

# USGA

## Turfgrass Substance Abuse!

By Mike Huck, Agronomist, USGA Green Section

Do your greens have a substance abuse problem? Are they drug addicts and junkies? Have you, as the grass doctor, become a pusher keeping the weaker strains of *Poa annua* alive by protecting them from a fungal form of natural selection? While it is one thing to treat an occasional outbreak of disease due to an unusual weather pattern, it is quite another to treat on a regular schedule through the year.

We all know that *Poa annua* is a vulnerable species when it comes to disease susceptibility. Anthracnose and Summer Patch are good examples as creeping bentgrass is practically immune to both of these pathogens. So, what do we do about it? We run out and give and already-terminal patient all kinds of medication to keep alive. (Where is Dr. Devorkian when you need him!)

Now, I am not advocating that you quit

spraying your *Poa annua* greens tomorrow (because I don't want to be responsible for your unemployment) but, I do think that you should take a good look at your overall management program. Ask yourself, "Am I promoting the continuation of *Poa annua* growth and development or, am I promoting a healthy turf blend of creeping bentgrass and *poa* with the least possible use of chemical pesticides?"

Here are a few specific questions to ask yourself when developing strategies for IPM. (These are not just geared to greens management but also apply to the entire golf course.)

1. Do I treat fairways and roughs to control *Poa annua*, reducing its being tracked into greens?
2. Are the fertilizer programs geared toward maintaining *Poa* or a more desirable turf species?
3. Do I manage my greens irrigation

properly? Do I use a soil probe on a regular basis to determine the irrigation schedule or do I rely on my gut feeling?

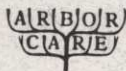
4. How often do I spray fungicides, insecticides and herbicides when it really could have been avoided? Has a threshold for damage been established or is the spray rig fired up at the first sight of pest activity?
5. Do I automatically spray all the greens, tees or fairways when a pest is spotted or would spot treating selected areas have been appropriate?
6. Do I fight fire with fire by regularly overseeding with a more desirable species to offset the natural seeding of *Poa annua*?
7. Are my aerations timed so that they encourage or discourage the most desirable species?

(Continued on page 7)

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October, 1995

## News (Cont'd.)

- There will be changes in the Seminar Program effective January 1, 1996. We will no longer receive a rebate on seminars for attendance over 40. This service loses \$200,000 to \$250,000 per year. In turn there will be only 20 required attendees instead of 25.
- GCSAA on line computer network will be introduced at the 1997 Las Vegas Conference and Show.
- All in all it was a good meeting, well organized and well presented. This was my first trip to Lawrence and I was very impressed with the Headquarters building and the accommodations provided. The Saturday meeting started with Continental Breakfast at 7:15 and concluded at 6:30 P.M. After this we were taken to the Kansas State Alumni Association for dinner and a hosted bar. The meal was great. The Sunday meeting started with biscuits and gravy at 6:15 and concluded at 2:30 P.M. allowing enough time to get to the Airport in time for the respective flights home. Thank you for the opportunity to represent our chapter in this important agreement. ❖

## Abuse (Cont'd.)

8. Are my cutting heights appropriate to promote a healthy turf of the species desired?
9. Am I truly making my best attempt to implement IPM strategies?

In this case, IPM is not just "Integrated Pest Management" but may also be looked at as "Integrated Plant Management". This may actually mean **not growing** a pure stand of either bent or *Poa annua* but possibly an integrated blend on greens that will allow peak performance during all segments of the season. *Poa annua* can dominate when wet and cool conditions exist while the bentgrass will shine during the heat of summer. This concept has become very popular in parts of California where two distinctly different seasons exist on the opposite ends of the calendar.

Please stop and think about finding a way for your turf to kick the habit. You are the doctor prescribing the medicine and the public is looking to put you out of business for malpractice.

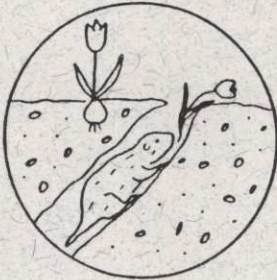
**Only you can stop turf substance abuse!** ❖

## Superintendents Wife's Top 10 List

10. He is the only person in the family who gets undressed outside the house at the end of his work day.
9. "My husband has really strange tan lines."
8. "He never listens to what I have to say when he gets home, but listens to every word that Jenneta Jones says on The Weather Channel."
7. All his co-workers look like the cast from *Caddy Shack*.
6. When he wakes up at 3 a.m., it's not to go and see his girlfriend, but to make sure the irrigation system turned on.
5. "All the post-it notepads in our house say 'Pro Lawn' on them."
4. "My husband has a spot of black grease on every piece of clothing he owns."
3. "We have the ugliest lawn in the neighborhood."
2. When he talks in his sleep, or, for that matter, when he is awake, he states, 'Ah, the smell of Dursban.'
1. "When he helps me vacuum, he always stripes our carpet in a checkerboard pattern."

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