And while I'm on the subject...

Of course, we're biased. But it's hard to imagine the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America choosing two more deserving recipients than Mr. Richard M. Hurdzan for his President's and Distinguished Service awards, respectively.

Both gentlemen serve on the Golf Course News Editorial Advisory Board, and they serve it extremely well. When it comes to matters at hand that affect superintendents and developers — a major change from decades ago when useful, helpful, innovative methods were held close to the vest and kept as secrets to take to the grave.

"What I have seen is, the superintendents' associations have moved from being social organizations to truly one of the most professional and appropriate retraction at your ear."

Our company supervises the production of the mix and assumes the liability of producing information is lifeblood to the body of the golf course superintendents' profession as well as all golfers and developers — a major change from decades ago when useful, helpful, innovative methods were held close to the vest and kept as secrets to take to the grave.

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Continued on page 52

Letters

ROOT ZONE ADDENDUM: COST AND 'PERFECTION'

To the editor:

Thanks for the opportunity to express some of my thoughts. In your November issue, regarding the industry's problems concerning root-zone mixes [see related letter on opposite page]: Because of the important issue of cost, I would like to clarify our company's position on the testing fees. The blending companies I work with charge for the mechanical portion of the work. It is our belief that the production of the mix and assumes the liability of producing mixes as designed. Together, our pricing is competitive with others in the blending business. It should be pointed out that all mixes are perfect until they are confirmed as meeting the original design specifications by a competent soil laboratory. If a mix is not checked by someone who knows what they're doing, it's a perfect mix.

Only after it's checked will you know whether the mix is subpar.

Glen Watkins Root Zone Mix Mule Shoe, Texas

PLAYER CLARIFIES DESIGN

To the editor:

I read the November issue of Golf Course News today. In this issue, GCN has an article concerning the acquisition of Cutter Sound Golf & Yacht Club in Martin County, Fla. ("Golf Communities adds Fla. track," page 43). The article incorrectly states that this is a "Gary Player-designed championship course."

We terminated our agreement with the developer of this course approximately first nine," page 4).

The present owners purchased at auction a nearly complete golf course designed by Richard and Associates that was named Head of the Bay Club. Construction of the golf course began in May of 1991. I find it preposterous that full design credit is being assigned to Mark Mungeam (of Uxbridge, Mass.-based Cornish and Silva, Inc.) after some minor tee and pond banks; and equip maintenance staff with two-way radios.

"Doral Golf Resort Director of Golf Course Maintenance and Grounds Patrick McHugh shared the 10 Commandments of Successful Human Relations to reacquire the arts of kindliness and persuasion; put consideration of human dignity higher than personal or working conditions; keep circulating to be seen as well as heard from; get rid of the darker side of behavior: preface a request to subordinates with "please;" don't take yourself too seriously, praise fearlessly, giving credit where it is due, giving credit to make changes; in handling grievances, let the employee tell his full story without interruption, remembering a kind word will help; and learn to listen.

"From superintendent Don Tolson of Fox Hollow at Lakewood in Lakewood, Colo.: Encourage wearing of soft spikes, and test irrigation water to determine if it could be harmful.

"Joint editor, western edition"
For turf’s sake, don’t take peat for granted

By Tom Levar

The constructed soil in sports turf root zones is the foundation of your golf course. It is easily and often taken for granted. Then, it is placed and covered with turf. Yet your continued success is largely linked to root-zone management, including construction. When roots, rhizomes, nematodes and other natural substances are aided and sustained, you are also able to establish and sustain healthy, playable turf. This goal is best achieved through the proper use of peat in the root zone and the bonus is water and nutrient conservation.

Peat provides both pore space for pathways and a physical filter to prevent peat from washing away. It also allows water and nutrients to slowly and evenly reach the root zone; and the bonus is water and nutrient conservation.

No other organic material is as effective as peat in constructed soils for maintaining healthy turf. Our organic options are ever increasing, but peat is the proven standard in the horticultural industries and for very good reasons. Healthy turf relies on a balanced diet of water, air and nutrients. A properly constructed root zone includes peat and is balanced to give a hedge against natural excesses and stresses.

The root zone must breathe and be permissive to gases and water; and at the same time aerate the space of available moisture. Peat provides both pore space for pathways and cellular fibers for sorption sites. The water held by peat is readily available to the roots of the turf. No other organic can provide both storage and availability so well. The fibrous nature and structure of peat enables the controlled metering of water and gases in the constructed root zone.

The greatest benefit of sphagnum peat in sports turf management is water conservation. The water in the root zone is the “chicken soup” to the turf—a broth carrying nutrients, fibers, water—supporting the plants and from the turf roots. If stagnant, this water can suffocate the roots and give rise to diseases and turf failure. The proper use of peat will improve your efficient water use. Peat provides a physical filter to prevent peat from washing away.

Not only is total water use made more efficient with peat, but water quality is also improved. In the natural environment, peat is a physical filter to prevent peat-water which may be laden with nutrients and acidifying agents. Micro-organisms reside in peat and biologically degrade organic residues, convert and biodegrade organic substances. By using peat, the water percolating through the root zones of your facility is physically and biologically treated.

An additional conservation bonus of peat is related to the inherent presence of peat humus substances. Organic acids stimulate microbial activity and promote more efficient nutrient conversion and uptake by the plants. This effect on the beneficial micro-organisms gives them a competitive advantage over pathogens in the root zone.

Letters

DETAILING A RECIPE FOR ROOT ZONES

To the editor:

I admired Leslie’s editorial in the November issue, “We mustn’t forget: Greens, root zone are living organisms.”

The “recipe” you describe is widely accepted, specified and used by the Deans of American Golf Course Construction. You identity several of these Deans in your editorial and the accompanying article (“Experts decry inconsistent root-zone mixes”), none of whom address your question: “Does any recipe or root zone formula exist?”

The solution to your “recipe” is not found in the school of agronomy but is discovered in the school of medicine; pre-med can be exact, in the microbiology section.

See “Facts on File, Biology,” edited by Elizabeth Tosti; Library of Congress catalog 88-045476; published in New York-Oxford-Sydney. This particular volume describes Part A of your “recipe” for peat. What follows is a partial description of “peat” from the above text:

1. Partially decomposed plant material that accumulates in waterlogged anaerobic conditions; varies from a light spongy material to a dense, brown, humified material in the lower layers.
2. If mineral salts are present, neutral or alkaline peat (pen peat) is formed.
3. If there are no mineral salts present, peat (or bog peat) is formed.

What follows next is a description of the spongy and humified material:

1. Mull: humus from deciduous and hardwood forest floor, wet acidic to neutral climates; neutral; alkaline; supports bacteria, worms, larger insects are abundant; decay is rapid.
2. Mor: humus; usually acidic characteristic of coniferous forests; supports micro-organisms such as ant, aphids and fungi, being the most common organis;
3. Muck: heavy black silt; successful, if handled cautiously.
4. Early to mid-’80s: Your “recipe” was used, sometimes with moderate success but always with problems. Some severe failures — namely, Breckenridge and Castle Pines — occurred.
5. Mid-’80s to today: Change to neutral organic on 95 percent of Colorado projects with 100 percent success to date. The five percent using an acid peat, not neutral peat suffer similar fungus problems as those seen in the early ’80s.

If the Deans of American Golf were to follow the example of the Canadian and American effects of the mid-1980s to stop the deadly contamination in the Great Lakes, perhaps golf greens would turn green.

Tom Briddle

Tom Levar is the principal scientist of North Woods Organics in Duluth, Minn. His 21-year career has included university research, private consulting, resource management, product development and technical assistance to private industry.

Golf Course News

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