

Director's Column



"Keeping Track"

by Alan T. Fierst

We are almost finished with another winter season of seminars, conferences, forums, clinics, and other educational gatherings sponsored by any number of golf-turf related organizations. These are wonderful opportunities to exchange ideas and information relative to the golf-turf business and the gatherings are usually very well supported by the sponsoring organizations membership. In addition to the accompanying trade shows, exhibits, and educational opportunities, each exposition usually includes at least one, if not several, presentation of donated monies for turf related research. The research grants are often of quite substantial amounts when compared to the financial resources of the donating organization and are not to be taken lightly.

As we are coming to realize, there are far too many areas of potential research at far too many institutions in need of funding. The state supported universities, the private foundations, the USGA, the GCSAA, and even the junior colleges are all seeking research dollars at every juncture. Each, in their own way, are deserving of every research dollar they seek and procure. But, as is nearly always the case, there is never sufficient funding to adequately supply the need.

As the need and demand for turf research funding increases, so should the accountability for the donated funding. This does not necessarily mean to "target or specify" where each dollar goes beforehand, but rather to be made aware of the benefit those donated research dollars bring. We as golf turf managers need to be cognizant of where and to where these dollars bring a return benefit.

Our clubs and club members also must be made aware of the necessitude of these research funding dollars. It doesn't hurt to mention the need and the benefit of club supported research funding to the Grounds Committee, the Golf Committee, and the Board of Directors at an individual club. Where these source dollars ultimately go (university, USGA, GCSAA, etc.) is not nearly so important as the fact that research dollars are being donated from a source that is so directly coupled to the game of golf. But funding sources such as these are normally accustomed to at least some rationalization for expenditures. A close, descriptive accounting of donated funding from such a source would figure to be imperative.

There is nothing wrong with asking the research funding recipients about research projects (current or otherwise), nor is there any need for reluctance in seeking project results. So long as the research institutions are seeking grants for continued project work, we as the potential funding source should monitor where the funding goes and how far. The research funding dollars are not "wanting for a home", it is our responsibility to monitor which "home" those research funds find.

Getting Started with Perennials

by Terri Tappen Zandi

Head Gardener, Ravisloe Country Club

Herbaceous perennials, plants which grow back from their own roots for several years, were very popular during the Victorian age both at large estates and in small cottage gardens. Although the popularity of Perennials has waned from this time, renewed interest in these plants has been shown in gardens and landscapes.

Most people are familiar with Peonies, Bearded Irises, Poppies, and Chrysanthemums. These perennials have remained popular, however, there are many other species in this category of plants that deserve a place in the garden. Because perennials come back year after year, they are not only cost efficient, but require less maintenance than annuals. Instead of buying new flowers every year, a perennial bed is already established and through division and other means of propagation, the stock of plants can be increased without any further cost.

With the renewed popularity of perennials, it has become much easier to obtain varieties of plants which perform well under many environmental conditions. In the midwest, it is not always advisable to use the same plants that are used on the east coast. (Most perennial gardening books are geared to eastern gardens). Many native and hybrid plants, which will flourish under our environmental conditions, are available. (See list of Low Maintenance, Easy to Grow Perennials).

The first concern, when establishing a perennial garden, is site selection. An area with full sun and good drainage is preferable, although there are many plants which thrive in partial shade and wet conditions. A source of irrigation is desirable, but avoid areas where sprinklers from tees or greens might overlap. Unless an island bed is desired, choose a good background for the garden such as shrub borders, buildings, or fences. Perennials can also be used in small groups as part of a woody landscape to add summer color when few shrubs are blooming.

After a site is chosen, consider the type of garden desired. On a golf course, a garden which blooms primarily from June through September is preferable. Choose plants with color and period of bloom that complement each other. In gardens viewed from afar, choose warm colors such as yellows and oranges. For gardens viewed up close, pastel colors might be preferable.

Another consideration is the amount of time available to maintain the garden. Some plants need to be divided yearly. Others are invasive. The use of low maintenance perennials, plants which are cold and heat hardy, disease resistant, bloom for long time periods, do not need staking, have low fertility requirements, and need infrequent division, reduce time and labor requirements.

Investigate and understand the plants selected for the garden before purchasing. **All About Perennials** by Ortho Books and **Perennials** by Pamela Harper and Fredrich McGourty are two good inexpensive references.

Soil preparation for perennial gardens is crucial. Unlike annual beds which can be reworked yearly, the perennial bed must be prepared to last for several years. At Ravisloe, six inches of leaf compost is worked into the bed the fall before planting. A mix of nutrients similar to those used in our annual beds is worked in the following spring. After the ground is raked
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