

YOUR LETTERS ARE NEEDED!

Send to: Scott MacCallum, Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF, or email them to: scott@bigga.co.uk

Dear Editor

I read your welcome note in the June magazine and appreciate your candour about getting out on the wrong side of the bed but I am glad you brought up the fact that the turf grass profession takes regular hits from people like Mr. Humphries and nobody stands up for the profession in your country, except you.

I call this a profession because here in this country it is classed as a profession and recognised as a good career in part by constant information and media awareness being made available to anyone who questions the Superintendents role and how he or she may have got to that position. If someone of Mr Humphries' stature were to criticise the education and training of Superintendents I can assure you, there would immediately be a rebuff from the GCSAA in the national press the very next day or there would be plenty of information to back up and give credit to the courses taken by young superintendents. There is no industry rebuff given, (except by you of course).

If Mr Humphries thinks that these courses taken by the vast majority of future Superintendents in your country are so called "Mickey Mouse" courses then he is in turn insulting some of the best Golf Course Superintendent in America. Why? because right now four of the top ten courses in America have UK educated trainees on their courses. There are many other courses in the country including Pinehurst and Augusta that request British educated trainees every year from our Program here at The Ohio State University.

The recent US Open had a young man from Myerscough College on the course; Augusta had a young lady do an internship there in 2002 (refer to your article of April this year) and there will be another Myerscough student interning at The Ryder Cup in 2004. If, as Mr Humphries says, you need to get rid of these "Mickey Mouse" courses, maybe he needs to be made aware of how well respected the recipients of these courses are over here in the States. Maybe industry need to put their foot down and demand a little more respect from the politicians, after all, where would they go play their golf if the Superintendents went on strike and did not mow the grass !!! if that is all they think they do with this education ?

Michael O'Keefe
Via email

Dear Editor

I am writing this letter to you at present in a state of annoyance, having once again been rejected following yet another interview for a Head Greenkeeper's post somewhere in the country. I am actually Head Greenkeeper on a nine hole course at present, a post I have held for some considerable time. I have to say from the start that I certainly do not have any problems with fellow Greenkeepers being offered these positions instead of me, as I know there have to be other more qualified and experienced colleagues around.

I am actually writing to you for some advice from yourself and any other Greenkeepers who could possibly help. Please can someone tell me where I need to go to receive training in being a Greenkeeper who is capable of looking after an 18-hole course, rather than a nine hole course! I have probably had more interviews than years I have worked on golf courses, which amounts to quite a lot, and practically every response I get when I phone up after receiving the bad news is the same. "Thank you very much Mr X for coming along, everyone on the panel thought you were very good and came across really well - unfortunately you have not got the management experience required to run an 18 hole course."

In light of this I would like to ask if there are any colleges I could go to receive the type of specialist training that is obviously required in order for me to make the step up to an eighteen hole course. I already have heaps of training behind me but unfortunately I must have gone to the only Greenkeeping College in the country that specialises in nine-hole golf courses!

I look forward to hearing from these training providers soon. In the mean time on a more serious note I would ask any course who is looking for staff not to totally dismiss the large group of nine holers, such as myself. After all we are only half the size of you big boys with probably half or less staff, budgets and resources to look after the course. I am sure you will agree this makes us just as able, if not more so, to run and maintain an eighteen-hole course to the high standards demanded of us by all members and visitors alike.

Name withheld

Dear Editor

The article by two American professors on the use of 'waste-water' for golf course irrigation seems to me to miss a very significant point. It itemises all the extra 'manurial' contents of purified effluents/sewage etc. as if these are of benefit, though in fairness it does accept that such materials encourage algal bloom and others may be toxic.

What it does not state is that such content or contamination is undesirable or indeed harmful. The main problem with waste water is that it does contain many products with undesirable side effects. No reputable agronomist would dare to suggest that our golf greens (old or new) need trace elements. Good ones and good greenkeepers would agree that we want no phosphates, only controlled nitrogen and a little occasional potash.

The authors correctly state that most waste water, pre-treated for application to public sites are satisfactory (in the absence of better alternatives) for the irrigation of golf courses. I and many others would disagree that routine fertiliser management needs to be 'adjusted' - the problem with waste water is their 'contamination' with so called nutrients - all we want from our irrigation water is that it should be wet!

In passing could I also protest about the ever increasing use of the term 'fertilisation' - when what the perpetrators mean is fertiliser treatment. The former relates to reproduction not nutrition and grates as much as Greens committees which if they deal with anything are dealing with cabbages. It is the green - the whole course that greenkeepers manage.

Jim Arthur
Honorary Member