Ignore Them and They’ll Go Away

Protect your course’s signature trees. As the pioneer of micro-infusion, Mauget has been the trusted source for tree health since 1958. Our completely enclosed application method makes tree care easy, safe and cost-effective.

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The Right Way to Treat a Tree
“We’re just as CRAZY ABOUT PERFECT TURF as you are.”

Blaine Pinkerton, Regional Sales Manager

Great things happen when passion and commitment combine with technology and value. To learn more about how Nufarm’s passion for turf can help you, both agronomically and financially, see your distributor or go to www.nufarm.com/us.


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Also, we didn’t understand what the power
of molecular science could bring to us, so
we’re still not where we should be in that
arena. It’s not the salvation, but it’s another
tool. You still have to have germ plasm to
work with, but molecular breeding is a way of
fast-tracking Mother Nature. But, because of
the problems we’ve had with pollen contain-
ment, etc., we’ve ended up dragging around a
boat anchor that’s preventing us from making
progress. (Breeders) failed to recognize that
Mother Nature was still going to rule the roost.
We’ll overcome it eventually.

We’re finally overcoming some of the barri-
ers and starting to learn how to take advantage
of the host of consistent DNA sequences.
Our team is now inserting genes into plant
materials all the time – just like Monstanto –
and it turns out the genetic characteristic
was already there in many cases – it was just
turned off. The question is how to turn the
sequences on and off.

We’re making baby steps, but I think the
USDA will eventually get comfortable with
this because it’s not introducing new sequenc-
es – it’s all native. We’re just taking advantage
of inherent gene components.

Look into your crystal ball... What new
varieties/standards for turf will we see
in 10 years? 20 years?
Our new varieties are all targeted at concerns
about natural resources. Water, heat dissipa-
tion, etc. We’re working hard on living filtra-
tion systems to take brackish water and clean
it up through natural processes. You’ll hear
more and more about zoysias that live in a
saline environment that can pull the salt out of
the soil and remediate the water and the soils.
Salt extraction will be a hot new topic.

If you can preserve the soil, it’s a phenom-
ena1 way to remove salt. Diamond zoysia is
one of the most salt-tolerant plants you’ll
ever find. The zoysias will give us a whole
different concept about how to manage salts
and water.

You’ve known the man forever so give us
your best Jim Beard story.
I have plenty, but here’s the most recent. Just
a few weeks ago, I read an obituary in the
newspaper for a “James Beard” from Bryan,
Texas – the same town Jim lives in – and I just
about had a heart attack. Then I noticed that
the deceased was 101. I was much relieved.

Jim Beard was one of the reasons I came
to Tex along with Al Turgeon (now of Penn
State). They were among the best in the
world. Garald Horst (now of the University
of Nebraska-Lincoln) was in El Paso, too. It
was a bird’s nest on the ground in terms of
wonderful people. In 1980, Jim Beard said
we need to understand one thing: Water is
king. He was right. Thirty years later, that’s
all we’re talking about. But we were our own
worst enemy.

What one thing haven’t you accom-
plished that you wish you could have?
I submitted a design concept to build a sustain-
able course for patent protection and they just
can’t seem to understand the concept. The
biggest nemesis for most superintendents
is the perception that aeration or other
cultural practices screw things up. My idea
is to create a “chameleon” facility. It’s a golf
course that you could change from day to day.
You could take a green, tee or fairway out of
play to rest when it needs it. For every nine
holes you need to build 11. Eighteen holes
becomes 22. With the technology we have
today, we can do that. It’s cheaper, better,
more interesting and actually creates more
places to put houses. Unfortunately, it just
doesn’t work with the economy and couldn’t
get past a bull-headed patent examiner. Maybe
it’ll get built internationally.

Also, I’m frustrated that zoysia hasn’t
been used more on major sports venues. It’s
so wear-tolerant, but someone really has to
grab the bull by the horns and market it. It
doesn’t wear out and it’s so shade and salt
tolerant. Lot’s of people are looking at Dia-
mond and are so amazed about how well it
works for sports.

Finally, the (EPA’s) WaterSense program is
kind of a tragedy because it limits the amount
of grass we use instead of which grasses we
use. There are too many benefits to turf to
limit our acreage because of misconceptions
about turf. That’s what we’re working on to-
day with the Urban Solutions Center here at
A&M. Just Google “urban living laboratory”
and check out what we’re doing in terms of
sustainability that combines LEED ideas with
our standards for plant materials. It’s a huge,
ambitious project that will eventually become
a global research facility.

