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.

Continued on page 14

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 already have a good break through 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 already have a good break through 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.
New Albany's walls make space-savers

By TERRY BUCHEN

NEW ALBANY, Ohio — Using storage space properly and efficiently has always been a priority for superintendents in their maintenance buildings. New Albany Country Club superintendent Tony Mancuso has accomplished a fine example of using wall space for storing backpack blowers and string-line trimmers.

The backpack blowers are hung on a partition wall, using a bicycle-type hook that is covered with a red vinyl-type material screwed into a 1-by-6-inch board. "We installed particle peg boards on the inside of our partition wall and put wing walls on either end to protect the backpack blowers from being bumped accidentally," Mancuso said. "Below each backpack blower we have space for smaller items such as orange-colored parking lot cones and rolls of rope."

For string-line trimmers, Mancuso mounted 2-by-8-inch boards vertically, then notched them out so the trimmers could be stored horizontally. The motor and string line, brush blade or reciprocators end of the trimmer are then also protected from being bumped accidentally. The straps used by the crew while operating the trimmers are hung alongside the trimmers on the same wall used for storage for easy access.

Safety signs are also placed on the wall, reminding employees that eye protection must be worn at all times when operating the string-line trimmers, brush blades and reciprocators. "We did all of the storage modifications to our turf-care facility in-house with our staff during the winter months and put in the storage modifications to our turf-care facility in-house with our staff during the winter months and in the spring," Mancuso said. "We have many of our own carpentry tools. There are always many small projects that justify having this type of equipment instead of renting from the usual sources."

Harris Method of thatch control

Continued from page 13

Thus, the genesis of The Harris Method. "The basis is the removal of thatch," Harris said, "so we began the thatch-removal process by vacuuming the thatch in two directions with a 4500 with hydraulically driven verticut reel set at 1/2 inch. Then we went with the verticut to the outside of both sides of the fairway ground."

Harris set the Lay-Mor with the operator at the guide point, and the brush so you can see a little soil fly up, or, less aggressively, by raising up the brush. "Ultimately, we end up with grass and soil — nothing else," he said.

On the self-propelled model, a person can see right underneath. It usually takes about 10 hours to do all the tees at Lake Nona.

Harris recommends that the operator wear a respirator and safety goggles and maybe a spray suit since he will get quite dirty.

Lake Nona plans to rent two or three units to prepare the 419 fairways for overseeding in the middle of November and do the tees again soon.

They close the course for five days to overseed. "The Lay-Mor is too coarse a machine for greens and collars, so we are going to test a Jacobsen Turf Cat that has a rotary brush that is made for cart paths that should work really well," Harris said.

Once the Harris Method of dethatching tees is completed, a fairly heavy 3/8 to 1/2 inch of top dressing is applied to the greens prior to verticutting again. Then Harris applies a 19-0-17 greens fertilizer a week after the brushing is completed.

It Happens.

When lightning strikes, special pump station engineering kicks in...

Even in a lightning storm, SyncroFlo's unique circuitry protects expensive electronics from damage! Instead of reeking complete havoc when IT happens, recovery is likely to be quick and inexpensive. That's just one way SyncroFlo matches technology with real world golf course conditions.

You're invited to request a copy of "Five Ways Any Pump Station Can Work Better". Or talk directly to our experts. Learn from our experiences with over 10,000 installations worldwide. We welcome the opportunity to share a few trade secrets that could add to your peace of mind.

SyncroFlo, Inc.
Call 800-886-4443 or online: email@syncroflo.com

CIRCLE #112