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The Discovery of "Brown Gold" at E.G.C.

by Todd W. Hopphan, Assistant Superintendent

Over the years, Evanston Golf Club has changed its mowing habits to conform with the ever-changing needs of today's golfer. One change was the use of light weight mowers on fairways. With the introduction of 3 gang and now 5 gang fairway mowers, quality of cut and aesthetics have improved greatly. This change has created great playing conditions, however, it has also caused a maintenance nightmare: clippings.

When we began mowing with catchers, we would discard the clippings in the rough. Most of the time, this procedure would be effective. We rarely heard of any complaints from our membership. This method was great when the clippings were dry, however, most of the time clippings were wet from morning dew and even dispersal would be difficult. We decided, that to avoid future problems, we needed to devise a way to get rid of the clippings, but not increase our costs.

Since we did not have enough employees or enough money in our budget for a removal system, we needed a different plan. What we finally came up with was a different way of looking at our problem. We looked at the clippings in a different light, not as a nuisance but as a benefit. We figured that there must be a way the clippings can be used. We found the solution in our improved flower program.

With our increasing number of flower beds, we needed mulch to incorporate into the soil to keep up the soil and flower quality. Peat moss and other organic matter sources are effective, but can be costly on a grand scale. Since our turfgrass is healthy and fed regularly, we felt that grass clippings would be a good source of organic matter.

In the Spring of 1990, we experimented with the idea and started two programs. First, we instructed our employees to dump clippings directly into our open flower beds. We made sure that they spread them evenly and distributed the clippings to all the beds. This was done only in the early spring and in the fall when the flowers were removed. Since we have beds on almost all the tees and many areas on the course, this portion of the program worked fine.

On a regular basis, we would rototill the clippings into the soil, when the amount was built up enough. It was amazing to see how much the soil would "consume". The soil texture was improved tremendously. While this portion of the plan worked, we needed another plan for the late Spring and Summer when the flowers were in place.

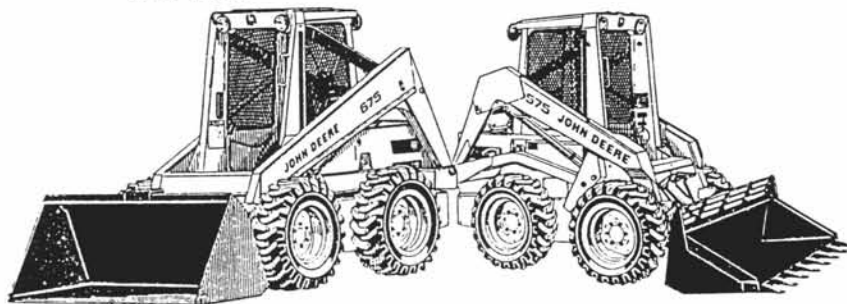
What we did was similar to a dump and removal system that many courses use now. However, we modified this procedure to fit our composting program. We set up dump sites all over the course in inconspicuous and out of play areas. We realized that if these sites held clippings too long, we would have a serious odor problem. What we did to eliminate the odor, was to use another source of organic matter that we had an abundance of: wood chips. Nels Johnson Tree Service over the past five years has dumped large quantities of chips on our proper-

(cont'd. page 24)

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(“Brown Gold” cont’d.)

ty. We have used it in our shrub beds, winterizing our Miscanthus plants, and for new tree plantings. We also used some of the older chips to start up a compost pile. However, due to the fact that wood chips decompose very slowly, we realized that the end product we wanted would be a long time in coming.

What we did then was to introduce these two sources of organic matter to form a “symbiosis”. We would take 1 or 2 yard loads of wood chips and dump them in a previously mentioned designated areas on the course. On a weekly basis, as the clippings would be dumped on the chip piles, would mix the pile using either a pitch fork or for larger beds: a tractor. What this procedure has done was to effectively reduce the odor problem to practically nothing.

When the mulch piles would start to grow in size, we remove them to our compost pile and replace it with a new chip pile. In effect the grass could decompose easily. Since the wood chips would break up the grass clumps, the grass would get plenty of oxygen to help the decomposition process. Also the wood chips would benefit from the increased nitrogen from the grass and help it decompose.

At the end of that season we noticed that the clippings in these piles had practically disappeared and that the wood chips were rotting faster than if they were left alone.

Well, this year (1991), we finally have been reaping the harvest of our efforts. Using a small soil shredder, we started using the grass/chip compost on a few of our beds with very favorable results. The compost at this time is still chunky in nature, however, we would raked out the large particles and put them back on the compost pile or as we say “back in the oven”.

Results from our other program of dumping straight into the beds had mixed results. Last season we saw no ill effects from the green compost. However, due to the extremely warm May we had, some of the beds failed at first due to the increased soil temperatures caused by the decomposing grass. This could be either a good aspect or a bad one. The previous Spring I felt that the warm soil temperatures were a benefit due to the cooler air temperatures we had at the time. The warmer soil seemed to simulate a warming bed in a greenhouse thus causing improved growth. What I am trying to get at is that this procedure probably should be used with caution. In the future, we will not allow any dumping past mid April and will concentrate on dumping in the fall.

