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FEATURES

President's Message

Don Cross

2

COVER STORY

**Pythium Root Diseases and
Summer Decline Phenomena**

Randy Kane & Hank Wilkinson

4

SUPER-N-SITE PROFILE

Ken Lapp -N- Cog Hill

Dan Anderson

6

ASK THE EXPERT

Poa annua Seedhead Suppression

Randy Kane

8

Director's Column

Brian A. Bossert

10

Synopsis of the CDGA Green Seminar

Fred Opperman

12

1995 Honeylocust Pest Complex

Rex Bastion

14

the Bull Sheet

18

Recovering from "The Summer of '95"

Dave Blomquist

20

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The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents is a professional organization founded in 1927 whose goals include preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge pertaining to golf turf maintenance.

We endeavor to increase efficiency and economic performance while improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige of the members.

The MAGCS (Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents) member is also an environmental steward. We strive to uphold and enhance our surroundings by promoting flora and fauna in every facet in a manner that is beneficial to the general public now and in the future.



Don Cross
President, MAGCS

As I begin this column at the end of March, winter's grip appears to be weakening, and we are all beginning the fury of activity the new golf season brings. It's been a very busy off-season for me as we began a major pond dredging/retaining wall/mounding project back in October. For the past 6 months, this project has consumed the majority of my time and energy; and now, finally, as we proceed with restoration work, the light at the end of the tunnel is a little brighter. I can sincerely say that during this period, I have been fortunate to work with such dependable, capable, and dedicated people as is the MAGCS Board of Directors. I thank them all for their fine work and hope the entire membership appreciates the time and effort they volunteer.

While we are all busy on our courses or supplying products and providing services, your MAGCS Board continues to address the varied association business activities.

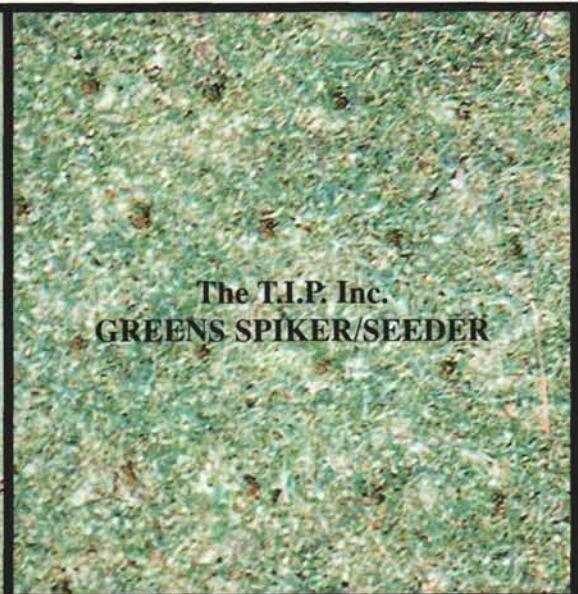
The Arrangements, Education, and Golf Committees are finalizing dates, topics, and events for the remainder of the year. The Long-Range Planning Committee has met and will be bringing up some "future considerations" at our next board meeting. The Public Relations Committee is considering how best to disseminate the new MAGCS brochure and possibly help in the formulation of a follow-up progress report letter to last year's CDGA "Turf Conditions and the Summer of 1995." The Employment Committee continues to provide rapid response and distribution of position announcements. These announcements, as well as many other membership services, are made possible by the excellent efforts of our executive secretary, who so quietly, yet proficiently, handles much of our ongoing business. Last, but not least, our editor and the Editorial Committee continue to produce and enhance what I believe we are all very proud of, our *On Course* publication. We, the Board of Directors, are all striving to provide you with valuable

membership services and a high-quality association. We hope you are pleased with the direction we are heading. If not, please let me know!

At this early juncture in this new season, it's hard to comment about the weather. But aside from temperatures being cooler than normal, at least it has been dry. Just what one needs for restoration work! A few warm days and a little rainfall should bring everything out of dormancy. Well, almost everything... I'm not so sure about the bleached out *Poa annua*!

I hope all of you have a great spring, and I look forward to seeing you at our next MAGCS meeting, June 11, at Odyssey Golf Club.

Donald A. Cross, CGCS
President, MAGCS



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Pythium Root Diseases and Summer Decline Phenomena

Randy Kane, CDGA Turf Advisor
& Hank Wilkinson, U of I, NRES

There has been a lot of research activity and educational offerings the last few years concerning root diseases of golf turf, especially on putting greens. Loss of vigor due to such things as “root rots,” “root dysfunction,” and “summer decline” increasingly has been blamed on the activity of various *Pythium* species in the root zone of creeping bentgrass and, in some cases, of *Poa annua*. In this article, we will review what we know about *Pythium* as a root colonizing fungus and discuss some possible ties with other ill-defined losses of turf, such as the summer bentgrass decline observed in the southeastern U.S. and our own high temperature, mid-summer decline of *Poa annua*.

