

Dowsing — An Ancient Art in Modern Use

by Jeffrey T. Dorrell, Supt., Cadillac C.C.

Dowse / 'dauz / verb — To dowse is to search with the aid of a hand-held instrument (such as a diving rod) for **anything**.

When a superintendent first demonstrated the technique of dowsing to me, I had the typical knee-jerk reaction of skepticism and disbelief. Yet it quickly proved its worth on the golf course for finding buried water pipes, drain lines, valves and electrical wires. Also, I found that with a little practice I could perform the technique myself. As irrigation technician on a course with an aging irrigation system and frequent problems, my divining rod became a tool of daily use. For anyone with underground irrigation, unless you really enjoy digging keep an open mind and give this a try. It has been my experience that it takes no special clairvoyance or faith and with a little patience anyone can learn to dowse.

History

The actual origins of dowsing are unknown. Historians point to some obscure references in Greek Mythology and to Biblical passages of Moses smiting the rocks with his staff and water gushing forth (Exodus XVII, 5-6). Written references to dowsing began in the 14th century and an engraving of a dowser at work is dated 1550. Records of scientific investigation on the subject began to show soon after the 15th century and continue today. Volumes have

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been written on the subject and still no real explanation has been found. Theories of ESP, electro-magnetism and unconscious muscle movement have been put forth but none fully explain this phenomena.

Much of the problem with trying to scientifically explain dowsing is its wide variety of equipment, techniques and results. The classic forked stick is only one of many types of instruments used. Pendulum bobs, straight sticks, and coiled springs, which could be made of metal, plastic, or wood, all seem to work. Some of the more unusual equipment used includes household items such as scissors, rulers, utensils and even German Sausages. The results include the well-known reports of locating well water and metal ore of all types, lesser-known reports of finding missing persons and merchandise, and even solving crimes, diverting underground water, and diagnosing car trouble. Some dowsers have had successes using only a map of an area. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. Marines were trained in dowsing and used the techniques to locate enemy tunnels, booby traps, and ammunition caches. The reasons why it works may be unknown, but the results are well documented.

Technique

I have begun to notice tucked into the back of many turf periodicals ads for pipe locators. These locators, though not advertised as such, as divining rods. So an instrument could

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be purchased, but very simple rods that work very well can be made from materials around the shop. One type is a welding rod, stripped of its flux and bent at a right angle about

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(Dowsing continued)

2/3 of the way down its length. Though this is my preference due to its durability, physical make-up of the rod can vary. Ordinary coat hanger wire, electrical wire, and plastic tubing bent this way also work. You will want to experiment and find your own favorites. The short end is then held lightly between the thumb and forefinger with the longer end pointed straight ahead. This method can be done one-handed with a single rod or by using two rods, one in each hand. When the dowser is over the target the rod(s) will turn either inward or outward, depending on the person dowsing. If getting the grip required is a problem or if you're accused of turning the rod intentionally, place the short end of the rod in a piece of tubing and try again. If you don't get a reading on the first try keep at it. Experiment with different target materials; PVC pipe, steel pipe, or irrigation wire. Having water in the pipe or current in the wire is no prerequisite. You can use known sites of buried material or just lie short pieces on the ground.

When you do start to get readings a couple of things will be noticeable. First, it's spooky. The rod does turn seemingly of its own volition for no noticeable reason. Once again, an understanding of why or a faith in any special power are not necessary. The rod will begin to turn before you are right over the target and in the case of pipes and wires it will wish to turn along the running length of such a target. Very exact locations can be determined by crossing the length of such targets on the perpendicular. The rod will turn 90 degrees to your body (either inward or outward) when the rod is directly over the target and actually turn past the right angle after you cross it. The strength of the turn can vary from slight to strong enough to cause heat and friction on your fingers if you try to stop it.

The real "art" of dowsing is not in learning to get readings from your divining rod, but interpreting what those readings are. Along with pipes, drains, wires and valves the rod will read tree roots, underground water and many other undesired objects that may be buried for whatever reason. A general foreknowledge of the area to be dowsed is a great help. Then use the divining rod to determine more exact locations and directions to reduce the search time and labor necessary in uncovering your target.

The value of more modern wire finders and locaters is indisputable, but the simplicity, speed and accuracy of dowsing definitely earns it a place in modern turf maintenance.

Credit: Turf Times 7/93

The below are messages on TurfTalk from Bruce Williams.

I just received a note from Arthur Clesen, Inc. that Grace-Sierra withdrew the registration of Calo-Clor with the EPA. Existing inventories will be sold throughout the remainder of 1993 and 1994.

Don't expect supplies to last long, though. I checked the local suppliers and there is not a lot of product left. Typically, supply and demand took over and the prices have really gone up. I bought at 25 lb. drum in the spring for \$700. The lowest quote I got this week was \$840 and the highest was \$1035.

What are the fellows up in snow country planning on using in the future. Maybe we could hear from the Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, or Dakotan users of Turfbyte on a replacement for the mercurial fungicides.

For everyone's information, John Turner called me yesterday to let me know that Prostar is now registered with the EPA and we can expect it on shelves in your local turf distributor's warehouse by the end of next week. Great News!!!

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