

MAINTENANCE



BRIEFS

USGA RELEASES "MAKING ROOM FOR NATIVE POLLINATORS"

FAR HILLS, N.J. — The United States Golf Association has released a new book, "Making Room for Native Pollinators: How to Create Habitat for Pollinator Insects on Golf Courses." Written by Matthew Shepherd, pollinator program director for the Xerces Society, the book is a result of a grant provided through the USGA's Wildlife Links program and is targeted to golf course superintendents, course officials, and environmental consultants to help manage out-of-play areas on the golf course. By taking some simple steps to establish patches of native wild flowers and nesting sites, golf courses can provide an important refuge for bees and other pollinating insects, which in turn helps maintain healthy plant communities.

VALLEYCREST GOLF NETS STONE CREEK GOLF CLUB CONTRACT

MAKANDA, Ill. — ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance has signed a partnership to perform golf course maintenance for Stone Creek Golf Club here. Under the agreement, ValleyCrest will provide professional maintenance services for the 18-hole daily-fee golf club. The addition of this facility is the company's first in Illinois and increases the company's maintenance portfolio in the Great Lakes area to four. Stone Creek was designed in 1998 by Jerry Lemmons of Golf Links Inc. The course features bluegrass/ryegrass tees and fairways with fescue roughs and bentgrass greens. Superintendent Joel Tyrpak will handle maintenance duties at the course.

DELHI PAIR WIN SCHOLARSHIP

DELHI, N.Y. — Two students of the State University of New York at Delhi's golf course management program were recently awarded scholarships from the Long Island Golf Course Superintendents Association. Brian Macmillan and Christian Munoz were awarded \$750 each, recognizing them as outstanding students pursuing a career in golf course management.

2002 NEWSMAKERS

More superintendents taking organic approach

By DOUG SAUNDERS

TRUCKEE, Calif. — The interest in organics has increased this year on many fronts other than in the golf industry. The Food and Drug Administration recently announced new guidelines for the labeling of organic products for the marketplace after years of discussion. More organic products are appearing in stores, which increases public awareness about trends in the agricultural industry. More public awareness leads to more concerns on how to best protect our environment.

But for the golf maintenance industry, the talk of organic methods for the golf course is tempered by several factors. Foremost is the desire to present the best possible conditions in order to attract the playing public. Second are the economic factors that have to be weighed as golf course superintendents are continually juggling their budgets in order to satisfy the needs of their golf course and the demands of their course managers.

Can an organic approach sat-



Old Brockway near Lake Tahoe has adopted an organic maintenance program.

isfy these two primary demands?

Over the last several years more organic fertilizers and products have been introduced to the golf market but the decision to use

them is a difficult one for course managers as there is little track record on their effectiveness.

"The bottom line in the discussion about the pros and cons of

the use of organics on golf courses is that the turf itself knows no difference in nutrients that come from organics or from synthetic

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2002 NEWSMAKERS

Compost tea shows promise

By ANDREW OVERBECK

WOODBURY, N.J. — As more superintendents study organic golf course maintenance practices, compost tea has emerged as viable alternative to a chemical-only approach.

While the compost tea technique has been around for

more than a century, today's higher-tech version "brews" compost to create a concentrated "tea" that delivers beneficial microbes and low levels of nutrients to turfgrass.

Evidence at this point is strictly anecdotal, but superintendents using compost tea report less disease pressure, less need for fer-

tilization and irrigation and all-around healthier turf.

Last February, *Golf Course News* interviewed Woodbury (N.J.) Country Club superintendent Charles Clarke about the results he had gotten after two years of using compost tea. Clarke stuck with his compost tea regimen this year and recorded a third successful season with his "home brew"

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Courses face cost-cutting pressure

By ANDREW OVERBECK

An uncertain economy and flat or declining rounds played numbers have placed increasing pressure on the bottom line at courses across the country.

According to a *Golf Course News* poll, 56.3 percent of courses will see maintenance budgets for 2003 remain the same, while 25 percent will see them drop (See page 8).

As more budgets come under pressure, superintendents are forced to produce the same turf conditions with fewer resources.