How do students today compare to those
of a decade or so ago?
They don’t know the basics. They have won-
derful book learning. It’s like the reverse of
Doug Petersen (of the Austin Golf Club).
When it comes to course appearance, there is no trophy for second place. That’s why we developed new Reserve™ Fungicide. Reserve delivers superior, broad-spectrum disease control without turf thinning that other fungicides can cause. Reserve prevents algae growth and controls just about everything under the sun including dollar spot, brown patch, snow mold, and anthracnose. And thanks to Reserve’s StressGard™ formulation technology, it helps manage course stress, maintains...
turf roots and improves turf density. Of course new Reserve is Backed by Bayer, which means all of our research and support is at your fingertips to help you create the healthiest, thickest, greenest turf possible. Because when it comes to your course, good enough isn’t good enough. To learn more, go to www.BackedbyBayer.com/Reserve.
The Clivus Multrum M54 Trailhead is an odorless composting toilet system with handicapped accessible bathroom structure. Ideal for mid-course, the Trailhead structure is available in single or double-stall configurations and a variety of finishes. And like all Clivus systems, the Trailhead is odorless and does not pollute.

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He’s a minimalist who maximizes performance because he understands the biology of the local ecosystem. The book learning isn’t enough. They need more exposure to the guys like Doug who’ve been out there. Throwing water at stuff doesn’t solve the problem.

What’s the most common question you get from stressed-out superintendents?

“How do I do more with less and get away with it.” If we understand the resiliency of the plants on golf courses we can do more with less. Take diseases for example. Everyone’s always looking for which disease is the culprit. Sometimes, it’s a cultural problem like salt in the irrigation water. It’s too easy to fall into the “program” mentality and not really consider what the root problem is. Watering is often the last thing you should do and most green chairmen just don’t understand that. The pressure to perform is contrary to using serious biology to manage the turf.

Then what’s the most common problem?

Greens fail because the soil porosity doesn’t change. You lose macropores and increase micropores. The problem is simple: too much water, not enough oxygen. When I started working with Jacobsen in 1987, they came out with the bayonet or vent tine. That technology literally manufactures macropores. You can better sustain microbial activity and microbes digest organic matter. Sometimes a holistic, sustainable, minimal approach is better than “wonder juice.”

What do you do for non-turf fun?

Woodworking and fishing. Ken Mangum (of Atlanta Athletic Club) recently built a new course and had to cut down a couple of old growth cherry and black walnut trees. We had them shipped out here and I built my kitchen cabinets out of the cherry and several pieces of furniture out of the walnut. I used damned near every bit of those trees. We also have a 4,000-square-foot Diamond zoysia putting green at home, but that’s another story.

Tell us about the happiest day of your life.

Years ago, I actually bought a DeLorean. I was on cloud nine, man. Yet, the second happiest day of my life was when I swapped it for a 2002 T-Bird. I’ve always been an early adopter, but sometimes you have to realize it wasn’t the right decision.

Final question...what’s next for you?

Fishing! In Oregon. Bye! 6CI
It's not easy being an assistant superintendnet who's ready to move on to your own facility.

Matt Rostal, golf course superintendent at Interlachen Country Club, Edina, Minn., sums it up well: "There are so many qualified people, so little jobs."

The golf course construction boom of the 1990s piqued students' interest in turfgrass management as a career, but the decline of rounds has led to a decrease in the number of jobs. Meanwhile, universities continue to churn out turf grads, making competition for existing assistant and superintendent jobs very tough.

On top of the sheer math making it difficult to be an aspiring superintendent today, the role of the "new" assistant is changing as the superintendent's off-the-course demands increase.

"The superintendent is taking more and more of a management/communication role and the assistant is assuming more day-to-day operational control of the maintenance staff," says consultant Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, president of Golf Agronomy International.

An increase in regulations and business demands of the superintendent profession have contributed to these changes, says Joe Livingston, CGCS, River Crest Country Club, Fort Worth, Texas.

While the actual skill set an assistant needs to take the next step to become a superintendent hasn't changed, the odds of doing so have. As such, assistants need to stay on top of industry advancements, sharpen their management skills and hone their professional conduct to have a shot at the superintendent job they're looking for.

