Ohio show hits hot buttons
President stresses green ‘marriage’

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Calling the relationship of the state’s golf course superintendents, sports turf managers and lawn-care operators “a beautiful marriage,” new Ohio Turfgrass Foundation (OTF) President Joe Duncan said the different groups are learning more and more from each other as time passes.

“That relationship has existed for a long, long time, but we depend on each other more than ever before,” said Duncan, owner of Evergreen Lawn Care Inc. in Troy, who succeeded Hank Chafin at the OTF Conference and Show here, Dec. 8-11. “We’re learning that everything we do is an integral part of each other’s work. Things that happen on sports turfs and on golf courses, and the research they are fostering, affect us all.”

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Prof. pushes more biological control

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Questions abound in the arena of turfgrass soil ecology and biology, but Dr. Michael Boehm pointed to a future where biological care plays an equal role in maintenance with chemical and cultural care and the turfgrass’ genetic resistance.

The Ohio State University (OSU) assistant professor of plant pathology painted a picture in which current maintenance practices are dominated by chemicals, and where cultural practices and genetic resistance dwarf biological controls.

“We want to get all spheres relatively the same size to give turfgrass managers the ultimate and largest arsenal to combat turfgrass diseases,” Boehm told an audience at the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Show and Conference here.

“Our goal,” he said, “is the integrated management of diseases ... to push the responsible use of biorational, environmentally friendly and environmentally...”

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Golf and the Environment

A water sample is taken at TPC River Highlands in Cromwell, Conn.

Tackling unreasonable expectations

By RON DODSON

It’s interesting how jobs seem to define who we are. For instance, when we ask, “What is a golf course superintendent?” we’re really asking what job does he or she do, and, believe me, everyone’s got an answer about what they’re supposed to do.

First of all, everyone seems to agree that a superintendent’s primary job is to manage the golf course (meaning turfgrass). And it follows that every golfer wants all their greens to be managed. Right?

Sometimes that’s how it sounds when I talk with golfers about superintendents. Well, I’m here to tell you that good golf course superintendents do a whole lot more than manage turfgrass. In addition to all of the work and expertise it takes to manage turf, they manage water, and from this environmentalist’s perspective they also manage wildlife, wetlands, lakes, streams, forests, landscape ecology, insects, the weather, the media, the government, their staff, and the biggest challenge of all: the unreasonable expectations of golfers.

What do I mean by unreasonable? From an economic and environmental perspective, think about wall-to-wall manicured turfgrass, both in terms of man and machine hours as well as in loss of habitat. Think about fertilized turf right down to the edge of water bodies, both in terms of cost of fertilizers, man hours to spread it, and the potential damage to water quality...

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to support their research," he added. "None of us individually has the funds, or the staff to do this research. We appreciate what OSU does for us."

The OTF function, Duncan said, is the research and technology of products and services. "We feel we are the education arm of all the other groups — the golf course superintendent associations, Ohio Lawncare Association and Professional Grounds Management Association. We feel they better serve their constituents in the administration and business aspects. What we're doing in gathering and disseminating information and research is the beauty about the marriage. It's what makes the green industry in Ohio so successful. Both groups are very viable and important to all the people involved."

Duncan, who has been in the lawn-care industry since 1975 and started Evergreen Lawn Care in 1985, said extraordinary advances have been made in technology and the use of computers. "These things will come more naturally to the next generation," he said. "Some of us in this industry are dinosaurs. Look where we've come in the last 20 years, in the way we managed turf then and now. It is the difference between night and day. I can't imagine where we're going to be 20 years from today. It's exciting because what we're doing now is so much better for the environment, for our clients, and for the turf."

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and insect resistance you will have fewer dead spots ... less mowing, fewer clippings, and less irrigation."

On the other hand, he said, "more people will want finer turf. There will be more do-it-yourselfers in lawn care. There will be a higher demand for greens, tees and fairways, and for renovation of existing turf to new varieties."

Overall, he said, it should be easier to manage turf, "but it depends on what spectrum of turf-care management you are on. If you're on the professional end, you'd better know what the varieties are you are treating, and from that standpoint you will need more knowledge, more record-keeping, better communications with your crew, and able to keep up with a faster pace of advancing technology."

Market size is critical to pay for genetic research, Meier said. "One of the concerns is, if you find a fantastic gene for herbicide or disease resistance, do you have a plant that is going to be harder to control?" he said. "Who knows, if it is disease-resistant, is it going to grow wild and take over [tracts of land]? The USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] controls the release of transgenic organisms and this is one criteria it looks at."