"You have to cut costs

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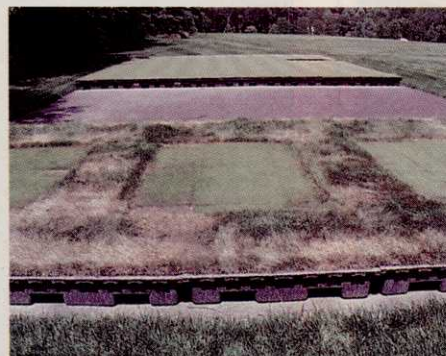
2002 NEWSMAKERS

Roundup Ready bentgrass still on track

By ANDREW OVERBECK

MARYSVILLE, Ohio — The Scotts Co. and Monsanto are pressing forward with the development of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass. The transgenic turf has created a buzz throughout the golf industry this year because it would allow superintendents to control weeds with Roundup without damaging the bentgrass (see related story page 18).

Since gaining approval from the



Roundup Ready trials are ongoing at several courses

acre control area for the production of the transgenic turfgrass, 400 acres have been planted and will be ready for harvest in July 2003.

However, the two companies cannot market Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass until they receive approval from the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant and Health In-

spection Service (APHIS). That

Oregon Department of Agriculture in July to set up an 11,000-

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Golf courses explore organic options

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methods," explained USGA Green Section agronomist Patrick Gross.

Still, with all of these variables there are golf course superintendents around the country who have made the philosophical commitment to an organic approach to course maintenance. The choice to use organic methods is driven by

same desire to develop the healthiest stand of turf possible in order to make the plant more disease resistant. In theory, a healthier plant has less needs for insecticide and herbicide applications.

The big difference in the organic approach is that the primary drive to stimulate healthier turf begins with the concept of doing all that is

possible to alter the chemical structure of the soil itself.

"I look at myself as a dirt farmer," explained Mike Kozak of Lahontan Golf Club in Truckee, Calif. "I believe that the necessary nutrients for plants are available in every acre of land. My job is to unlock these nutrients from the soil so that they are available to the plant. Synthetic applications go directly to the plant but

can have a detrimental effect on soil structure over time."

Around the country some superintendents have begun to look to organic fertilizers as an alternative because of increased environmental concerns. Dave Laurie is the superintendent at Old Brockway Golf Course, an 85-year-old nine-hole course located near the shoreline of Lake Tahoe, Calif., one of the most scruti-

nized environmental regions in the nation. The lake's water clarity has become a hot issue in the last 20 years, and Laurie and course owner Lane Lewis decided six years ago to take a more proactive approach to deal with the course's impact on the environment.

"We have undertaken a complete refinement of our facility to control how we affect our ecosystem," said Laurie. "We have developed filtration ponds to capture all of our runoff. We have installed a new irrigation system to reduce our water usage. And we have undertaken a total commitment to an organic fertilization program in order to improve our soil structure."

The commitment is important as it takes years of a concerted effort to realize the benefits of an organic approach. For course manager and owner Lewis, he had to weigh the extra cost with the eventual benefits.

"It is more expensive for us to maintain the course organically and we have to make the golfing public aware of what it is that we do here so that they understand and appreciate our approach," Lewis said. "I feel that over time we will be able to lower our fertilization rates to a point that we will see an economic benefit."

"We have also found golfers who play here regularly because of our no pesticide approach," he continued. "Both Dave and I see this approach as turning back to the roots of course maintenance rather than being on the cutting edge of a new concept."

While these mountain courses have an advantage in that they don't have a large list of pathogens to combat, there are courses in other micro-climates that have begun to find benefits to the use of organic fertilizations. Don Paul, CGCS, at De Laveaga Golf Course in Santa Cruz, Calif., maintains an 18-hole course near the coast where he must deal with such pathogens as dollar spot, yellow spot and snow molds.

"I have been creating an intense IPM program over the years and the use of organic fertilizers is a part of that program," said Paul. "I am going to expand my plan by including compost tea, which I will use to try to increase microbial rates to try to control snow mold, which I deal with during the cold foggy mornings in the winter. I think that the industry is going to make a more pronounced turn to organics in the future. I just seems like the right thing to do for me." ■



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