



BRIEFS

MOUNT SNOW GOLF CLUB NAMES PETREY

MOUNT SNOW, Vt. — The Mount Snow Golf Club, owned by American Skiing Co., has named Donald Petrey golf course superintendent. Petrey comes to Mount Snow from Keystone Resort in Keystone, Colo., where he spent the last two years as the assistant superintendent. At Keystone Resort, Petrey managed a crew of 22 and oversaw the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary program.



Donald Petrey

CARLS ELECTED CALIFORNIA GCSCA PRESIDENT

SUNNYVALE, Calif. — Gary Carls, CGCS, golf operations supervisor for the City of Sunnyvale, has been named president of the California Golf Course Superintendents Association (CGCSA) at their annual meeting in Palm Springs. The CGCSA comprises six regional chapters throughout California and boasts more than 2,000 members. In 2000, Carls served as president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California, the state's largest chapter.

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF IRRIGATION CONSULTANTS CHOOSES BARRETT

TUSCON, Ariz. — James Barrett, president of James Barrett Associates in Roseland, N.J., was elected president of the American Society of Irrigation Consultants at the group's annual conference here. Barrett has been involved in the irrigation industry since joining Robert Trent Jones Inc. as an irrigation designer in 1972. He started his own company in 1985. During his term, Barrett will continue to help further the understanding of how well-designed irrigation systems that use the latest technology can save water, energy and money. He also will continue to encourage local, state and federal lawmakers to work with irrigation consultants to develop meaningful irrigation regulations.



Editorial Focus: Fertigation

Superintendents overcoming fertigation learning curve

By ANDREW OVERBECK

While fertigation and injection systems have been available for many years, more superintendents are tuning into the benefits of applying liquid fertilizers and other nutrients through their irrigation systems.

Once overcoming the initial learning curve, superintendents are finding that fertigation units not only save time, labor and fertilizer costs, but also can improve playing conditions by constantly providing low levels of nutrients to turfgrass.

At Ravenwood Golf Course in Victor, N.Y., the facility's owner turned superintendent Peter George on to the value of fertigation.

"Our owner was actually the one who pushed the fertigation system on me," said George. "Once I saw the results of how fast the greens came in using the fertigation system, I started using it more during the grow-in. Now that we are fully operational, we use it for 60 percent of our fertilization."

George doesn't see that level going any higher, however, because his first application in the spring must be made before he can turn on his irrigation system.

"I go out in the spring and put a half-pound of nitrogen on the fairways with a low-quality granular and then I spoon-feed with the fertigation system all summer long," he said. "As a result I don't have peaks and valleys like other courses in the area. With the constant feed, I get good color and quality."

Down the road at Irondequoit Country Club in Rochester, N.Y., superintendent Rick Holfoth also is learning how to best use his new fertigation system that was installed as part of a \$1.5 million golf course and irrigation system renovation.

"I had been moving more toward using liquid fertilizers and plant growth regulators," said Holfoth. "When it came time for a new irrigation system, this was my



Peter George uses his fertigation system for 60 percent of his fertilization needs at Ravenwood Golf Course.

chance to add fertigation. So far in our first season, we are using it for 70 percent of our fertilization."

As George and Holfoth sort out their fertigation programs, other superintendents, like Ryan Porter at Old Ranch Country Club in Seal Beach, Calif., depend on their systems to keep their courses up and running.

Porter uses a fertigation system to distribute eight tons of gypsum monthly onto the 18-hole layout to help fight the waterphobic, high-sodium soils. Using liquid fertilizer for foliar feeding also helps him

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Washington courses providing habitat for burrowing owls

By ANDREW OVERBECK

PASCO, Wash. — As a three-year long study to determine if golf courses can provide suitable nesting habitat for burrowing owls draws to a close, there are promising signs that the species of concern is finding a home on the links.

"We are excited that the burrows are being used, both as satellite burrows and as nests," said project coordinator Matthew D. Smith, a graduate student at the University of Arizona. "We are optimistic that over time the number of owls will increase and expand to use more of the artificial burrows."

Burrowing owls inhabit short-grass open country and use the abandoned burrows of badgers, ground squirrels and coyotes for their nests. As those animals are driven away by development researchers suspect the owls may be left with fewer burrows. Since golf courses are open spaces with short grass, they represent potential habitat. The owls provide some benefit to courses because their diet includes pests such as voles, mice, pocket gophers and beetles.

Dr. Courtney J. Conway, a University of Arizona wildlife ecologist received a three-year, \$75,000 grant from the United States Golf Association in 2000 (GCN May 2000) to install and monitor artificial burrows at five area golf courses.

The researchers built artificial burrows at a variety of locations on golf courses to determine how the owls would tolerate golfers and maintenance activity. The artificial burrows are constructed of 10 feet of irrigation pipe, which leads to an upside-down five-gallon bucket that is buried three feet underground.

So far Horn Rapids Golf Course in Richland and Sun Willows Golf Course in Pasco have had the most success.