The genus *Pythium* contains close to 100 species, many of which can be found living in soils or organic matter, in plant roots, stolons, rhizomes and thatch. *Pythium* fungi are aquatic in nature and are much more abundant in wet or irrigated soils. They require free water or high relative humidity in order for resting stages to break dormancy, mycelia to grow and colonize substrates, and more spores to be produced. Fungal hyphae of *Pythium* grows very quickly and can, therefore, colonize newly available substrates before other microbes can compete. Many species are also tolerant of low oxygen concentrations in wet soils, thus giving them a further competitive advantage.

Many *Pythium* species produce enzymes that cause plant



Microscopic view of root rot.

cells to become “leaky” and collapse, and these faster growing fungi have first crack at the nutrients that leak out. You can see why a *Pythium* blight epidemic can move so fast if temperature and moisture conditions remain favorable. Also, *Pythium* species are often the cause of seedling rot and damping off because of their rapid growth, enzymes, and the vulnerability of these tissues.

Pythium species are ubiquitous in turf soils and can often be isolated from roots, regardless of the health of the root system or level of stress on the plant. Turf roots are constantly going through cycles of formation, growth, senescence, and death. The ability of *Pythium* to rapidly colonize senescent root hairs and cortex cells, coupled with their ability to form thick-walled resting spores (oospores), insures that *Pythium* species will be a part of the naturally-occurring root flora.

When tested under controlled conditions, most of these *Pythium* root isolates are found to be saprophytes or weak parasites (sometimes called “minor root pathogens”). However, these minor pathogens can still weaken and predispose turf to death by other stresses.

Several *Pythium* species are known to be important pathogens of putting green turf. Interestingly, the species that are the most important foliar pathogens are also important root and crown rot pathogens. *Pythium aphanidermatum* and *P. graminicola* are the key foliar blight and root rot species in our region and can cause either type of disease at cool or warm temperatures. *Pythium* (foliar) blight is not exclusively a high temperature disease, and *Pythium* root rot is not exclusively a cool temperature problem.

(continued on page 16)

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Ken Lapp -N- Cog Hill

Dan Anderson

Ken Lapp, the Jemsek Corporation, Cog Hill and the Western Open. When the Western Open became the newest member to this impressive group around 5 years ago, the top-flight public golf course boon continued at an impressive rate. It has long been Joe Jemsek's philosophy to supply the golfing public with country club-type conditions for the price of a greens fee. Joe has done that time and time again; and at Cog, his right-hand man that maintains all four 18-hole courses is Ken Lapp.

Ken is entering into his 23rd season at Cog; and actually, the club now has 75 holes. The No. 2 course has a par 3, 19th hole. Ken says it is usually open and people

almost always play it. Last year, Ken and his staff constructed two new holes that are situated between the No. 2 course and No. 4 course (Dubsdred). During my visit with Ken, he showed me both of the new holes; and they are spectacular. The club can now close two holes on either course and still play a full 18 with the new holes. They are now thinking about doing the same for courses 1 and 3.

Ken's golf course experience started at St. Andrews: he caddied, worked in the clubhouse and did other odd jobs such as parking cars. His first superintendent's position came at the tender age of 19 at Fresh Meadows. After 18 years at one of Chicagoland's busiest courses, he took over the reigns at Cog Hill from George Dalman. Between George and Ken (the only

two supers to work at Cog), they have a combined total of 70 years of service. Ken shows no sign of slowing down, and he said his greatest reward is the profession and waking up every morning at the course and going to work.

Upcoming renovation includes rebuilding and enlarging greens and tees, replacing sand in some traps and bunkers and constructing more holes. The changes that have taken place from the time when courses 1 and 2 were built with horses to now when Ken uses his own bulldozer have been frequent but impressive nonetheless. Cog is constantly evolving like all other golf courses but with a much greater magnitude. I feel that Ken has one of the most demanding and interesting jobs in all of Chicago. ■

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Poa annua Seedhead Suppression

Randy Kane, PhD
"Not the Expert"

Here is the second installment of our new monthly "Ask the Expert" column. Each month, we will explore a particular topic and seek information from real experts (i.e., **you guys**) in the field of golf course management. For answers to this month's question, how do I get good suppression of *Poa* seedheads on my greens, I have consulted a university professor as well as several local superintendents. Not surprisingly, there is more than one way to skin this cat. However, before you start cutting, you may want to decide if you really want to skin the cat in the first place. You can only reduce *Poa* seedhead proliferation by chemical means, and the potential for injury to the turf is always there.

