Managing personnel a challenge often unmet

By ROBERT D. CHABOURNE

What's the difference between a good golf course superintendent and a great superintendent? "I have no statistics, but when a superintendent fails to move up, or loses the position he has, I feel I'm safe in saying he was probably deficient in some area of managing people," concludes Dr. Donald R. Marion, retired professor of resource economics at the University of Massachusetts (UMass), who teaches personnel management at the annual UMass Winter Turf School.

Marion's message to superintendents honing their skills, and assistant superintendents grooming their resumes, has changed over the years.

"Back in the '70s we used to stress the routing, automating, and mechanizing of tasks as the complete answer to a smooth golf course operation," said Marion. "What's different today is the expanded role of the employee in the workplace."

When asked to arrange lists of job considerations such as pay, promotion, benefits, responsibility, job involvement, job security, appreciation, tact in applying discipline, and assistance in dealing with personal problems, workers tend to rate appreciation and the degree to which management involves them in the overall process higher in importance than pay and benefits.

"The teaching point to superintendents is not how their employees arrange their lists," Marion said, "but how they are arranged in comparison to the superintendents' list. Ideally, results that are about the same would predict a smoothly running operation. Marion, who holds bachelor's and master's degrees in agri-economics from Cornell University and a PhD from UMass, has seen his own field change with the times. Resource

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Turfgrass, molecular genetics and the future

By MARK LESLIE

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Citing "several-fold results" from the first international Workshop on Biotechnology of Turfgrass, scientists are excited about the future of genetic engineering and biological controls.

"Look over your shoulder and see where we were 10 years ago with bentgrasses, and that [progress] was just with conventional plant breeding," said Dr. Michael Kenna of the U.S. Golf Association Green Section, which co-sponsored the workshop along with host Michigan State University (MSU). "I think we will see some turfgrass varieties in which molecular genetics made a significant contribution."

"We can expect breakthrough after breakthrough very quickly," said Dr. Miriam Sticklen, an MSU biotechnologist who helped coordinate the three-day event. "In a decade there will be a big revolution in turfgrass maintenance, saving time and money and improving the environment."

Already, according to MSU Professor Jan Zeebaart, who spoke at the workshop, there is work on genes that can make grass shorter and thicker. And scientists are researching other genes with herbicide and pathogen resistance.

"We have several other useful genes, but because we are talking about patents, I can't discuss them now," Sticklen said.

Kenna tempered his assessment of the future. Acknowledging that Rutgers and Michigan State have bentgrasses that are resistant to the chemicals Finale or Roundup, he said. "The problem is, the companies that own the patents

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