

The Role of the Assistant Golf Course Superintendent,

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Before I attempt to explain the role of an assistant golf course superintendent, I think we should define an assistant superintendent. He is a person, male or female, hired by the superintendent to be his right hand. He must be able to take control of the crew in the superintendent's absence. With this in mind, I would like to share with you some personal experience on the assistant's role.

An educated assistant should understand some of the technical aspects of greenkeeping through his college education. He should know how to calibrate spray equipment, understand fertilizer analysis and what each nutrient does within the grass plant, and be able to identify species of trees and shrubs. I feel that identification of trees and shrubs could be a time saving tool. If you have some work to be done in or along a fairway, your description of the area might sound like "go to the number six tee, on the left side, near the large linden and cut up some damaged sod, smooth out in preparation for new sod". A person might look for a linden tree forever if he has no idea what one looks like. Time is money and, in this case, wasted money.

Although book learning is an invaluable asset, the amount of knowledge gained through on-the-job training is also a necessity. Through practical experience, he can get a better understanding of drainage, irrigation, disease identification, and with the enormous popularity of lightweight fairway mowing, different grass cutting patterns.

Understanding drainage comes from learning where all the main tiles are located and where they go to. Having this knowledge, one can have a better understanding of how to drain a wet spot in the middle of the fairway if it occurs.

From an irrigation standpoint, it is very important to know the complete operation of the system. I will never forget the time back in the late 60's when I was an assistant superintendent at Woodmar Country Club when a fairway sprinkler came on in the middle of the afternoon during a club event. The superintendent at the time, Roger LaRochelle, lived in Olympia Fields, which is a 30 minute drive from Woodmar. I lived 3 minutes away. The golf professional, Jim Romar, gave me a call and I promptly came over and was able to get the sprinkler to shut off and everyone was happy. I was able to accomplish this without shutting down the entire system. We were able to go ahead with our evening water program that evening.

Even though many superintendents spray on a preventative program, once in a while disease still creeps in. Many of these diseases are detected in the early morning through irregular dew patterns. Not only should he be able to identify disease, but how to get rid of it. If the superintendent decides to take a Sunday off to be with his family, and the weather is hot and humid, the assistant should be alert and, if disease occurs, spray at the curative rate to rid the infected area of the disease.

Those clubs that practice lightweight fairway mowing, the assistant should understand why you cut in different directions, the speed the cutting unit should travel, where and how the clippings will be disposed of, and the frequency of cut.

The biggest hurdle I feel the assistant has to overcome is communication. Many times as assistant will start a job that has older employees on the crew that have been there for a few years.

The assistant must be accepted by the crew and at the same time be able to get work out of them when the superintendent is not on the job. He should delegate jobs in a professional manner when required. He should be a listener as well as help the crew members when they need help.

From an educational standpoint, the assistant should be encouraged to attend as many local seminars as he possibly can. The Midwest Clinic sponsored by the MAGCS gives the superintendent a chance to share some personal experiences with his peers. In many cases, good ideas are brought up and taken home by fellow superintendents and assistants.

The North Central Turfgrass Exposition, which is sponsored by the University of Illinois, MAGCS, and Central Illinois Superintendents, brings not only superintendents, but college professors together to share ideas and research work. This year, the NCTE will be held in Peoria, Illinois in early December.

The Midwest Regional Turf Foundation (Purdue Conference) is held in early March. The format is basically the same as the NCTE. Many professors as well as superintendents share thoughts and ideas on turfgrass management and care. Dr. W. H. Daniel, who for the past 35 years has organized this conference has retired in April of 1985, however I can assure you that this conference will continue to grow and be a valuable place to learn about all the latest research being conducted throughout the Midwest.

All three of the above mentioned conferences should be attended by assistant superintendents as well as superintendents not only to learn about what is new, but refresh our knowledge in many areas.

In summary, the assistant is the superintendent's right hand man. He should learn as much as he can from his on-the-job experience. He should be encouraged to attend as many educational seminars as he can possibly attend. Through hard work and his desire to continue to learn turfgrass management, every assistant should strive to become a successful superintendent

Syringing Effects on the Canopy Temperatures of Bentgrass Greens

by J.M. DiPaola, 1984

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Syringing of fine turf, particularly bentgrass golf greens, is practiced throughout the United States. The practical utility of syringing for canopy temperature reduction under the warm, humid conditions of the southeastern United States was examined on a Penncross creeping bentgrass green constructed to U.S. Golf Association specifications. In the absence of wilt, bentgrass canopy temperatures were not altered one hour after syringing regardless of the volume of water or timing of the syringing application. Therefore, in the absence of wilt, the routine syringing of bentgrass greens must be reevaluated given the substantial economic cost of this procedure, particularly for labor and water.

*Truth is not always popular,
but it is always right.*