Cold stressed at the Maine turf conference

By MARK LESLIE

ROCKPORT, Maine — Hardening off cool-season turfgrasses is the most important factor in turf survival during a winter of freezing stresses, according to Dr. William Torello, turf program director at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Speaking at the Maine Turfgrass Conference and Show here March 7, Torello said superintendents should make every effort to accumulate volumes of carbohydrates within the turf plant. Higher carbohydrate levels mean less internal ice crystal formation ― "the kiss of death" ― within the plant, he said.

Torello told superintendents to enhance the hardening process by:

• Increasing mowing heights, which "does great things for you. Even if you only bring it up 1/8 inch, it makes a big difference because you have increased leaf area and green tissues, which means higher carbohydrate production during the fall, increased storage, and increased concentration of stored carbohydrates in the crown which is going to give you a much better-prepared turf."

• Decreasing or eliminating soluble nitrogen (N) applications as the fall progresses. "Make no N applications after Oct. 15 — earlier in Maine," he warned. "How does nitrogen interfere with the hardening process? The more N picked up by the plant, the more protein it makes. Protein is made by taking carbohydrate and attaching ammonium nitrogen to it. It takes away carbohydrate." Dormant applications are an exception, he said.

Continued on page 19

The play's the thing, say supers who hit the links

By PETER BLAIS

All superintendents may not play as much or as well as Jim Dusch of Atlanta National Golf Course in Alpharetta, Ga.

"But it's hard to see how you can do this job and not play the game," said Dusch, winner of this year's GCSAA Championship and a self-described I-handicap player. "My goal is to get the course to the point where it is acoustically sound and playable in my eyes."

Dusch tries to play his course at least once a week. He watches how the ball rolls on the greens, how bunkers are raked and how worn the tees are as both a superintendent and a golfer.

"You don't have to be a great golfer," he said. "But you should know what the course looks like to the people playing your course. Playing helps you understand what is good and what is bad from the player's perspective. I'm not saying someone who doesn't play can't have a great course. But it would be tough if you weren't a player."

Charles Passios, head super

Continued on page 25

Beating the water woes in Nevada

By ALTON Pryor

LAUGHLIN, Nev. — Emerald River Resort and Country Club stretches for four miles along the Colorado River where it is carved out of rough and unforgiving desert. Built in 1989 in 360 acres of desert base, it requires huge amounts of water to cope with high summer temperatures. For golf course superintendent Jay Long, water is his biggest concern. Even though he pumps from the giant Colorado River, flowing only a fairway from the course, water is an expensive commodity and Long has had to discover ways to reduce that expense.

"We pump out of the river, but cost for water is very high," Long said. "I'm budgeted $250,000 a year for water and that isn't enough. We are charged $1.94 per thousand gallons, which is the residential rate, and the water from the pumps to make sure we don't cheat. When the courts broke up the water rights among the states on the Colorado River, Nevada didn't get a very big share."

Long said he applies about 50 acres feet per year to his green areas — about 75 acres. During the summer, when temperatures soar to as high as 125 degrees, Long said he applies about 50 acres feet per year to his green areas — about 75 acres. During the summer, when temperatures soar to as high as 125 degrees,