We are planning to expand this program by having more dump sites and using the compost in other areas. We feel that this program has been very successful. It might not be a good program for everyone but we hope that others might be interested. This will not replace peat moss, however, it adds to our arsenal and creates a good neighbor outlook to be portrayed in our community.

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Compounding and an early start really add up!

Investing regularly to meet your long-term goals can have dramatic effects when you get an early start. For example, if your investment time horizon is 30 years, consider the results of contributing \$100 monthly for the first 10 years to a hypothetical investment plan yielding 6 percent annually. Then assume that no further contributions were made and the ending sum was allowed to grow for another 20 years at the same hypothetical 6 percent investment rate.

Now, compare the ending results with another hypothetical 30-year plan where no investments were made for the first 10 years, and then \$100 a month was contributed for the remaining 20 years (see chart above).

The first investment plan yielded **\$8,804 more** in the long run — **even though \$12,000 less was invested!** The difference is the amount of time that the first plan had to compound. Clearly, starting early can make a dramatic difference over the long term.



Judging Your Tolerance for Investment Risk

by F. Bill Billimoria, MBA, CPA, CFP

If you had a 100% chance of winning \$5,000 or an 80% chance of winning \$10,000, which would you choose? If you had a 100% chance of losing \$5,000 or a 20% chance of losing nothing, which would you choose? What is your “comfort level” when it comes to risking money in a financial investment? Investments can be like a roller coaster. Some people love to ride rollercoasters at the amusement park, but for others, the very thought is terrifying.

If you are like many people, you tend to view yourself as a financial risk-taker, at least to some degree. Yet, in response to the first question, most people choose the “sure” choice to win money, while in the second, they gamble at the chance to lose nothing. In reality, the alternative choices are better risks.

(cont’d. page 26)



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("Investment Risks" cont'd.)

The fact is, most people abhor loss more than they covet gain, to the point of making poor investment decisions.

Thus, it is vitally important when you are preparing to make important investment decisions, whether on your own or with the help of a financial advisor, that you make a clear-eyed assessment of your risk tolerance. Are you going to panic when the rollercoaster goes down? Would you lie awake at night worrying about your investments? How would you react if you lost all of your investment tomorrow?

Sometimes it is helpful to look at your non-financial life to gauge your tolerance for risk. Do you prefer checkers to hang-gliding? Vacations at a quiet resort or shooting the rapids? Do you risk running out of gas to get to an important meeting?

Your risk tolerance may also depend upon your current financial situation. Are you in a secure job in a secure industry? Are you young and single? If so, you can take more risk, since you will have more time to make up for riskier investments gone sour. But if you are married, with children, or nearing retirement, you should be more conservative. If your investment is intended for college education, play it safe. If it's money for vacations, you may wish to take a greater gamble.

How knowledgeable you are about a particular investment and how diversified your overall investment portfolio is also affects your comfort level. No matter how expert you or your financial advisor are, expect surprises, good and bad. There is no magic to investment success. Time and patience are the keys.

Book Review

by Dave Blomquist
Naperville Country Club

Interested Superintendents should pick up a copy of the book "Trashing the Planet." Author Dixy Lee Ray provides fascinating and timely insight about everything from pesticides to acid rain. This book provides information for superintendent's operating in "environmentally sensitive" areas.

These are some outtakes from the book:

- "Pesticides have reduced America's food costs 33% by controlling weeds, insects, mold and rot in vegetables and fruits. They have helped to keep our food and our homes clean by controlling ants, rats, mice and cockroaches. Through the use of wood preservatives in pressure treated lumber, we have saved a forest of trees two times the size of New England."
- "The most important fallout from the decision to ban DDT was that it gave credibility to **pseudoscience**. It created an atmosphere in which scientific evidence can be pushed aside by emotion, hysteria and political pressure."

I found it interesting to read a different point of view. This book debunks every "environmental crisis" and forces the reader to use common sense, or review legitimate scientific data vs. emotional knee jerk pressure.

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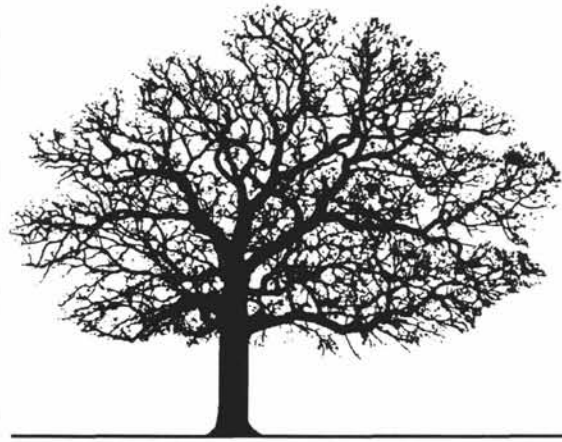


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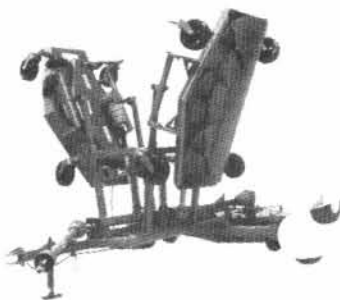
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