

# CAN YOU ANSWER ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS ?

## Here's the answers every superintendent should know well !

*As someone involved with the game of golf, you may already be aware that golf courses are sometimes criticized for "damaging the environment."*

*The use of turf chemicals, the impact on water and soil quality, and the amount of irrigation water used are cited most often as public concerns about the golf industry.*

*Although most authorities agree that the maintenance of golf courses has comparatively little negative impact on the environment, we at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) believe that these issues must be addressed. And, through a comprehensive effort combining research, education and communication, GCSAA is leading the golf community's effort to minimize the potential for ecological harm resulting from course maintenance.*

*However, the biggest problem we have is public perception-or, more accurately, public misperception about the environmental impact of course. These inaccuracies, if left uncorrected, could pose a serious threat to the vitality and integrity of the game. You can help GCSAA change perceptions about our industry by reviewing the following overview and sharing this information with elected officials, decision-makers and others with whom you have contact. Please do not hesitate to pass this information to others who share our belief that golf is good for the environment.*

1. Research has shown that golf courses do not contribute significantly to groundwater contamination. Several university and government studies (in Massachusetts, New York and Florida) indicate that when properly applied, pesticides and fertilizers used today on golf courses do not leach into groundwater in any significant amounts.

2. Modern turfgrass management practices (such as the use of slow-release formulations) can greatly reduce the potential for nitrogen leaching or runoff into water supplies. The organic (thatch) layer in healthy turfgrass also significantly reduces the potential for nutrient "movement."

3. An 18-hole golf course averages 140 acres. Pesticides and fertilizers are used only on certain portions of the golf course. The majority of the property often consists of natural areas that are not maintained with chemicals. These low-maintenance areas usually provide a home for wildlife, and include a diverse variety of native plants and large stands of trees.

4. Golf course superintendents are among the best-educated and most judicious users of chemical management tools. Today, most superintendents have university degrees in agronomy, horticulture or a related field. More than 3,500 superintendents also pursued continuing professional education through GCSAA last year. Although most golf courses do not apply "restricted-use" pesticides, virtually all course with GCSAA members have at least one staff person who is state-certified in the safe handling and use of these chemicals.


5. Because turf chemicals are often expensive, golf course superintendents have an economic incentive not to apply them. What's more, many superintendents entered the profession because of a love of nature and the outdoors and are strongly committed to conservation. In a recent survey, superintendents said they give extremely high priority to selecting maintenance practices that do not have a negative impact on the environment.

6. Golf courses typically compost grass clippings, thus reducing unnecessary contributions to Americas landfills. Grass clippings and leaves are usually composted in low-maintenance areas of the course. In some cases, the compost is recycled for use as a natural soil amendment. Composting is a growing and recommended practice for golf course operations.

7. The water used on golf courses can be an excellent investment in both economic and environmental terms. Irrigated golf courses generate billions of tourist and property tax dollars for state economies. (America's golf courses are also bringing an increasing number of international tourists to the United States.) When effectively irrigated, healthy turf provides numerous environmental benefits.

Properly maintained turfgrass:

- produces oxygen (carbon dioxide exchange)
- removes pollutants from the air
- cools the atmosphere (acts as a heat-sink)
- absorbs sound and glare
- prevents erosion
- filters natural and synthetic contaminants from rainfall and irrigation
- recharges critical groundwater supplies
- provides crucial "greenspace" in urban settings.



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**Environment continued**

Beyond these benefits, computerized irrigation systems and improved turfgrass varieties now allow course to use less water more efficiently to achieve the same level of conditioning.

Continuing research will provide even more "low-water" turfgrass varieties in the future.

8. GCSAA and the entire golf community are firmly committed to seeking answers through research. The United States Golf Association is funding a three-year \$3 million research that will provide a number of those answers.

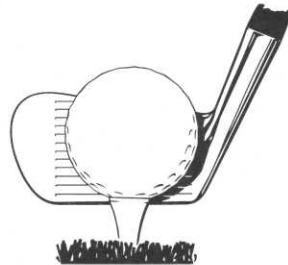
9. In addition to turf-related benefits, courses provide other important ecological and community assets. Golf course are:

- key sanctuaries for birds and other wildlife
- disposal and treatment sites for (effluent) wastewater
- attractive and environmentally sound "covers" for closed landfills and other ecologically damaged sites
- places for non-golf recreational activities such as jogging, walking, birdwatching, cross-country skiing and fishing
- businesses that provide hundreds of thousands of skilled and semi-skilled jobs.
- places for social interaction and community events
- civic benefactors that give major contributions to charities
- the keystone of a multi-billion-dollar industry nationwide
- community improvements that add value to land, thus increasing local tax bases.

10. On golf's behalf, GCSAA has developed a strong and cooperative relationship with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other major regulatory groups. Though governmental affairs, professional education and public information, the association strives to make environmental responsibility a basic precept for its members.

Golf has the motivation, the resources and the willingness to address the issues now, before environmental questions seriously impede the growth of the game. By pursuing this enlightened path, it is hoped that golf will be increasingly perceived as a model environmental industry of the 1990's.

Reprinted from Greentips, published by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America



## A LOOK AHEAD

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| September 14   | Pasitiempo CC   |
| October 8      | Sierra Nevada Chapter joint meeting                   |
| November 11,12 | GCSANC /UC CooperativeExtension Golf Course Institute |
| December 4     | Christmas Party                                       |




## HELP WANTED

**La Rinconada Country Club** is seriously looking for a full time mechanic and full time irrigation tech. Pay and benefits are excellent. If interested, please contact Bob Painter at 408-867-1579.

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*Chuck Dal Pozzo*  
Technical Representative



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