

Keeping Pace With Technology

by Rob Durham, Illinois Lawn Equipment Inc.

When I was the assistant superintendent at Pottawattomie Country Club my boss would stress the importance of setting priorities. He would say, "Greens, tees, fairways. In that order. Greens, tees, fairways." He told me a story of the greenskeeper he had learned under. The gentleman did not have much to work with but he set his priorities. His priority was his "Circle of Green". Water was at a premium so the challenge was to position roller base sprinklers on his nine greens in such a way that the greens were properly watered but no water was wasted around the periphery. The greens required several settings, so getting a perfect circle pattern out of four or five sprinkler positions was no simple task. That greenskeepers challenge was to create that circle of green, and he had mastered his craft. As the greenskeeping profession and industry grew, greens superintendents had more tools available to them, so their circle of green could be expanded to include greens, tees and fairways.

Today the greens superintendents circle of green continues to expand. Advances in technology have played a major role in allowing the superintendent to create playing conditions that could not have been possible years ago. The tools we use and consider essential in carrying out our duties today were unheard of not long ago. Our business is a very dynamic one and the superintendent of the nineties must keep pace with advancing technology or be left behind.

Technology sneaks up on you. It is like watching your children grow. You see them every day, never really noticing the changes, but one day you look around and they are all grown up. So it is with technology.

It is amazing how advances in technology changes our lives. These changes enhance the comforts we enjoy at home, the way we do our jobs and shape our attitudes about what is commonplace and what is extravagant. Many items that not long ago were considered to be on the "leading edge of technology" are considered mundane and have come to be look on as basic, necessary parts of our lives. Video cassette recorders, microwave ovens, and answering machines fall into this category. Similarly, technological advances in the turfgrass industry have shaped the way we expect to do business as golf course superintendents and suppliers to the turfgrass industry.

Let's take turf equipment for example. When I was superintendent my equipment supplier wanted to show me an "amazing new technology", the turf groomer. It would fit on my existing mowers and the benefits were too numerous to count. I was skeptical. Was I being sold a bill of goods? If superintendents can create the type of playing conditions that the PGA Tour plays on, and have done so for years without this new, exciting (and expensive) technology, why in the world would I need it now?

That groomer introduction was a relatively short time ago. Today turf groomers are an accepted, yes, even basic, tool for conditioning greens in our industry.

Consider some other recent technological advances that have affected the turfgrass industry which we now take for granted. Lightweight fairway mowers; high production mechanical style fairway aerifiers that produce greens quality aeration at over

(continued page 22)

Specializing in Golf Course Renovations

- Tees • Greens • Traps • Fairways
- Hydroseeding • Plant Installation •

company inc.
don fiore

landscape contractors & architects
golf course contractors

28846 Nagel Court
Lake Bluff, Illinois 60044
708-234-0020
Fax 708-234-0922

Certified Member: American Society of Landscape Architects
Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents

When It Comes to Turf Management ...

NOBODY KNOWS
LIKE YOUR
WILBUR-ELLIS PRO

↑ chipco 26019 FLO

**NOW AVAILABLE IN
15 GALLON RETURNABLES**

- No Triple Rinsing
- No Container Disposal
- Environmentally Correct



Your one-stop shop for all turf management needs. Ask about our complete line of chemicals, fertilizers and seed.

Wilbur-Ellis...dedicated to quality, customer service and environmental stewardship.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Chicago Land 800/747-7400
or Central Illinois 800/892-4033



®/™ registered or applied for Wilbur-Ellis Company ©1993 WECO

(Keeping Pace continued)

an acre per hour; vehicles dedicated solely to turf spraying, with application rates controlled by computer; water injection aerifiers; rotary mowers that can mow fifteen foot swaths and still maintain their trimability. We now have automated feed reel grinding equipment that really transforms the mechanic into a machining technician. It is not uncommon for the superintendent of today to rely on a computer in his office to perform tasks that range from controlling the irrigation system, to creating budget reports, to reminding him when to reorder gasoline.

Our friend who was on the edge of his profession with his roller base sprinklers would gasp at the complexity of our business in the nineties. It seems like we have come so far, and we have. But what lies ahead? It is expected that advances in computer chip technology will explode in the nineties and spill into all areas of our lives like never before.

How will this effect the greens industry? We cannot be sure. But we can be sure of one thing. The greens superintendent that monitors the changes and adjusts accordingly will be in position to capitalize on these changes and use them to his advantage. That is his challenge. The superintendent who does not, must be forever contented with his "circle of green."

Legislators Explore Local Nurseries

by Richard Theidel, Hinsdale Nurseries, Inc.

More than 50 Illinois legislators and agriculture and nursery professionals recently embarked on a tour to explore issues facing plant-and crop-producing operations.

Lawmakers and growers visited three sites on September 14, including Hinsdale Nurseries' Yorkville Farm field nursery. Visitors received an overview of the 425-acre facility's propagation, growing, irrigation and harvesting operations.

"In a sense, we can be considered farmers," Hinsdale Nursery General Manager Ken Doty told the tour participants. "We work with and have a love for the soil just as a farmer does."

Growing 182 varieties of trees, shrubs and evergreens on one of Illinois' oldest nurseries requires a multi-year investment of time and money. Doty said, explaining that some trees take 10 years to reach salability. "We're trying to predict far down the road what our market's going to be," he said. "This is not a short-term business."

Environmental issues have affected the green industry as well as food-growing operations, Doty told the crowd, who earlier on the tour visited an agri-chemical facility and a production farm. "We have to comply with the myriad of federal and state regulations like all other growing trades," he said.

"From a legislator's standpoint, the tour was extremely insightful and worthwhile" said State Representative Tom Cross (R-84th), one of a dozen lawmakers who participated in the tour. "It was good to actually go out to a site to see the issues and concerns every nursery operator encounters."

State Representative Brent Hassert (R-83rd) agreed the tour was eye-opening. "I don't think many of the legislators realized how much goes into producing plant material."

The tour was sponsored by the Illinois Farm Bureau, Illinois Nurserymen's Association, Growmark Inc. and American Cyanamid Co.

PEERLESS FENCE CO.

3N381 Powis Rd.
West Chicago, IL

- Chain-Link Fencing
- Wood Fencing
- Special Gates
- Driving Range Fencing
- Tee Protection Fencing
- Wood & Steel Guard-Rails
- Golf Course Work Our Specialty

708/584-7710

Hal Laman

NATIONAL CHEMSEARCH CORP.

Russel Fishman
(708) 432-3588



VERTI-DRAIN®

The Ultimate Solution For Compacted Soil

Mechanical Soil Technology

— Contract Aeration Service —
Serving The Entire Midwest

David Strang
Ph. (800) 743-2419

442 Pine St.
Galesburg, IL 61401



They're known by the greens they keep.

Lush, beautiful greens and tee boxes are well-known to superintendents who use Ringer Greens Products. With five finely granulated formulations available, you can match our fertilizer to your needs throughout the seasons. Each formulation releases the precise amount of nitrogen needed to eliminate burning and green-up greens evenly. The remaining nitrogen is reserved for slower release to encourage consistent growth. Try Ringer Greens Products. Your greens will be in good company.

RINGER®

Contact your local distributor or Ringer's Golf & Commercial Turf Division at 9959 Valley View Road, Minneapolis, MN 55344. (612) 941-4180. Ringer offers a complete line of fertilizers for greens, fairways and general turf applications.