

or dying. I theorized that the birds had eaten the dead worms and in turn also died. The members (especially the women) had many questions and comments. But we felt the grass was more important to the golf course than the birds, and we have continued to spray with the same type of material. And except for this one incident, not a single dead bird has been found. The question in my mind since then has been, what actually did kill these birds.

Although I am not an authority on pesticide and chemicals, I feel that DDT has done a lot of good and does not deserve the "black eye" it now has received. I do feel it has been used indiscreetly in some cases, just like some of us over eat and drink. So it remains to be seen what the eventual outcome will be. In the meantime we do have available to us other pesticides that we can use with excellent results. And it is my feeling that it will not jeopardize our turf maintenance program if it should be banned.

Ed Wollenberg, President

## KEEPING UP TO PAR

More Demanding

Specialists Struggle to Grow Grass Despite  
Tournament Crowds, Spikes, Divots

Mollifying the Club Members

By John A. Prestbo

Staff Reporter of *The Wall Street Journal*

CHICAGO—If your once lush green lawn is now turning brown (and your wife is nagging you to do something about it), take some tips from an expert grass grower:

Your problem might be one of 40 common turf diseases which Oscar L. Miles of south suburban Chicago is always looking closely for. This year he plans to spray his grass with mixtures of fungicides totaling 4,925 pounds of expensive chemicals.

Or maybe your browning lawn needs more water. Each summer Mr. Miles irrigates his grass with about 31 million gallons, pumped through a 10-mile network of pipes and sprinklers.

Of course, he tends a bit more turf than the average weekend gardener. Mr. Miles is superintendent of two 18-hole courses at Olympia Fields Country Club.

He's one of the nation's estimated 5,500 golf course superintendents, whose jobs are part agronomy and part aggravation. Their bosses are dedicated golfers whose own lawns at home could be a tangle of dandelions but who rage if their bobbled putts can be even remotely blamed on a stray blade of grass.

### A Chance Remark

Each year many superintendents have their reputations put on the line when their clubs host major tournaments. Then, a chance comment to a sports reporter by a disgruntled pro ("I would've broke par if the greens weren't in such lousy condition") could give their handiwork a nationwide bad press overnight.

Golf course superintendents "are expected to raise laboratory-quality grass under battlefield conditions", says Ben J. Chlevin, executive director of the superintendents' national association. This year some 11 million American golfers, nearly 50% more than five years ago, will tromp around 9,615 golf courses (many

smaller, publicly owned courses can't afford a full-time superintendent, which explains why there are fewer superintendents than courses). The golfers will chew up the turf with their spiked shoes and dig it up with their clubs.

To cope with the punishment their grass must take, superintendents have become a highly specialized, professional group. Twenty years ago, when golf wasn't the national craze it is now, superintendents were called greenskeepers, were paid meagerly and had no formal training. Some of them came from farms, while others drifted into the work because they had a green thumb.

### A Costly Crop

Today, superintendents are entrusted with growing what's probably the nation's most expensive crop. Many plush country clubs sprawl over land worth \$50,000 or more an acre, and in metropolitan areas such as Chicago their superintendents spend upwards of \$100,000 a year to maintain each 18-hole course.

With this kind of money at stake, golf clubs aren't hiring amateurs anymore. Many of the younger superintendents have bachelor's degrees in agronomy or some related subject, and a few hold master's degrees. Many are graduates of special turf management courses offered by a dozen universities around the country.

The new breed of superintendent works with soil tests and chemical analyses instead of intuition. Some are even feeding soil conditions into computers to help determine how much water and what kind of fertilizer to apply and when. Top superintendents are paid up to \$23,000 a year and some are provided free housing on the course.

Like many of his colleagues, Oscar Miles of Olympia Fields is a golf enthusiast. When he was a teenager he considered making golf his career but then chose superintendency because he saw "more potential for advancement" in grass-growing than on the pro circuit. Now an energetic 30-year old with a sand-colored mutache, Mr. Miles plays his two courses at least twice a week "So I can see how the course is from the golfer's point of view." (He has a seven handicap.)

### Thick Grass

Under his watchful eye, his 36-man summer crew (15 are year-round men) mow the club's eight miles of fairway every other day at five-eighths of an inch. He keeps fairway grass growing thick so that golf balls will perch on top of the blades instead of sinking down. That's important because golfers lose a degree of control of their hits if grass or clover comes between the swinging club face and the ball.

Mr. Miles' greens are trimmed early each morning at three-sixteenths of an inch, a much shorter pile than in many living room carpets. The tees are also clipped daily, at three-eighths of an inch, and the roughs are mowed weekly at three inches.

