

A golf superintendent

Do you qualify for the title?

Are you a golf course superintendent? If so, you should be able to lay out and direct the construction of greens, tees, and fairways; supervise the mowing, watering, and maintenance of tees, greens, fairways, and related areas; supervise the planting, fertilizing, and maintenance of turf; supervise the operation of an equipment repair shop; order supplies and materials within budgetary limitations; keep records of annual maintenance activities; be able to make an annual budget and explain in detail every expenditure in a manner that club officials can understand what they are paying for; know what OSHA and EPA require of you and keep your club informed about the new amendments that affect your golf course and make your club aware that compliance with these federal rules and regulations is mandatory.

If you are a golf course superintendent, you must possess thorough knowledge of the construction and maintenance of golf course tees, fairways and greens; of the production and maintenance of the types of turf used on golf courses; of the planting, cultivating, pruning, and care of plants, shrubs, and trees; of the characteristics and proper use of various fertilizers and soil conditioners; of herbicides and pest control methods and materials; of drainage control methods; and of watering and irrigation systems, including wells, pumps, and automatic controls; of construction and maintenance of golf car paths.

If you are a golf course superintendent, you must have the ability to maintain tees, fairways, greens and appurtenances to an acceptable standard of golf course play; to plan, assign and direct the work of others; to prepare clear and concise reports; to prepare annual budget estimates; to maintain effective employee and public relations; and to have a participating knowledge of golf.

Our profession is changing. A man who held the title of golf course superintendent a few years ago needed only the knowledge of the average grass farmer. Today, he must be trained in horticulture, arboriculture, agronomy, botany, landscape architecture, mechanics, chemistry, business management, engineering, hydraulics, psychology, and mathematics. Sooner or later you are going to have to produce results to satisfy the most demanding golfers, and this takes backup with an adequate budget and education. Hence, well-manicured courses are rapidly becoming the rule rather than the exception.

The superintendent must take a more positive attitude toward requirements and qualifications and measure up in a very definite way. He must give evidence that he understands his profession or is making an effort to improve himself.

Today's superintendent is faced with meeting continuous, major demands. He's under pressure to innovate, to solve old prob-

lems in new ways. He is being forced to improve his skills. The way to improve our skills is to review the qualifications of the superintendent and spot our weak areas. The weak areas we spot may represent our toughest going. Face the facts frankly. These may be areas in which we have the least natural proficiency, so we'll have to work hard to improve. Or we may spot a weak area and find that this area is undeveloped simply because we never have worked at it sufficiently. In that case, improvement here may be essential in terms of personal growth and future advancement.

Every superintendent must be well versed in the agronomic problems of turfgrass management. Attendance at national, regional, and local meetings and short courses is the only way to keep abreast of developments. There is no substitute for factual knowledge.

Each year a myriad of new fungicides, insecticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and related products are put on the market. Research narrows these products down for us and distributes this information. It is then up to the superintendent to do some testing on his own golf course. Just because something works in one location, it isn't necessarily going to work well on your course.

Research is the systematic search for the truth. Vast amounts of money are wasted on golf courses each year using products whose worth is not proven. Research investigates the problems of grass culture and distributes the information obtained through turf conferences. It is through these conferences that the superintendent meets other superintendents and compares notes on techniques, ideas, and problems.

Golf clubs should insist that their superintendent attend these educational conferences. I don't think any club, no matter how large or small, can afford not to send him. This expenditure should be included in every course budget.

While the superintendent personally benefits by the acquisition of more knowledge and through a broadening awareness of new information and techniques, it is his club or turf facility that is the real beneficiary. It is the cheapest insurance a club can buy to keep up to date on rapidly moving new developments in machinery, chemicals, and techniques that keep today's golf courses well groomed.

As this year is coming to an end, look back and see how many turfgrass conferences you have attended and ask yourself, "Have I done my best?"

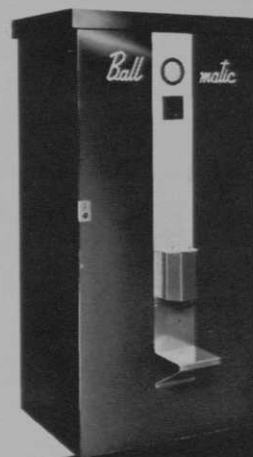
After reviewing the above qualifications and requirements, can you truthfully claim the title *Golf Course Superintendent*?

The column above by Marion E. Johnson, CGCS, of the Southern Turfgrass Association is reprinted with permission from "A Patch of Green," newsletter of the Michigan & Border Cities GCSA.

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