Why do we want to suppress *Poa annua* seedheads? I can think of three or four reasons right off the bat: 1) if seed set is heavy, the greens and other fine turf areas have a displeasing off-white color, and many golfers will ask what disease is on the grass; 2) greens with heavy *Poa* seed set do not putt particularly smooth or fast, and golfers will wonder if your mowers are all broken; 3) all of those seeds are adding to the "seed load" in the soil unless you cut them off and pick them up in your baskets. By suppressing *Poa* seedheads, you may be able to gain ground in the *Poa* vs bentgrass population competition; and 4) there are several studies that suggest that if *Poa* doesn't seed heavily, it will have healthier root systems and be better able to survive summers like last year.

There are several options for suppressing seedheads, but none combine safety and consistency. The growth regulator mefluidide (Embark) has shown *Poa* seedhead suppression at low rates, but timing of application is critical, and some discoloration may occur following treatment. Moderate-to-low rates of growth retardants such as Scott's TGR (paclobutrazole) and Dow Elanco's Cutless (flurprimidol) may reduce seedheads by stunting the seed stalk, but this approach is very sensitive to timing and rate problems. Aqua Gro is a wetting agent that has been shown to reduce *Poa* seedset by 40 to 70 percent in university trials, but it, too, has phyto and consistency problems.

Professor Bruce Branham
from the University of Illinois turf
(continued on page 26)

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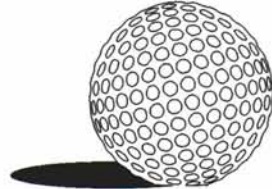


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Brian A. Bossert, CGCS

As March drew to a close, I'm sure we were all wondering when the weather was going to become more spring-like. If you are like me and never entirely ready anyway, this last window of opportunity should have provided everyone with a chance to prepare yourself for the upcoming season. There were many lessons to be learned in 1995; and hopefully, everyone took the time over the winter to look for some of the answers that may have eluded us last summer.

The Education Committee has met twice since the annual meeting and has a solid plan for the upcoming season. This year the committee members are Tim Anderson, Len Conley, Don Ferreri, Gary Hearn, Randy Kane, John Macleod, Joel Purpur and myself. I am fortunate to have two past committee chairmen and sev-

eral repeat volunteers to work with. Everyone has provided helpful input and takes his duties seriously.

Thus far, our monthly meetings have been very successful and informative. An OSHA representative provided insight into inspections, safety issues and his organization's purpose at the January meeting. In March, Randy Kane updated us on all of the new bentgrass varieties. Bruce Branham and Hank Wilkinson teamed up to provide us with their latest research results and update us on the program at the University of Illinois. There was also a small engine seminar at Seven Bridges in March.

Additionally, the April issue of *On Course* contained the first installment of our new column, "Ask the Expert." This monthly feature will pass along the experiences of local professionals (not necessarily only superintendents) in the golf business. Members of the

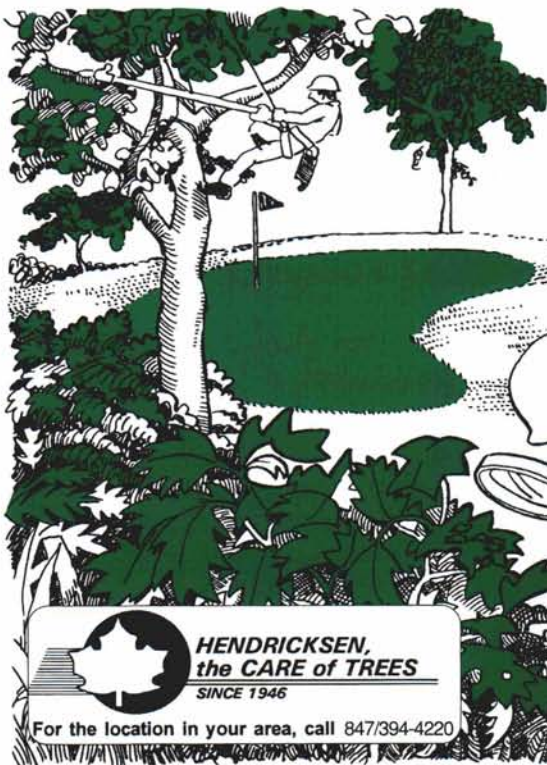
Education Committee are responsible for these articles. We also have plans for improved Spanish classes, computer courses and a resume writing seminar. Unfortunately, the Microscope Disease ID class scheduled for April was cancelled. Ms. Pat Sanders had not received enough commitments from other chapters in this part of the country. We will keep you updated on future developments.

If there are any ideas or topics you would like to see covered, please let someone on the committee know. We can't please everyone, but a few suggestions and comments that we have addressed to date include:

Use more superintendents in educational programs.

We have gotten back to more superintendents speaking at the annual Midwest Clinic. (Rookie Superintendent's Forum in 1995.) This year we plan to have

(continued on page 32)



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