We hope the stories in this guide help. Let us know what you think and send your ideas for next year to gci@gie.net.
Industry members dole out do's and don'ts for assistants to use in day-to-day operations.

Career advancement advice runs thick for assistant superintendents in the golf course industry (in fact, we provide some more on page 31). But what about the day to day? What practical nuggets do you need to know about managing the golf course, running the crew and being a great assistant overall?

We cast our net to compile this compendium of advice from industry members nationwide.

By Marisa Palmieri

Do

Do everything you can to treat your employees with the utmost respect. They are typically the ones working for the lowest wage and working under the most difficult conditions and the longest hours. Never miss an opportunity to say thank you to them for what they do. - Paul Jetty, CGCS, Pinehurst (N.C.) No. 2

Start a journal of the daily activities at the course. You won't be able to remember everything you did and when or how you did it. The journal of agronomic activities will be invaluable when you get the opportunity to be in charge. - John Kaminski, assistant professor of turfgrass science at Penn State

Dress for success. Make sure the members can determine who is the worker and who is the boss. Shave everyday and look neat. - Matt Schaffer, director of golf operations, Merion Golf Club, Ardmore, Pa.

Always work on doing it right the first time. - Ron Dahlin, CGCS, The Meadows Golf Club at Grand Valley State University

Have a positive attitude toward the superintendent and the staff. The staff takes on the personality of the assistant, so a positive assistant leads to a positive and productive staff. - Chad Miller, superintendent, Hillcrest Golf & Country Club, Batesville, Ind.

Keep up with the latest research findings not only from your state or region, but from all over the nation. A number of local golf course superintendent associations have online access to the Turfgrass Information File, an extraordinary collection of scientific information about turf management at Michigan State University. If you don't have access to this resource, work to create momentum within the association to join. - Doug Soldat, assistant professor, Department of Soil Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Be sure that the line of communication between the golf course maintenance department and the membership/customer is strong. An ally in the clubhouse goes a long way to that end, as the face time the pro shop personnel has with customers dwarfs the time the maintenance folks have. - Bruce Gregory, PGA, CGCS, Liberty (Ind.) Country Club

Manage people for success; be a great teacher. - Matt Rosenthal, superintendent, Interlachen Country Club, Edina, Minn.

Come to work at least a 1/2 hour before the staff so you are ready for changes. - Schaffer

Let the superintendent handle interclub communications. If it's a light comment about the weather, that's fine, but let the superintendent handle sensitive issues in a committee setting, or on the course. - Ray Richard, consultant, Richard Associates, Cape Cod, Mass.

Get to know common equipment operation and common faults; you have to be smarter than the operator and the ma-
Simplifying irrigation to get straight to the point.

That’s intelligent.

Introducing the NEW Rain Bird® IC™ System, a revolutionary control platform that directly links your rotors to your central control. Our innovative Integrated Control Technology™ uses up to 90% less wire and 50% fewer splices, while eliminating satellite controllers and decoders and saving precious water. It’s also more peace of mind, simpler installation and reduced maintenance. Now that’s The Intelligent Use of Water."
Consider clever ideas to reduce costs in labor and eliminate overtime, like two shifts, part-time workers on afternoons and weekends and section workers to eliminate wasteful travel time on-course. –Michael Vogt, CGCS, manager of the McMahon Group’s Golf Division

Read the operator’s manuals and watch the training videos—all of them. –Bill Hughes, equipment manager, The Loon Golf Club, Gaylord, Mich.

Continually monitor the course, equipment, and staff with the idea of improving upon the entire operation. –Joe Livingston, CGCS, River Crest Country Club, Fort Worth, Texas

Tell the truth. Owning up to a mistake goes a long way to establishing trust between the superintendent and you. –Brown

Learning to delegate, don’t think you can do it all yourself. In fact, when you are working who is supervising? Give yourself jobs that allow you to move within the ranks. –Schaffer

Serving as a course information conduit to the superintendent. Mention good and bad news. If you see a staffing or cultural problem, say something. –Richard

Forget that golf is now centered on a business that needs to be concerned with profits and losses. Just because you have an approved budget doesn’t necessarily mean the amount of that budget should or must be spent. –Vogt

Badmouth equipment just because it’s not what you had at your last course. –Kriz GCI

What advice do you believe all assistant superintendents should follow? What do you know now that you wish you knew when you were an assistant? E-mail us at gci@gie.net and we’ll print our favorites.