Poa annua invades bentgrass fairways and greens often out-competing bentgrass and other desirable grasses, eventually becoming the dominant turf species. Cutless turf growth regulator can help you fight this encroachment, and shift the competitive advantage back to your desirable turfgrass. Unlike some plant growth regulators, Cutless constricts the Poa annua but is gentle on desirable grasses such as bentgrass, allowing the bentgrass to grow and establish in the constricted Poa annua colonies. So free your bentgrass and squeeze the Poa annua out of your fairways and greens. Use Cutless, the Poa Constrictor!

For more information about Cutless turf growth regulator, call 1-800-419-7779 or visit our website at www.sepro.com.

"Here at Merion Golf Club, our members are passionate about golf and the condition of our course, so we have an active Poa annua management program. We rely on Cutless because it is highly effective in reducing Poa annua infestations in bentgrass fairways. My experience with Cutless is that it is less disruptive on the bentgrass, while being highly effective in reducing Poa annua populations. In addition to bentgrass conversion, Cutless also provides labor savings by reducing our mowing requirement. Cutless is a great product that I am glad to see SePRO bring back to the golf course market."

Matt Shaffer
Director of Golf Course Operations,
Merion Golf Club, Ardmore, PA
United acquires Nu-Gro

United Industries, which operates Spectrum Brands, will acquire the Nu-Gro Corp., based in Brantford, Ontario. The combined companies will have sales of about $750 million with more than 1,800 employees in the United States and Canada. The transaction should be completed in May.

"I see this acquisition as a strong and positive venture for both Nu-Gro and United," said Mark Barbera, Nu-Gro's vice president and general manager.

Noer group approves studies

The O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research Foundation recently approved funding for the following research projects: "Microbial Control of the Black Cutworm in Turfgrass using a Naturally Occurring Baculovirus," "Seasonal Biology and Pro-Active Management of Mound-Building Nuisance Ants on Golf Putting Greens" and "Developing Water-Saving Irrigation Scheduling Indices from Bentgrass Fairways."

Coldwell creates golf division

Coldwell Banker Commercial/Nicholson Williams Realty has created a new Golf Course Sales Division. Heading up the division is Charles Smith, and Kathy Bissell. "Coldwell Banker Commercial Nicholson Williams Realty has identified a growing niche in the commercial real estate market, one that's particularly hot in the South," said George Slusser, president of Coldwell Banker Commercial.

Course can use Merit donation

The First Tee of San Diego at Colina Park Golf Course recently received a donation of a year’s worth of Merit Insecticide from Bayer Environmental Science. Bayer made the donation in celebration of the ten-year anniversary of Merit.

"We are happy to receive the donation of Merit from Bayer," said Doug Sparks, superintendent at Colina Park. "We have problems with black turfgrass athenius, white grubs, and cutworms in turfgrass, as well as aphids, whiteflies, thrips, and mealybugs in ornamental plants."
Introducing the John Deere Gator™ High-Performance Series. The best-performing Gator we've ever built. With its rigid, hydroformed steel frame and available all-wheel drive, it can tackle any job, anywhere. The new John Deere Gator HPX 4x4. Tougher than the task.

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Hole of the

No. 7
The Course at Wente Vineyards
Livermore Valley, Calif.
California Dreamin'

Look at this splendid view of the seventh hole of The Course at Wente Vineyards. What was that saying in that old commercial? Oh yeah, "It doesn't get any better than this!"

And to think that people get to play golf in this setting and that a superintendent, Glenn Matthews, gets to tend turf in it.

But long before there was golf in this California valley, there was wine. The Wente Vineyards was created in the late 1800s and continues its success more than 120 years later. But now there is golf to go with the vineyards, specifically this 18-hole design by Greg Norman.

The course's holes play through the vineyards, and the site contains more than 200 feet of elevation change. The par-3 seventh hole is downhill, and golfers should be wary to select the appropriate clubs. Tee shots have been known to play about a club short because of the wind blowing from the left.
Jim Nantz of CBS Sports was the keynote speaker at the opening session of the GCSAA Conference and Show in San Diego. It was a happy case of serendipity since Nantz was in town to anchor the broadcast of the Buick Invitational being held at the nearby Torrey Pines Golf Course. It turned out to be an opening session for the ages.

As the program began with the usual ceremonies and awards, I noticed Nantz making notes on his speech. I wondered if the video of the history of the association and the itemized list of contributions and accomplishments of the award winners was shedding new light on his perceptions of the GCSAA and superintendents.

As Nantz began his presentation, it was a folksy, nostalgic trip down memory lane, laced with insider glimpses into his career and sports acquaintances. Naturally, it was weighted heavily with golf personalities, especially considering the audience. He poked fun at his own waning golf skills at the University of Houston and gave everyone the inside scoop on why Freddy Couples, his college roommate, buried his face in Nantz’s shoulder in the Butler Cabin at Augusta in 1992 when he won the coveted green jacket at the Masters.

