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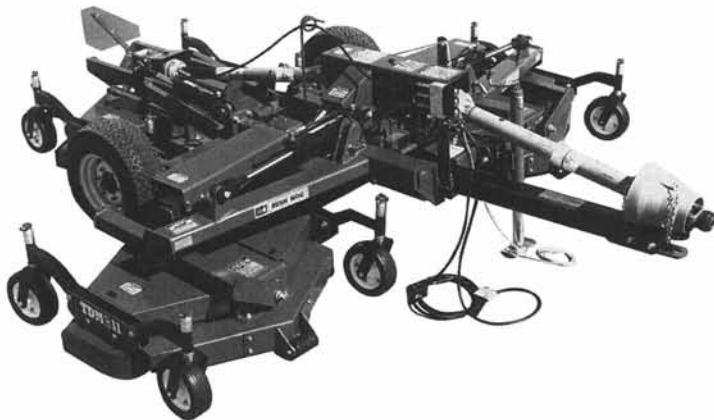
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JUNE 2000
Volume 54 No.1

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An aerial shot of Winnetka Golf Club. (Photo by Aerial Images)

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Paul Yerkes
LESCO Inc.
Office: 630-904-5255

TURFGRASS ADVISOR

Dr. Randy T. Kane
University of Illinois & CDGA
630-954-2753

EDITOR

Cathy Miles Ralston
276 Lincoln Terrace
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089
Phone & Fax: 847-537-7883
E-mail: on_course@hotmail.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

John Gurke
E-mail: Boomding@aol.com

GRAPHIC ARTIST

Mark Karczewski

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The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS), founded December 24, 1926, is a professional organization 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 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.



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A Mid-Year Report

With summer knocking at our door, I hope we are well-prepared. I am quite confident that my beloved Cubbies have their team flag flying near the top of the pole. I always look forward to summer; a bad summer day is always better than a good winter day. Routine events are in place and a little bit of help from Mother Nature can make summer quite enjoyable in our walk of life.

Our Board of Directors has been involved in many discussions pertaining to the Midwest Golf Complex at Cog Hill. We have been invited to participate in this venue and are considering the possibilities seriously. The opportunities it proposes are very positive and would join the MAGCS with a great team of allied associations.

I thought I would write a mid-year report on the state of our Association. You are halfway to the finish line in reading my messages, but don't get too excited—I still have six more. Happily, I can assure you that the MAGCS is as strong as ever with more irons in the fire than my memory serves. Our Board is collectively working on a number of projects that I would like to highlight for you. Also, many tasks are in progress at the committee level as well.

Among our directors, Luke Strojny has been implementing our new accounting system. This involves working with an outside contractor to balance and rectify our ledger monthly. Currently, we have settled the books on 1999, and will be working towards our 2000 certified audit. Our Association is working with a budget greater than a quarter-million dollars; this requires more work than you might think.

Brian Bossert is keeping our Web page updated continually and adding new components as they become available. He has also kicked off negotiations for the 2001 hospitality room in Dallas. Paul Yerkes will be spearheading this project as the date draws nearer. Brian is also keeping quite active in communicating with golf clubs or companies for employee announcements. This particular facet of our Association, fortunately or unfortunately, has become very busy over the past two years.

I myself have completed a few projects with the help of my Board and other dedicated members. We created and distributed our 2000 survey to all members this spring. I would like to thank all of you for the time and effort you put into your returns. Cathy Ralston will write an article highlighting the results and publish them in this magazine. Anyone interested in reviewing the results in tally format can request them from George Minnis. Speaking of George, he is hard at work with me on a number of projects. We are formulating an updated Standard Operating Procedure. Our last one was 10 years old and outdated in many areas. A new membership applica-

(continued on page 12)

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A micrograph shows the intricate anatomy of mycorrhizae within the plant root.

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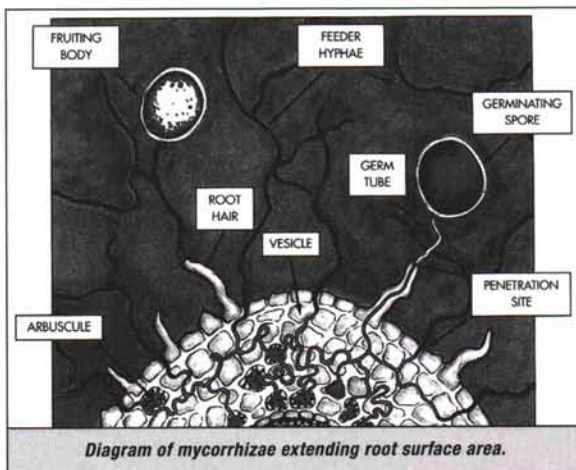


Diagram of mycorrhizae extending root surface area.



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The Michna family includes son Tony (9), wife Lisa, Henry and son Mark (15). Canine members are Akasha (L), named after a character in an Anne Rice novel, and Voodoo, named after a New Orleans beer.



