Super ideas: tree recycling, chemical cuts, and a tee blower

**By JOEL JOYNER**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Innovative solutions to help save time and money in a maintenance operation is just what golf courses need when their budgets start to turn sour. From self-supporting tree recycling programs to reducing chemical use on the golf course to innovative debris blowers, superintendents John Gurke, Andrew Dalton and Larry Balke have implemented creative solutions that have proven successful at their courses.

**TREE PROGRAM**

At the Aurora Country Club in Wheaton, Ill., in the Chicagoland area, superintendent John Gurke has developed a tree planting program that supports himself. Located on a small acreage property in a residential area, the club has no room for a landscape waste disposal site, according to Gurke.

"We must recycle all landscape waste on site," he said. "What we've done is start a self-perpetuating tree program, whereby we cut and split all large tree material into firewood and chip smaller material for mulch."

The by-products are then sold to club members -- delivered, stacked, and/or spread -- for a cost of $50 per dump truck load. The money is deposited into a new fund. According to Gurke, "It's a win-win situation. We get rid of the material without paying the high price of waste removal, and members get low-priced firewood and mulch. It also works as a nice public relations tool for member-staff relations."

In addition, every year in late October, the course obtains a permit from the Aurora Fire Department to hold a Halloween bonfire/hayride. "We pull a rented hay wagon around the course at night by tractor, with scare stations set up throughout," said Gurke. "The members have dinner at the clubhouse, get on the hayride and mander down to the maintenance area where we light up all unsold and unused firewood. We also include a bar tent, music, and pizzas for the event. It's a great time, and we legally finish off our extra and unsuitable-for-firewood material."

The labor cost is minimal, and all log splitting and chipping is done from fall to spring on frost mornings when the crew can not get out on the golf course," he continued. "It's a win-win situation. We get rid of the material without paying the high price of waste removal, and members get low-priced firewood and mulch. It also works as a nice public relations tool for member-staff relations."

**Superintendent Andrew Dalton on the third tee of the Hill course at Copper Hills G&CC.**

**NEW TURF DISEASE HITS THE CAROLINAS**

**By JOEL JOYNER**

NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. — A new turf disease, tentatively named chytridomyctete, has hit coastal golf courses in the Carolinas. The single-celled organism was devastating to some courses last fall as researchers were just starting to learn about the fungus. So far, the disease has been discovered attacking annual bluegrass, ryegrass and Poa trivialis.

There's still debate on what to call the disease. "It's been found out West for the past five years, but it's new to us here in the Carolinas. It's still new throughout the country," said Dr. Bruce Martin, plant pathologist at Clemson University. "We cannot call it the chytrid which is the slang term that's been going around. One idea is to name it rapid blight. When it is active, it can destroy a green in a week." The disease currently is found in eight pastures in the Carolinas. The report also addresses ongoing habitat enhancement and educational programs that teach club members and the community at large about the environment, course maintenance and the ways golf courses can be good neighbors.

**BONITA BAY RECERTIFIED WITH AUDUBON INTL**

NAPLES, Fla. — Bonita Bay Club East's two golf courses, The Cypress and The Sabal, recently earned recertification as Audubon International signature sanctuaries.

"Recertification is not automatic, and initial designation is not permanent," said Dennis Gilkey, president and CEO of the Bonita Bay Group. "It is conferred every two years if the developer shows ongoing commitment to the environment."

Each year, a comprehensive report is submitted to Audubon International that details the environmental work done during the previous year. "We present information about projects planned for the next year, our efforts to protect the native wildlife, and our work to limit pesticide use," said Jim Schilling, director of golf course operations here at the facility.

The report also addresses ongoing habitat enhancement and educational programs that teach club members and the community at large about the environment, course maintenance and the ways golf courses can be good neighbors.

**GOING NATIVE**

During 2000, the club replaced a total of two acres of golf course turf with native grasses and natural vegetation, enhanced an acre of habitat and natural areas near the golf courses and eliminated 15 sprinkler heads and adjusted 50 more, resulting in additional irrigation water savings.

"The most recent 2001 project removed 29,500 square feet of grass that needed continued on page 14