It seems Nantz and Couples had rehearsed the winner’s interview years before in their college dorm room as Nantz practiced becoming a broadcaster. Broadcasting became Nantz’s career goal after watching roommates Couples and Blaine McCallister, another future PGA Tour player, put his golf game to shame.

The moral of the story was that dreams, whether they change throughout your life or not, can come true. Then Nantz did something extraordinary — he offered to use his celebrity status to make superintendents’ dreams of getting more attention from golfers come true.

Nantz opened the door when he admitted to the audience that the media had done a poor job of recognizing the role superintendents play in golf. He said he had been remiss in that area as well, and he promised he would strive to a better job in the future.

I had always hoped that we’d get something more in prime time than the once in awhile generic thank you comment at the end of a telecast. Nantz began fulfilling his promise the following Saturday and Sunday with comments on superintendents being the unsung heroes of golf and mentioning the GCSAA was in town. He even had his sidekick, Lanny Wadkins, throwing us bouquets on air. It was sweet.

It dawned on me that while superintendents are often overlooked, we must proceed with this prime-time praise opportunity cautiously. If I compare our roles to film production, we are definitely backstage and off-camera. How many of you can name the set designer, lighting director or cinematographer for Star Wars or Raiders of the Lost Ark? A film, like a golf course tournament, is a collaborative effort.

The stars at a tournament are the players and the broadcasters. Mandatory credits roll at the end of a film. We should get real credit on air, but it should remain proportionate. We obviously shouldn’t be asking for more credit than the stars of the show.

A way for us to help Nantz to “do a better job” will be for GCSAA’s Director of Communications Jeff Bollig to work with host superintendents to spice up the usual course fact sheets with some anecdotes beyond grass types and cutting heights. We can toss in some interesting and maybe even humorous tidbits about what it took to prepare each tournament. Nantz is good enough that he can work those insider facts into the broadcast and help shine the spotlight on the superintendent in a creative but subtle way. For now, Nantz has miles to go and promises to keep, but it is the beginning of a dream — one that we can all hope will someday become reality.

Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney’s golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.
Sometimes the best way to measure a fungicide is by what it doesn't do. Compass™ doesn’t come with a heavy price tag like the leading strobilurin. In fact, it’s only half as much per application. It doesn’t promote turf thinning. It doesn’t flare dollar spot. On the other hand, Compass does provide preventive and curative broad-spectrum control of more than ten tough diseases, including brown patch, summer patch, gray leaf spot and anthracnose. See what it can do for you. And see what it won’t do. To learn more, call 1-800-331-2867 or visit BayerProCentral.com.
The Old Pro

They say grow-ins are only for young superintendents.

But don’t give Roger Barton that bull

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

A cold rain falls hard and steady. Beads of water trickle down the lenses of Roger Barton’s wire-rimmed glasses. But the late-morning deluge and the drenching of Barton’s clothes haven’t dampened his enthusiasm to seize the day.

There goes Barton — zooming through puddles and mud in a utility vehicle down a hilly fairway. He’s giving a visitor a tour of the fledgling turf growing at his new job — Angels Crossing Golf Course in Vicksburg, Mich.

An excited Barton points here and there, waxing eloquently about the course that opens in May. With the enthusiasm he exhibits, one gets the feeling that Angels Crossing is Barton’s first job as a superintendent. But, ironically, it’s probably his last. Barton, called the “dean of Michigan superintendents” by some of his peers, is 65 years old and in his 40th year as a superintendent. While he has no plans to retire, Barton will likely finish his career at the Bruce Matthews design, where he was hired in early 2003.

A major reason Barton came to Angels Crossing — and left PohlCat Championship Golf Course in Mount Pleasant, Mich., where he was superintendent for 11 years — is because he wanted to experience the challenge and artistry of growing in another golf course.
They say grow-ins are for young superintendents in their primes. But don’t give Barton that bull.

The big-shouldered Barton looks, feels and talks like a man much younger than his mid-60s. Remember Nolan Ryan blowing away hitters with his heater when he was in his 40s? Now picture Barton on the course getting down and dirty with his 20-something crew.

It was fate with a capital “F” that brought Barton to Angels Crossing. To many, Barton was destined to end his career at the course.

But enough about finales — Angels Crossing represents a new beginning for Barton. He may be near retirement age, but that doesn’t mean he doesn’t have goals and dreams like a kid fresh out of turf school.

Here’s the funny thing: Nobody really knew Barton was looking for a new job — not even Barton. “I had no intention of changing jobs,” he says.

Matthews says Barton was at the pinnacle of his career at PohlCat. “He was doing an excellent job and being compensated very well for it,” Matthews notes.