"At Horn Rapids there are five burrows



Field coordinator Audrey Sanfaçon and Sun Willows superintendent Ron Kuhns discuss the location of owl nests. A burrowing owl on the 15th hole at Sun Willows (inset).



Photos by Andrew Overbeck

with signs of use and one nest burrow," said field coordinator Audrey Sanfaçon. "At Sun Willows we have a pair raising young in one artificial burrow, unpaired resident males at

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Seeded bermudas are narrowing the quality gap

By ANDREW OVERBECK

After nearly a decade and a half of work, turfgrass breeders have introduced seeded bermudagrasses that are getting closer to the quality of the best vegetative varieties. Beyond the obvious cost savings associated with using seed versus sod, some seeded varieties also require less water and have better cold tolerance.

"In the past seeded bermudagrass was pretty far away from vegetative varieties but the gap is closing," said Kevin Morris, executive director of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program based in Beltsville, Md. "Seed is cheaper to use, and it has better cold hardiness. If you want to establish something quickly they are a good choice."

Seeds West's Princess seeded bermudagrass has topped the NTEP quality rating in recent trials for seeded varieties.

According to Seeds West director

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Audubon Int'l certifies 500th sanctuary

SELKIRK, N.Y. — Audubon International has certified its 500th Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.

"In an era where we see increasingly complex environmental problems, Audubon International has dedicated itself to helping people from all walks of life be part of the solution," said Audubon International president Ronald Dodson. "Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries exemplify what can be done when people make a

commitment to good environmental stewardship and sustainable resource management. We applaud the many golf courses that are participating in this crucial effort."

Certified properties account for more than 173,000 acres of land that is managed to protect wildlife and environmental quality and includes backyards, schools, golf courses, cemeteries and a variety of corporate sites.

Seeded bermudagrass improving

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of international sales Tom Bodderij, Princess is the first seeded type that compares with the quality of 419 or 328 and it has the added advantage of fast germination.

"Seed is easier to get into the ground," he said. "Sod is very time- and labor-intensive and with seed you have mowable grass in 45 days." Bodderij said studies at the University of Arizona also showed that Princess uses 19 to 25 percent less water than vegetative varieties.

Turf-Seed's Dr. Melodee Fraser also has been busy perfecting seeded bermudas.

"We have improved the quality with shorter inner nodes and finer leaves," said Fraser. "You can now mow them much shorter and still maintain turf density."

While Turf-Seed introduced its first seeded variety called Savannah in 1998, it is close to rolling out Transcontinental, which will offer better winter survivability.

In addition to improving quality, Jacklin Seed's Susan Samudio has also been working on improving winter survivability with its Southern Star, Sun Devil 2 and Jackpot varieties.

"Southern Star has the best cold tolerance of the three," said Samudio. "It can survive in the lower transition zone, especially

if they have time to harden off."

Although Seed Research of Oregon (SRO) already has Yukon, a variety that was developed by Oklahoma State University and is marketed jointly with Enid, Okla.-based Johnston Seed Co., the company is working on several new cold-tolerant varieties. According to SRO general manager Bill

Dunn, SR 9500 and 9554 are coming out soon, as is Riviera, a synthetic variety that was selected on the basis of turf quality and transition zone adaptation.

SLOW TO CATCH ON

Despite the advantages provided by these new seeded varieties, golf courses in the U.S. have been slow to catch on.

"In Europe and Japan sales are better because they don't have

an established sod industry and there are many regulations on sod imports," said Seeds West's Bodderij. "Here sod is readily available and is pretty cheap. But now that our seed is in full production it is half as expensive as it was two years ago, so it is now a good alternative to sod."

To some, seeded types still come up short on quality.

As a result, Jacklin's Samudio

said her work on seeded types was slowing down. "We are not doing much work right now, we have no new varieties coming out next year and we are taking a slow approach to the whole program."

Others are plugging ahead with work. "We are screening plants for better salt and shade tolerance," said Fraser. "And we are always working on improving winter survivability." ■

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Burrowing owls

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two other burrows and signs of use at three other burrows."

The owls and the golf courses are certainly learning to coexist.

One burrow at Sun Willows has 15 golf balls in it, according to Sanfaçon, but the owls remain active at the site. Sun Willows also will be expanding its irrigation system this fall and superintendent Ron Kuhns is doing what he can to work around the burrows.

"We will be expanding our irrigated area from 90 acres to 112 acres," said Kuhns. "Golfers love the owls and they are very much a part of the course. We don't want to disturb them now that we have them."

The researchers are providing Kuhns with a map of the active burrows on the course so he can make sure the irrigation system is designed around the nests.

After the completion of the study, Smith and Dr. Conway plan to distribute a pamphlet that will help superintendents create burrowing owl nests on their courses.

"We have witnessed the increasing owl population at Sun Willows and our success so far supports the potential for golf courses to help reverse suspected population declines of burrowing owls across the West," said Smith. ■