits. In high-population areas, the landscape may fight a losing battle in maintaining environmental quality. Use of accounting procedures to measure the magnitude of decisions and practices is valid. Interpretation of data must be handled with care. Performance standards are difficult to come by for living entities. It's a good objective, but must be administered by technically well-qualified horticulturists and agronomists.

Q — Landscape plans, regulations and specifications seem to stand in the way of successful development. How can we deal with this?
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**Dr. Eliot C. Roberts, PhD, is director of The Lawn Institute in Pleasant Hill, Tenn.**

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