But a fall day in 2002 changed all that. Matthews, who has known Barton for many years, asked him to tour the new course he had been hired to design in Vicksburg, located outside of Kalamazoo.

“I like to have Roger look at my golf courses,” Matthews says. “I value his input.”

Barton, who worked as superintendent at Grand Haven Golf Club in the late 1960s, a course designed by Matthews’ grandfather, gladly accepted the invitation. He traveled the short distance to Vicksburg from Mount Pleasant and toured the property with Matthews. Oh yeah, the Thompson brothers, Bob and Jim, who were building the course, tagged along for the tour.

As they walked the site, the Thompson brothers fired an array of agronomic questions at Barton, who answered them specifically and thoroughly. Barton also seemed genuinely interested in the course. He stuck his hand in a batch of greens mix and rubbed the material with his fingers.

“We were on the course for three and a half hours,” Jim Thompson says. “After touring six holes, we knew Roger was the man we wanted as superintendent.”

But Matthews told the Thompson brothers that Barton would never leave PohlCat to come to Angels Crossing, which made the Thompson brothers want Barton even more.

“You don’t want to be told that you can’t have something because that’s usually the motivation you need to get it,” Bob Thompson says.

What no one realized was that Barton was wondering what it might be like to be the superintendent at Angels Crossing. He had enjoyed his visit to the course immensely. He also liked the Thompsons and knew he would enjoy working for them. And deep down, he felt stagnant at PohlCat because he wasn’t being challenged enough.

The more Barton thought about it, the more he was attracted to Angels Crossing. It was, in a sense, a dream job. He longed to do another grow-in, which would be his third. He knew he would also get to work with people he liked and respected.

Bob Thompson, a Vicksburg farmer, wasn’t necessarily looking for some young whippersnapper to be the Angels Crossing superintendent. So when he met Barton, he was
impressed with his experience and knowledge. When he heard Barton's age, he didn't raise an eyebrow.

In fact, the 47-year-old Thompson, who spent a lot of time with his grandparents while growing up, has never accepted the stereotype that labels people over 60 as over the hill.

"I've always had a real respect for older people," he says. "I enjoy listening to them because I always learn so much from them."

Bob also wasn't concerned that Barton, regarded as one of the top superintendents in the state, would command a high salary commensurate with his experience and reputation. As a farmer, Thompson learned that paying more for quality was worth it in the long run.

"I've always found that it pays to hire confident, professional people to do things for us that we don't know much about," he says.

Jim Thompson says there's significant value in knowing the course has a superintendent who can cruise around the course in his utility vehicle, spot a specific turf disease with a glance and treat it before it spreads. Barton can tell you when conditions are ripe for an insect invasion or a turf disease breakout. He trusts his instincts like weathermen trust their Doppler radar.

"What does that do to the chemical budget?" the 35-year-old Jim asks rhetorically.

In his distinguished career, Barton has worked as superintendent at several Michigan courses in addition to PohlCat and Grand Haven, including Morrison Lake Golf Course, Dearborn Country Club and Blythefield Country Club. Barton, who has a two-year degree in tool and dye making from Grand Rapids Junior College, honed his turf skills by attending numerous short courses and seminars at Purdue University and Michigan State University in the past 40 years.

One might think the veteran Barton knows everything there is about the golf business, but not Barton. That's another reason he came to Angels Crossing. "I like to learn new things," he says.

Take the grow-in for instance, which occurred last spring and summer. It was a difficult time. A grow-in is a time-consuming and painstaking process. There are washouts, sunlight issues — and more washouts to deal with it. In the end, a grow-in can test the patience of even the most even-tempered superintendent.

"It takes a special breed of superintendent to be a grow-in superintendent," Matthews says.

Barton experienced his share of washouts at Angels Crossing. Unusual long and hard rains pounded the area. Two of the course's greens washed out three times. The washouts were so bad that the opening of the course, scheduled for July, was delayed until the fall and again until this year.

Barton, despite his wisdom and experience, was frustrated. "But I just learned to let it roll off my back."

Barton says it helped that his owner didn't jump up and down screaming and demand that Barton perform a Moses-like miracle to meet the opening date. But Bob Thompson, who has experienced his share of seed washouts as a farmer, knew better. "This wasn't anything new to me," he says.

Thompson's comment brings into focus another reason why Barton likes it so much at Angels Crossing. Everybody communicates well and tries to understand each other's needs. And they're friends. Barton says he and Bob talk all the time, and not always about work.

Who knows how long Barton will work at Angels Crossing. Seventy? Seventy-five? Here's betting he'll go as long as he can — for he's one of those people who cherishes his trade.

"I'm luckier than a lot of people," Barton says. "Being a superintendent hasn't been work for me. There's no reason to retire."