

Why South? Conditions are different.



There is no animosity, but you hear Southern Superintendents saying, "We're completely different from the North. We don't have the winter-time to fix our equipment. We run all year-round." And in the general text of that statement, it is true that conditions in the South are much different than in the North. However, reversing that statement and saying conditions in the North are much different than in the South, puts the burden on the Northern Superintendent. They have to deal with such things as snow mold, aetenus beetle, etc. The Southern Superintendent has to deal with mole crickets and overseeding.

Perhaps Jim Bertoni, Superintendent at La Jolla CC in southern California, said it best. "An article written for conditions in the cool season growing climate might cover the majority of superintendents. An article written about my conditions would benefit only a few superintendents."

We have long been accused of ignoring the South and concentrating on the North. And it's true, we have. So now we're correcting the problem. We are directing a special bi-monthly supplement at the problems a Southern Superintendent faces and trying to help with the dissemination of the information that the university people are putting out. We want also to act as a forum for superintendents. There are many fine ideas that can be shared and benefit quite a few. However, the problem is a little more complex than it seems. "The South" cannot be an all encompassing term. The problems of a superintendent in northern Florida are much different than those in the southern part of the state.

Arizona superintendents have to deal with desert conditions. Freezing temperatures at night, heat in the day. Others have their problems. Some southern California soils are not meant for the rains. They get 2½ inches of rain in a day and it brings disastrous results. The soils are heavy clay and turn to jello. Trees uproot because of high winds and soils that just can't hold them in after rain. And then the rain creates lush vegetation that dries up and turns brown in August. Then fires are likely. The water sources in the West are often high in salt. Even with all the rain in southern California, there is still a

water shortage. There are not enough reservoirs to hold enough for future use. Bertoni paid \$45,000 for water last year.

Out of it all, the common sense of the superintendent prevails and he gets the job done. Clint Smallridge, at Royal Poinciana in Florida, is one who realizes the importance of communicating with the members of his club in terms that they can relate to. One idea, that of relating equipment use in miles traveled, rather than hours, almost doubled his equipment budget. Think about it. If you drive a fairway unit eight hours a day, five days a week, 52 weeks a year and keep it for 10 years, by rough figures it has about 600,000 miles on it. And the miles are hard ones, stopping, starting, turning. Anyone can relate to why it is worn out.

While some areas of the country are not growing right now, the Sunbelt is advancing rapidly. There are some 37 courses being built or added on to in Florida alone. Bob Sanderson doesn't think the recession is affecting the economy there. The company he works for went into summer with a backlog of 1200 homes to build.

The energy crisis is affecting the South. Superintendents are concerned with the most efficient equipment. Smallridge has converted to diesel and is using only one-third the fuel he was. Sanderson is thinking of conversion to LP gas. David Harmon, Superintendent at Golden Horseshoe in Virginia, went on gas rationing, altered his mowing heights and frequency and saved 300 gallons in one month. And the members didn't seem to notice that the course was a little different.

Harmon does feel that tourism has slowed down some in his area. Some superintendents in his area have been put on a bonus plan, where they get a percentage of what they save in the budget. It would make a superintendent think twice about providing extras. But that again depends on the course. A resort course has to provide the extras because a golfer is paying the premium and expects it.

He now puts his chemicals, fertilizer, and even oil filters and spark plugs out for bid. He was amazed at the variance in price between dis-

tributors on name brand chemicals.

So you see there are many ideas that relate to the South and for which a particular forum is needed. GOLF BUSINESS South intends to provide that forum. But a forum, by definition, requires an exchange of ideas and that doesn't come about unless someone speaks up. Many are ready and willing.

Jim Bertoni feels adamant about this. "We are losing our chemicals and what are we doing about it? What is our responsibility to our club? Just to continue to learn how to grow grass, or to advance with society and say this is going to hurt our club in the long run? It's time I tie in with my associates in my profession and we stand unified against the loss of these chemicals."

Aubrey Roy, Superintendent at Sea Pines Plantation in Georgia, recognizes the problem as he looks for an alternative chemical for sting nematodes. Now that they have taken Fumazone off the market, and Namacur costs \$97 a bag, what do you use? He is looking to researchers for the information. He wants to know when crowfoot germinates in his area. When do you go on a preemergent program for it? And what about creeping charlie? He doesn't have a chemical registered for it.

These are the kinds of things that make us excited about our new supplement. At the GCSAA show, when we talked to all the superintendents pictured on the next two pages, this excitement was great enough to make us go ahead with it. We plan to work hard to tailor our articles to the needs of the Southern Superintendent. And, as I say all too often, we can only do it if you tell us when we're on track or off track. It's kind of like the fellow you have mowing. He's not going to raise or lower the height of cut unless you tell him to. We have some good ideas and I know you do to. We're looking forward to passing all of them around. As I heard from one superintendent, "We tend to look upon a weed as a problem. The weed isn't really the problem. What's wrong that allows it to grow there is the problem." Same with us. You look at an article and say it isn't right for you. Tell us what is right for you. We'll look for some fertilizer for the idea. *Ron Morris.*