

## MIDWEST BREEZES

Charles Anfield, CGCS, *Heritage Bluffs Golf Course*



### The “Secret Sauce”

The sauce is known throughout the culinary world as the “difference maker” in a masterpiece menu item. It’s a special blending of spices, seasonings, vegetables and other food stuff that is combined and mixed together behind the secret closed doors of the kitchen. There is actually a specialization among chefs who take special training and serve apprenticeships to become sauciers. The meal is not complete without the sauce. These sauces are passed down from generation to generation and become closely guarded secrets. Fast food chains market their hamburgers featuring the “secret sauce”. The secret sauce is the coup de gras of the meal. Everyone wants it, everyone needs it.

Among Golf Course Superintendents there is a great desire to find a secret sauce in putting green maintenance. Everyone is looking for the “edge” to make their greens better. Some of the reasons Superintendents create the secret sauce are: stress relief, clipping reduction/growth regulation, disease control, green speed, color, tighter leaf, poa control, improved rooting and overall health. There are numerous products, by numerous manufacturers out there ready to provide Superintendents with their “need” to find the secret sauce. Some of these products are new, others old. The concept of these products has been around since the dawn of grass growth. Some experts consider some of these products to be “snake oil”. Many Superintendents take a little of this, a little of that, and viola, the secret sauce.

I called a few Superintendents to share their “secret sauce” formula with me. Some were reluctant to reveal their program but with a little coaxing and bribery I was able to convince them to share.

Ed Braunsky, CGCS (Past MAGCS President from Geneva Golf Club) who is never shy about telling you what he thinks, had this to share. “I like using the Emerald Isle liquid fertilizer combined with Primo, fungicides and Signature on two week intervals, the stuff works”.

Mike Siefken from Sportman’s Country Club, “I’m trying reducing clipping yields and improve my wear tolerance”. He uses Cutless and Primo combined with his fungicide program.

Brian Bossert, CGCS from Bryn Mawr Country Club, “I’m not a biostimulant guy”. He uses Signature at 4 oz/m plus Daconil at two week intervals combined with paclobutrazol. “It’s almost like magic how it perks up the greens”.

Dennis Buck from Dwight Country Club: “I don’t want to give away my full secret but I can tell you I use a granular paclobutrazol in the spring and fall at the full rate. I don’t recommend this to anyone who has a lot of poa”.

Derek Settle of the CDGA recently published an article for the USGA. He conducted a Field Study using six different products that contained cytokinins and other plant extracts to evaluate their impact on creeping bentgrass putting green color and summer quality. These products were compared to Urea and evaluated at the Golf House in Lemont and in College Park, Maryland in 2007 and 2008. “Not all products do what we learned. Based on research, I recommend going back to basics and using urea at .15 oz/m every 14 days for a nice, deep green color”.

There you have it, the secret is out. **-OC**