The June meeting moves to the North Shore, where it will be hosted by the Winnetka Golf Club and Henry Michna. Henry started in the business working for Peter Hahn at Ridgemoor Country Club in 1982. His first day on the job was spent edging traps on foot. During his tenure with Peter, Henry learned many things, but the most important item was proper irrigation practices. A quote he learned from Peter stays with him today:



Thanks to Henry's nurturing, Winnetka Golf Club has a thriving—and growing—bluebird population.

“Irrigation is critical, but drainage is imperative.” In January of 1989, he moved to help Roger Stewart grow in Stonebridge Country Club. Roger first bought a pick-up, then he hired Henry. It was during his tenure at Stonebridge where Henry learned the importance of managing the staff. After one-and-a-half seasons there, he accepted the position of golf course superintendent at Winnetka Golf Club, starting on Memorial Day weekend in 1990.

In 1916, Winnetka Golf Club's original nine holes were designed by William Langford and built, along with ball fields. During the early 1920s, more land was acquired and nine more holes were added.

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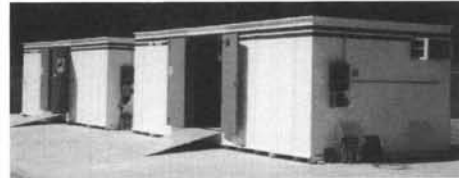
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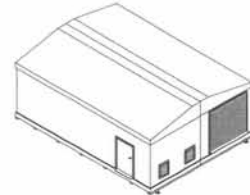
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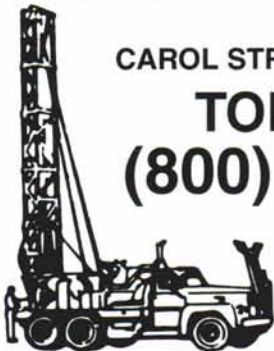
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“Houston... We Have a Problem . . .”

A new phenomenon has entered our world which, judging from the many MAGCS Web site messages, is now AN ISSUE. If you are experiencing this problem, you are probably not reading this column because you are A) weed-eating, B) spraying something, C) mowing out-of-control grass, D) training a new employee (if you're lucky), or E) all of the above. The phenomenon to which I refer is known to the scientific community as Laboris kaputicus, or NO LABOR to the layman, and it's starting to bug me. I've fielded countless (okay, maybe five) calls from my friends in the business regarding laborers—Do you have any? Can you find me some? Where are they going?—and I regretfully have no answer. This has never been an issue for me, especially in my particular geographical area. Labor has always been plentiful in Aurora, and the “lose someone today, replace them tomorrow” mentality was always the rule. This underappreciated, readily available labor pool has suddenly dried up, as it has for most superintendents, and it is throwing a huge monkey wrench into the once well-oiled machine known as “the crew.” Where have all the flower planters gone? The answer is simple—they've found higher-paying work.

Can we pare down our staff, retaining fewer workers at higher pay rates, and not compromise on the quality of our golf courses? Or must we go to our powers-that-be and request more funds to hire the labor we need to maintain our properties?

Our economy is doing very well, and unemployment is down to near-record lows. People are working, and being paid well for it. Workplaces previously known for poor wages and working conditions are changing their ways and enticing the labor force to shop around for jobs with good pay and benefits. These workplaces typically employ hundreds of laborers, which enables them to offer benefits that can not be touched by a small enterprise such as a golf course. Granted, it may be third shift (they're all going three shifts in a booming economy), but it is third shift at 10, 12, even 15 dollars per hour. Can we compete with that? Can we pare down our staff, retaining fewer workers at higher pay rates, and not compromise on the quality of our golf courses? Or must we go to our powers-that-be and request more funds to hire the labor we need to maintain our properties?

I pose these questions with no answer to offer. The reality of the situation is that money and benefits talk, and failure to offer them leads people to walk. Never has there been a greater need for communication with our owners/boards/municipalities about this issue. If kept uninformed, any decrease in course quality could be misinterpreted as a failure on the superintendent's part. I hate to use an overused word, but the onus is upon us to be PROACTIVE—to professionally explain the situation, and offer possible solutions (i.e., raising the pay scale, improving benefits, etc.). Even seemingly insignificant perks such as uniform

(continued on page 38)

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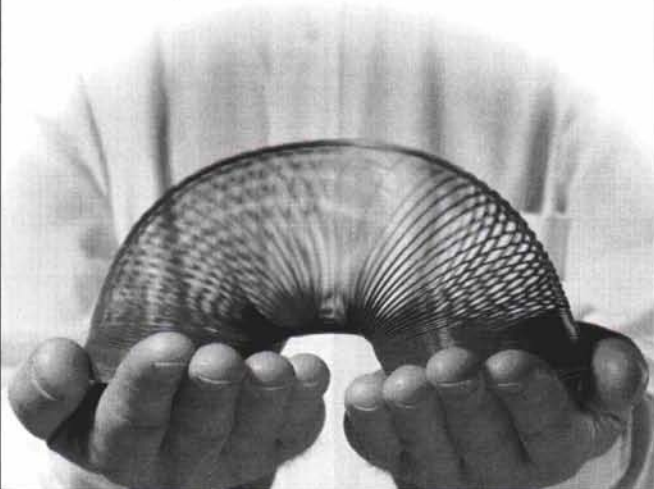
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