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Mercury Madness

From the **NEWSLETTER**
By **Gerry Finn**

The "Mercury Madness." You've heard about it. More than enough, if you follow the line of reality. And here is where Dr. Leonard J. Goldwater enters the picture.

Dr. Goldwater is an expert on mercury and he's on a country-wide binge trying to let people know that its scare been magnified to the high heavens. He was aboard for the Massachusetts Turf Conference last month and he picked apart the over-reaction to the effects of mercury.

"It's sensationalized," Dr. Goldwater delivered in between his formal lecture at the Highpoint Motor Inn. "The dangers of mercury have been blown way out of proportion. For what reason I really can't say. But if you think about it, the mercury jitters follows every hint of malfunction in certain products. The public just lets the thing run away to the point of being ridiculous."

The outspoken Dr. Goldwater, who has been doing research on mercury at Duke University, admits that indiscriminate use of it can be harmful. Then, on the other hand he says that indiscriminate banning of mercury is just as bad.

"You fellows," Dr. Goldwater said, "you superintendents ... have to be realistic about the use of mercury. It is one of the most useful fungicides at your disposal but it must be used with discrimination. That's all that is needed. Don't run scared from it. Don't let the emotional tirades of certain people turn you from using it."

Dr. Goldwater emphasizes that all a superintendent guards against in use of mercury on a golf course is excessive application. "There are certain states which ban the use of mercury on plants," Dr. Goldwater revealed. "But I think this is a case of being

an alarmist. If everyone took a course in mercury they would find that it is present in some form or other in every living thing. That's why I can't understand why such a strong stand has been taken against it."

The mercury scare crept into industry some time ago when it was inflated as a health hazard in a hat factory in Danbury, Conn. That started the ball rolling and from there the mercury syndrome has spread far and wide. Who ever eats swordfish anymore, for instance?

Dr. Goldwater snickers at that suggestion. "All fish have mercury in them," he laughed. "If everyone picked up the swordfish scare, there wouldn't be another fish sold in this country. And I'm talking about things like shrimp and clams. What would we do without them?"

There's a natural concern for the plight of the golf course superintendent on the part of Dr. Goldwater. "I've been a golf fan and player for a number of years," he confessed. "I don't get to play very much these days but I can understand just how much mercury can help the superintendent in his attempt to do his job. That's why I'm going around to these conferences explaining that use of mercury is not harmful to the turf or the atmosphere. I'm one of those golf people who want people to know that the superintendent uses chemicals with a certain amount of logic and knowledge of what its reaction, if any, will be."

Thus, the super has a champion on his side. Dr. Goldwater both endorses and encourages the use of mercury on the golf course. "I can't see any harm in its use just as long as its application follows normal lines," he concluded. "The superintendent should be determined in his selection of fungicides. He shouldn't be scared off because of propaganda. If he runs scared, his golf course will suffer for it."

The Midwest Golf Course Superintendents' fall dinner and dance is coming up, so mark your calendar. The date is October 27th at Nordic Hills Country Club; the time is 6:30 for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, and dinner at 8:00 p.m. with prime rib as the main entree. Music will be provided by Rollie Clifford from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. Prizes and corsages for the women and the price is \$25.00 per couple.

Clifford Wagoner, G.C.S.A.A. president, will be in the Chicago area on September 19, 1973, 6:30 p.m. at the Chicagoland Golf Course Superintendents Association meeting held at River Forest Country Club. All Midwest Association Class A or B members are invited to attend.

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