

O. J. NOER FOUNDATION, INC. REPORT

The O. J. Noer Foundation was initiated in 1959 by associates and friends of O. J. Noer, to honor him for his lifetime of work in turfgrass improvement throughout North America. Noer was a native of Stoughton, Wisconsin who graduated from the University of Wisconsin and did graduate work there which resulted in the production and marketing of Milorganite.

The Foundation is dedicated to the generation of original research through grants to universities and experiment stations. Most of these projects, being basic in nature, would have no "commercial" support. But being **Basic** research, the information will have value over a broad range of interests.

Much of the data generated has no immediate, direct effect on turf management since it is fundamental in nature. It does, however, form a base from which more practical projects can be developed. Dr. Jim Beard calls this the "fallout effect". If basic facts have been developed, a great deal of time, money and effort has been saved to do other things.

An example of this fallout effect can be illustrated by thatch studies. The Foundation established grants at Michigan State and Texas A & M currently to study the Identification, Cause and Effect and Control of Thatch on cool - and warm - season grasses. Since then, there have been many projects on thatch dealing with subjects like insecticide effects, disease generation, etc., all based on data accumulated by the initial projects.

The very first project was at the University of Wisconsin by Dr. Jim Love. This was the first time anyone had shown visible nutrient deficiency symptoms in turfgrasses. The paper by Love and the photographs are classics in the field. The color plates, by the way, can be found in Dr. Beard's forthcoming book.

Wisconsin does not have the extensive turfgrass research facilities found in other states. It is incumbent upon superintendents, however, to put money into research since they will be the beneficiaries in the long run. To do this on an orderly basis, an organization such as the O. J. Noer Research Foundation, Inc. is the best vehicle to use.

Most of the monies contributed to the Foundation comes from Milorganite distributors, who have a self-assessed fee on tonnage sold each year. Superintendents' Associations across the country also make gifts along with interested individuals and companies like Jacobsen and Toro.

Noer grants have been made toward worthwhile projects in all sections of the country, from New Jersey to California and from Florida to Washington. The following list provides a partial view of the range of subjects covered.

- University of Wisconsin - Visual symptoms of plant nutrient deficiencies, major and minor.
- Iowa State University - Effect of fertilization on turf diseases.
- University of Wisconsin - Effect of cutting height on root growth and chemical composition of Merion Bluegrass.
- Iowa State University - Nutritional influence on dollarspot disease in bentgrass.
- Michigan State University & Texas A&M University - Thatch on golf greens, North and South -- its cause, composition and control.
- University of Florida - Fertility problems with sandy soil mixtures.
- Pennsylvania State University - Special soil testing techniques required in turfgrass areas.
- Iowa State University - Influence of herbicides on turf diseases.

University of Washington - Fertility levels in **Poa annua** control.

New Mexico State University - Development of new grass varieties requiring less water and fertilizer.

University of Illinois - Management practices that influence thatch development on golf greens.

Rutgers University - Improvement of root growth on golf greens.

Texas A&M University - Water management in relation to heat and drought stress.

University of Nebraska - Nitrogen-fixing organisms for cool season grasses.

Ohio State University - Microscopic time lapse photographic studies of root nematodes.

There are four national-level funding agencies for turfgrass research: the U.S.G.A. Green Section provides the most money, followed by the G.C.S.A.A. Research and Education Fund, the Noer Foundation and Musser Foundation. Most G.C.S.A.A. projects are, and rightly so, on a more practical plane, such as the Toronto bent problem in Chicago last year when G.C.S.A.A. and the Green Section went to the aid of members to try to solve a local, but vexing problem.

There are many local or regional support systems for research. Michigan and Ohio are nearby examples of strong local support. The Midwest Turf Foundation gives regional support to Purdue. The South Florida G.C.S.A. primarily supports the South Florida Experiment Station now that a strong research staff has been assembled there.

One final word. Noer Foundation grants are made from investment profits. Thus, any donations continue to bring dividends from now on. In addition, since there are no paid employees, there is a minimum overhead. In 1980, the management cost of managing the \$164,000 fund amounted to only 2%. Officers and Directors receive no pay, no transportation or living expenses at meetings. They serve because of their remembrance of O. J. Noer and their commitment to the field from which their livelihood comes. That's how the Foundation has generated \$180,000 for turf research in the last twenty years.

**James M. Latham, Research Director
O. J. Noer Research Foundation, Inc.**

FACING UP TO AN EXPERT

•**Charge your mental motors so you won't have to start out cold.** Before facing any expert, it pays to mull over the information and/or advice you are seeking. Think about the questions you should ask ... "Why is this particular change being proposed? ... "How will this move affect employees?" Certainly, taking the time to jot down queries like these can clarify your thinking. Moreover, knowing just what you want to ask can help you keep the discussion on track and ease any feelings of awkwardness.

Another good idea is to check the file for material that is similar in content to the matter that will be discussed — for example, a compensation report that was prepared last year for another company. That way, you will be somewhat familiar with some of the common terms and jargon — and this familiarity can provide clues to what the expert is getting at.

•**Prime the pump.** Most people — experts included — are willing to share their knowledge and experience. But they do so more enthusiastically when they can see that there are personal benefits involved. It's important, therefore, to alert the expert to the advantages of an on-the-spot discussion. For example, "Mr. Taylor is so sorry he can't be here today, and he has asked me to get the basic information on the plans you're propos-

ing. When he comes back, I'll brief him — and this should save time for both of you. Equally important, your visit here won't have been wasted."

There is no reason not to mention that **you** are not an expert in this particular field. In fact, it's wise to do so ... "I must admit that I don't know much about this, but I'd like to learn as much as I can." Put on notice, the expert will be more inclined to expound — patiently and clearly — on his or her specialty.

•**Use your lack of expertness to advantage.** Absorbing specialized information comes slowly even to bright people. If a point is unclear, don't be inhibited by the fear of asking a foolish question or saying, "I don't understand." Admit that you don't know and have the expert explain in terms that you do understand. And keep asking questions until you are satisfied that you have grasped the meaning of what has been said.

•**Take notes.** When someone gives you new information or describes a process with which you are not familiar, simply trusting to memory is not a good idea. It's better to jot down a few key words, phrases, or even sentences to jog your memory. You can expand on the notes later while the discussion is still fresh in your mind.

Another useful memory jogger: asking the expert to put certain things in writing. You can peruse this at your leisure. Sometimes, too, an expert can refer you to written information which covers the same ground succinctly.

•**Pave the way for a follow-up.** What seems perfectly clear during your discussion with the expert may not seem so later on. You may find that, rather than trying to grasp everything in one sitting, you would prefer to get back to this person after you've had a chance to absorb what has been said. Hence, you may want to set the stage for further discussion — "After I've had a chance to think this over, I may have more questions." Or, "I'd like a chance to absorb all this before going on. Can we discuss this again — either in person or on the phone?"

Observation: There may be times when, like Sara Frazier, you are asked to stand in for your boss — facing up to an expert who can supply you with necessary information. In other cases, you may be consulting an expert for your own reasons. The important thing to remember is that you are there to **learn**, and this is not a passive process. An interested attitude, direct questions, the willingness to admit that you don't understand something — all these can help you add to your knowledge and broaden your mental horizons.

Research Institute Personal Report

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