The worst enemy of Mr. Miles' 380 acres of manicured greenery is people's feet. He can control the damage caused by members playing 45,000 rounds a year, but tournaments are major headaches. Last August 70,000 spectators flocked on Olympia Fields' north course for the annual four-day Western Open, and Mr. Miles knew the milling throng, many with spiked shoes on, would trample his grass to death.

Replanting it all after the tournament would take time and interrupt members' play. But Mr. Miles came

up with a solution. After the first day of the tournament, he had his men spread grass seed along the crowd's traffic patterns. "The spectators spiked the seed into the ground for me, and all I had to do was water it," recalls Mr. Miles. "Three weeks after the tournament you wouldn't know we had anybody here."

Working with nature is the easiest part of their jobs, the superintendents agree. It's getting along with the club members that can be a strain, which is why some superintendents dream up occasional little extras as public relations efforts. On ladies' day at Sunset Country Club in St. Louis, for example, superintendent Robert V. Mitchell sets out potted geraniums at the tees and marks the cups on each green with pink poles holding pink flags trimmed in black lace.

It helps to have a tight rein on tempers, too. One recent Fourth of July the Danville, Ill., Country Club brought in some ponies for member's children to ride. That night somebody tied one pony to the flag on a green. When James W. Brandt, the superintendent, arrived at work the following morning he found the tethered pony had worn a trench in the green by circling the pole all night.

The bad luck award, however, seems to have been permanently retired by Fred Harris, superintendent of the 27-hole Los Coyotes Country Club near Los Angeles. In October 1964, he bought some fertilizer and told his men to put it on a few greens. Unfortunately, when the stuff had been packaged, soil sterilants somehow were mixed in with the nutrients, and every blade of grass on four greens promptly withered and died.

A livid board of directors threatened to fire Mr. Harris, but he proved with soil tests it wasn't his fault. After a long period of litigation involving the fertilizer company and other suppliers, the club was reimbursed for the damage. Meanwhile, it took six months to rebuild the greens.

Then in December of the same year, a mammoth storage tank on a neighboring oil tank farm sprang a leak and sent about 300,000 barrels of crude oil gurgling over five Los Coyotes fairways. The oil company resodded the course, but with soil that had such a high saline content it took Mr. Harris a year to restore the fairways to normal.

The worst most superintendents have to put up with is vandalism, which is increasing despite efforts to increase grounds security. Besides tearing up the sod with drag races or spinning motorcycles, a seemingly favorite bit of vandalism is scratching dirty words deeply into the close-cropped greens. "It always seems to happen just before the ladies' tournament," moans one superintendent.

At one Los Angeles-area course, the superintendent walked out one recent morning to find a green completely stripped of sod. The police quickly nailed the culprit, a nearby homeowner who had decided his yard needed some nice grass. "It was easy to track him down," says a friend of the course superintendent. "All they did was go down the street and look for the best lawn on the block."

Reprint from the front page of **The Wall Street Journal**

### INSTRUCTION IN TURF MANAGEMENT

J. D. Butler will be teaching Turf Management, Horticulture E236 at the Naperville High School on Tuesday evenings, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., beginning

September 16 and ending on January 23. Description of this course is as follows:

The principles and practices used in the management of turfgrasses is the areas of general and special use. Of value to students interested in one or more aspects of turfgrass utilization. The course will include lectures, assigned readings, and laboratory exercises. Enrollment in this class is limited. Pre-enrollments will be accepted in the order received, Masters degree or Advanced Certificate in Education candidates at the University will have preference. This course will carry 3 semester hours credit if taken for college credit, or it may be attended as a visitor after due registration procedure. Further information concerning this course may be obtained by writing to Mr. R. F. Casper, Extension Specialist, Division of University Extension, Box 4348, Chicago, Illinois 60680, or by calling 663-8560.

### NEW RAIN BIRD DISTRIBUTOR FOR NORTHERN ILLINOIS

Ed Shoemaker of the Rain Bird Sprinkler Company of Glendora, California and Peoria, Illinois, recently announced the appointment of Illinois Lawn Equipment, Inc., 14750 LaGrange Road, Orland Park, Illinois, as the new distributor for the northern fifteen counties of Illinois, including Chicago.

Robert G. Johnson, of Illinois Lawn Equipment, Inc., stated that his sales department has been attending factory training schools and holding field trips to become better acquainted in the field of automatic underground irrigation systems.

Illinois Lawn Equipment, Inc. has been the Jacobsen turf distributor as well as representative for many other nationally known lines for the past fifteen years and are looking forward to working with Rain Bird, which has been the top line in the field for many years.



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