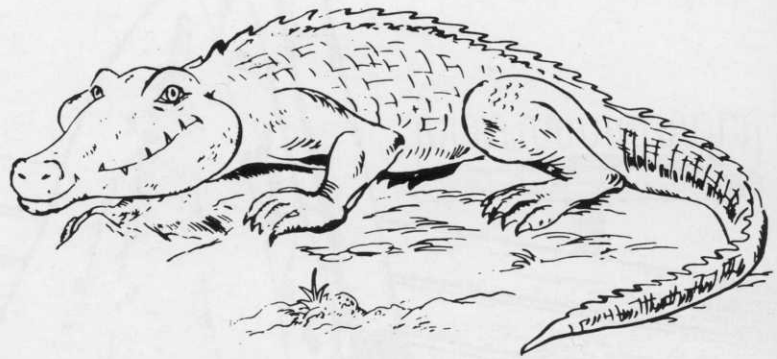


The Gator Growls

By Sandra P. Carmouche



CONSULTANTS - The Pros And Cons

Twenty years ago a golf course superintendent was just as likely to be a farmer or a pro-superintendent as a person with a degree in agronomy. At that time consultants played a major role in the golf course industry out of necessity.

Today the golf course superintendent is most likely a professional person who has attended a college or university that offers programs in golf course operations. Consultants are not needed as frequently or, as some superintendents contend, not at all.

Dick Naccarato of the Naples Beach Club, Jim Witt at Foxfire Country Club, and Buddy Carmouche of Hole-in-the-wall, all in Naples, have each worked with consultants at some point in their careers. They offered the following insights and opinions on consultants and their place in the golf course industry.

Naccarato: "The management of a golf course poses an extremely diverse variety of problems and requires a wide range of expertise. The use of a consultant helps insure a sound decision making process and efficient, economical use of funds.

A consultant is also a link between the superintendent and the club owners and can provide support on cultural practices. He is an outside person who can evaluate the course objectively. Through his many contacts with people in the industry and other golf courses, he can give new ideas and advice on procedures otherwise not known.

It is essential that a good working relationship be established between the superintendent and consultant. Advice or recommendations by a consultant who is not familiar with the budget, labor force, and equipment of those for whom he works can lead to problems for the superintendent.

The consultant must be dependable and easily accessible when a crisis arises or a major decision is required involving the golf course.

Selection of a consultant should be based on a careful study of the individual's proven technical expertise and his history in problem solving at other golf courses."

Witt: "Many golf courses throughout the nation employ

both a superintendent and a consultant in the fine art of growing and grooming the golf course and its surrounding grounds.

I am certain this works well so long as they function as a team, exchanging ideas and working for a common goal. But the bottom line is that the superintendent, who is there over 300 days each year, is ultimately responsible for the condition of the course.

In my opinion, today's superintendent has volumes of information at his finger tips. He is well educated and in command of his complex. If a problem does arise and the solution is not clear, he can call on fellow superintendents or those in related fields to find the answer. Most of these people are very helpful.

I am not an advocate of having a consultant on the payroll."

Carmouche: "I feel that golf course consultants on monthly retainers are a vanishing breed, particularly at the better clubs.

Consultants in the past were successful primarily for the preventative treatments they were able to prescribe. Now, with the higher cost of chemicals which have lower residuals, superintendents are forced to deal with most turf problems curatively rather than preventatively.

With that in mind, a consultant who comes around once a month is only as good as the information he receives from the superintendent.

Also, one of the main functions in the administrative area of the superintendent is crew motivation. How can I expect a Ph.D Agronomist from Atlanta to know the needs and wants of a transplanted Mexican in Naples, or how to make him work more effectively?

If superintendents expect to receive the salary and respect of a professional, we must make our own decisions. The days of the good-old-boy back at the barn, who no member sees, are over. A superintendent owes it to his profession to be seen and answer questions in a sincere and accurate manner.

(continued on page 21)

(continued from page 20)

When a problem does occur and the solution is not evident, there is plenty of help available through other superintendents, county extension agents, tech reps, and universities.

A club would be better served if it used the money allocated for a consultant to send its superintendent to conferences and local meetings. The club should pay his membership dues in national and local golf course associations and, in turn, use the associations in times of need.

The U.S.G.A. Green Section is a good, low cost general information service. It also provides excellent yearly seminars in almost all areas of the country which should be attended by superintendents.

I realize, as do most good consultants, that there is a place for them in the golf course industry. A club that cannot afford a top-notch, experienced superintendent would be well served by a consultant.

But in my opinion, our local and state organizations should set up a panel of superintendents to be called upon, free of charge, by a club or a superintendent when they need answers."

Since no one claims to have all the answers to every problem that might arise on a golf course, it is certain that at some point a superintendent will need advice. And although opinions on consultants do vary among superintendents, the final decision should be based upon which approach will most benefit the club.■



SERVING ALL OF FLORIDA
with

INSECTICIDES, HERBICIDES, FUNGICIDES
& APPLICATION EQUIPMENT



"DESIGNED
FOR
THE TURF
INDUSTRY!"

**SOUTHERN MILL CREEK
PRODUCTS CO., INC.**

Dade
635-0321

Tampa Office
1-800-282-9115

Florida wats
1-800-432-8717

A WINNING PARTNERSHIP AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE!

OFFERING:

- Professional Experience
- Quality Products
- Custom Formulations
- Problem Solving
- Soil Testing
- Analytical Report*
- Program Recommendations
- Other Services Available

***STAR** A new format for easier reading and understanding of your soil test numbers. Ask me how it can help you.


Turfgrass Consulting Services
ROBERT L. WILLCOX
1261 SW 27th Place
Boynton Beach, Florida 33435

(305)
736-2056



Your partners in helping you grow quality turf.