

Rolling with The Changes

It seems that every day in the growing season, we, as turf managers, are met with a new challenge. Weather pressures, environmental regulations, budget restrictions, soil problems and disease pressure are a few of the issues we face on a frequent basis. I wish I could say that I have all the answers. Actually, the longer I am in this business, the more I realize what I do not know! We need support from many areas. One of those areas that can definitely improve our performance and make our jobs easier is university research. Scientists are people we can trust to come up with unbiased research and recommendations. How many times have you been approached by a salesman pushing the latest 'snake oil' product? My usual response is to show me the university research on this product. We need answers to these new products and a myriad of other problems. We need research done in our own backyard that applies to our regional environmental conditions. We need practical turfgrass research that we can apply to our everyday jobs!

The turfgrass research program in Illinois includes five professors at the University of Illinois and two at Southern Illinois University. They have diverse interests ranging from biological disease control, to computer applications in turfgrass management, to soil amendments for turf soil mixes.

The Illinois Turfgrass Foundation has heard this very cry and has responded. Research and review committees have been established for each individual turfgrass researcher at the University of Illinois and Southern Illinois University. These committees meet with their respective researchers twice a year to exchange ideas. These committees have become strong tools in opening up communication between the university and the turfgrass industry. Those of you that have been involved with these committees have witnessed the positive aspects of exchanging ideas. The researchers are hearing directly what our problems are and what our priorities are. In turn, we can learn from the researchers what research is possible and even practical. We have developed a 'win – win' situation for both groups that will only get better. The benefits of this open dialogue will enhance our profession and improve our turf management skills. The university researchers have accepted this new commitment with open arms and are realizing the benefits of these committees. They are producing semi-annual reports that summarize their respective programs. These reports will be published in a number of formats, including *On Course*. If you are among those who still doubt the program, I ask you to get involved. We will take anyone willing to be on a committee. I know you will be impressed with the work that these researchers are doing. I was!

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soil mixes. Turfgrass breeding, native grass studies and good old *Poa annua* control are other areas of interest at these universities. The ITF strongly feels that we have one of the strongest and most diverse groups of turfgrass researchers as exist in this country. It is up to us to utilize them to our maximum benefit!


The ITF has contributed more than \$100,000 to turf research annually for a number of years. Recently, we have developed a number of new programs to increase the amount we contribute to research and insure that this research continues for many years to come. The Illinois Turfgrass Endowment was started primarily to perpetuate turfgrass research indefinitely, regardless of what happens to the economy or university funding. We know that with more environmental pressures in the future, there will be an even greater need for turf research. Now is the time to insure that this research will continue when we really need it. We also want to be a major benefactor of the turfgrass research plots that will be developed at the new Midwest Golf House at Cog Hill. This is research that will happen in our own backyard, making it easily accessible, applicable to our immediate environment and readily applied on our own golf courses. It will also be a tremendous public relations tool with the golf community.

Carl Hopphan, the friendliest guy in the turf industry, was brought on to be our director of development. He has spearheaded the Founders Club, where individuals can contribute to the ITE. He has also worked hard on increasing the number of golf clubs and turf companies that contribute to the Sunset Ridge program. Carl is working closely with Don Ferreri to raise money

through public golf clubs for the Sunset Ridge program. We have received sizeable donations from individuals and a number of people are interested in contributing. People are starting to realize that the new focus of the ITF is for real. Our goals benefit everyone associated with turf: turf researchers, turf managers, turf users. Think about being involved. How could you lose?



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