

USGA

Nothing Happens Fast In Agriculture, Except For . . .

Mike Huck, Agronomist

Modern technology allows a number of things to happen at a rapid pace today. This availability of instantaneous response has lead the populace to become what I call an "immediate society". It seems that everything in life is now so urgent that we need it yesterday: "Would you fax that to me right now? Page me as soon as you get that. Leave a message on my answering machine. Call me on my cellular immediately. Leave me an E-mail message. Ship it Next Day Air." All common responses from people in the 90's.

In my opinion, the pace that technology is changing is placing an additional stress on everyone in our society and especially those in agriculturally related businesses like golf course management. Golfers can develop unrealistic expectations as to how fast things should happen regarding growing grass at their courses. Their minds are clouded by how rapidly the rest of the business world moves around them due to modern technol-

ogy. They don't understand that grass does not grow one bit faster in 1996 than it did in 1976. They forget, or refuse to believe, that Mother Nature is in control of the growing environment as much or more than the superintendent. They need to understand that there will never be a computer made that will control temperature, humidity or positioning of the sun. Technological advances aside, this issue is significantly influenced by our society having become increasingly distanced from agriculture in their day to day lives. Gone are the days where three out of five jobs in America were somehow related to agriculture. Today the number is approximately one in ten.

I don't want these statements to discount the improvements made in this business. We certainly have better and more advanced chemicals, mowers and irrigation equipment than twenty, or even ten years ago. This has allowed the conditioning of golf courses to improve greatly. The fact still remains,

however, that all this makes very little difference regarding how fast a damaged green, tee, or fairway recovers. All the computer chips, cellular communications, and faxes in the world cannot make grass resist an attack of a fungus, insects, germinate more rapidly, or develop into a mature turf any faster than Mother Nature will allow. Technology may allow you to order a truckload of sod a bit quicker, but that's about it.

Some superintendents fall into the technology trap themselves, constantly searching for the magic elixir in a bottle. Just add some of this or inject some of that, and everything will be okay. They, too, are searching for that unrealistic, immediate response. In reality, the solution often requires improving the growing environment and most importantly, being patient. Cutting down a few trees to improve air movement and provide additional sunlight

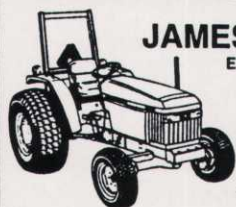
Continued on page 7

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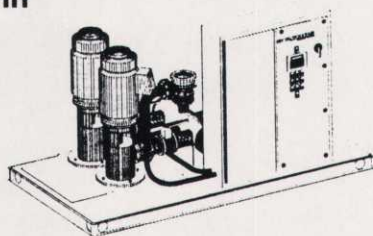
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Strictly Business (Cont'd)

- ◆ **State your neutrality** — Be certain that each individual understands your role. You are not concerned with assessing blame but, simply to identify the problem and resolve the conflict.
- ◆ **Carefully manage the discussion** — Make sure only one person speaks at a time. The goal is to gather the facts. Ask each individual to summarize their views and the views of the other party. Try to direct the discussion so there is some agreement among the employees as to what the problem is. This will go a long way toward a compromise and lead to a solution. More often than not the individuals involved will find the problem is simply one of poor communication.
- ◆ **If the parties can't agree on a solution be prepared to impose one** — Try to make it as equitable as possible, so one individual doesn't feel as though he is the only one losing. Usually in these types of disputes fault can be found with each party. Once a resolution is agreed upon, declare the dispute over with and thank the employees for their cooperation. Remind them of the fact that a continuation of this conflict will not be tolerated and suggest that further disputes may result in disciplinary action.
- ◆ **Follow up** — After a few days, check to see that the resolution is working. Monitor the situation every few weeks and be quick to respond if you sense the conflict is heating up again.



Nothing Happens Fast (Cont'd)

or rebuilding a problem green will often offer faster, longer lasting results than any "over the counter" bottled cure. Golfers would rather you throw thousands of dollars away on snake oils and additional chemical "fixes" than address the real agronomic issue, right? Unfortunately, it's true in some cases. As Dr. Joe Vargas once said, "Golfers would rather get rid of a superintendent than a tree."

Sorry, folks! I just don't think the magic potion in a bottle will ever be found. If it is, you can look for me to be selling it, because the payoff should be better than winning the

Rosenstrauch Receives Professional Certification

David Lee Rosenstrauch, superintendent at Orinda Country Club, has been designated a Certified Golf Course Superintendent (CGCS) by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

Rosenstrauch has been superintendent at the Orinda, California course since 1987. He lives at 5885 San Pablo Dam Rd., El Sobrante.

As a part of the certification process, an on-site inspection of Rosenstrauch's golf course operation was conducted by two Certified Golf Course Superintendents: Randal C. Gai, CGCS, at Claremont Country Club, Oakland, and Wayne S. Lindelof, CGCS, at Lone Tree Golf Course, Antioch.

Did You Know?

The use of sun hats, or safari hats as a form of head protection for golf course maintenance employees does not meet the current Cal-Osha safety code? Please be reminded that if you purchase these types of hats for your employees you may be held responsible for any injuries that might occur.

For information regarding acceptable head protection, contact your insurance carrier or Cal-Osha.

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lottery. Nothing can replace good agronomy and good growing environment. Nothing in a bottle, bag or box. The formula to keep turfgrass healthy is simple, provide adequate water, soil aeration, ample sunlight and good air movement with a little N, P and K on a regular basis. Each of these ingredients is essential in proper amounts, omit one, add too much or too little of another, and a weak link develops. That weak link leads to the one thing that does happen fast in agriculture . . . **crop failure!** So, always remember, nothing happens fast in agriculture, except crop failure. ◆