

Words of Wisdom

Green Section conferences give up-to-the-minute information on everything from how-to to ought-to

Agronomy is no longer enough, if the curriculum for the USGA's annual Green Section Conferences is any indication. Psychology, entomology, hydrology and political science are now survival skills for the modern golf course superintendent.

About 310 golf course executives, more than half of them superintendents, attended one of the two day-long Green Section conferences scheduled in Florida this year — West Palm Beach March 10 and Orlando March 12 — covering eight topics including an up-to-the-minute briefing on the golf industry's standing with the Florida Legislature.

Hosts for both sessions were Roger Harvie, USGA Regional Affairs director for the Southeastern U.S. and John Foy, USGA Green Section director for Florida.

"There are no drastic changes for 1992," said Chuck Gast, USGA agronomist who devotes about half his time to Florida. "And there won't be any special Florida modifications of our recommendations, contrary to some rumors you might have heard."

Among the Green Section's projects this year is a program to standardize procedures for conducting soil analyses. "All the major labs are cooperating," Gast said.

The USGA is funding a series of studies in an attempt to quantify the benefits of turfgrass and it is conducting a thorough review of the literature pertaining to wildlife on golf courses, he said.

As of mid-March, more than two dozen golf courses in Florida (*40 as The Florida Green goes to press -ed.*) had signed up for the USGA's wildlife sanctuary program conducted in cooperation with the New York Audubon Society. "The USGA started the program with a \$30,000 grant last year and this year added another \$100,000," Gast said.

Fees for the USGA's Turf Advisory Service, which has become very popular, have gone up to \$900 for a half-day visit and

\$1,400 for a full day, although privately owned public courses subscribing to the service for the first time can get a full-day visit for the half-day price.



Red Tee Stigma

Red tee markers are preventing two classes of golfers — women and senior men — from getting full enjoyment from the game, according to Jan Beljan, senior design consultant with Fazio Golf Course Designers in Jupiter.

Women won't play from any set of tees other than red — even though most women would benefit from a shorter course than delineated by the red tees at most courses — and senior men don't want to play from red tees because those markers have become associated exclusively with women.

Golfers — men and women — must be educated to play from whatever set of

tees gives them a fair chance of shooting par, Beljan said.

"Women must learn that they are permitted to play par golf," she said, "and they should understand that you are not taking part of the course away from them — you are trying to give them the enjoyment of playing golf the way it was meant to be played," Beljan said.

Replace the traditional marker colors of red, white and blue with a series of earth tones and give each set a name that is gender-neutral, she suggests.

Environmental Regulation

"There is no warm, fuzzy feeling toward golf in the Florida Legislature," said Dr. Tom Latta, external affairs chairman of the Florida Turfgrass Association and president of AmerAquatics, Inc. in Deerfield Beach. "When it comes to golf versus the manatee, you are going to lose; golf versus bass, you are going to lose; golf versus anything and you are going to lose. Golf is a nice, fat target because golf has no natural constituency."

Local and regional regulatory agencies have grown huge

Give your golfers little flags to mark fire ant mounds and have your spray tech follow up the next morning.

bureaucracies that must be supported by fines and user fees.

"The public perception is that golf equates to wealth. You have a lot of money and they need to balance their budgets.

"You are going to pay user fees," Latta predicted.

He urged a three-pronged defensive strategy:

- ◆ For regulatory purposes, unite with the Florida Turfgrass Association under the turf umbrella. "Not everyone can relate to golf, but everyone can relate to turfgrass because everyone has a lawn."

- ◆ Increase research funding drastically to get accurate data. "If you can prove that golf courses are net water contributors rather than net users, you will be in a much stronger negotiating position if they try to force you to pay high rates for treated effluent."

- ◆ Organize to wield political clout. "I don't sympathize with some of the goals of the National Rifle Association, but I have to admire the way they get attention of every lawmaker in this nation."

UF's IFAS is Major League

While funding for the Envirotron has received a lot of publicity recently, Dr. John Cisar, IFAS turfgrass extension specialist at the Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center, pointed out several other developments that have moved Florida into the big leagues of turfgrass research:

- ◆ Florida will host the 1993 International Turfgrass Society Research Conference — the organization's first visit to the United States in two decades.

- ◆ The Otto Schmeisser Research Green built by the FGCSA at the Fort Lauderdale REC will give the university a strong selling point in attracting grants for golf-related research.

- ◆ Of the five universities picked by the USGA to conduct pesticide fate studies, UF is the only one that can conduct all

phases of the soil analysis in house.

Mole Crickets

"They're here to stay and we're just going to have to learn to live with them," said Dr. Leon Stacey, entomologist in charge of an extensive mole cricket control program on St. Simon's Island, Ga.

Any pesticide labeled for mole crickets can be effective under the right conditions, he said. The trick "is to get the product down to the mole crickets or get the crickets up to the product. A lot of the material gets caught up in the thatch layer."

Timing, he notes, is everything. Get a residual pesticide down before the eggs hatch.

Stacey spent a year in research before launching his all-out campaign on the mole crickets. Among his findings:

- ◆ Except during the brief mating period, males and females segregate themselves in different areas of the golf course.

- ◆ Females lay 3-11 clutches of 50 eggs each during their life cycle.

- ◆ Eggs take 6-11 days to develop in the female and 21-31 days to hatch in the soil.

From these observations, he devised three ways of using a soap flush (which drives mole crickets to the surface) to determine the "hatch-out period," which may last three or four weeks.

- ◆ Examine the females. If they are full of eggs, you have at least 21 days before hatching begins.

- ◆ If the ratio of males to females is about 50-50, that means mating has begun and you have 27-42 days before hatching begins.

- ◆ If you have nymphs in the flush, hatching has begun.

Fire Ants

Like mole crickets, fire ants will be a perpetual problem on golf courses for the foreseeable future, according to Lee Bloomkamp, former director of pest con-

trol services for the University of Florida. She now represents Mobay Chemical Co.

"Each little ant is relatively easy to kill," she says. "The problem is, there are so darn many of them — and no more than five percent are ever on the surface where you can knock them down easily.

"They are fierce predators and they all bite at once," Bloomkamp reports. "They have adapted this behavior that lets them kill quite large animals. They all crawl onto the prey but nobody bites until the first one gets disturbed. She (all workers are sterile females) releases a pheromone that alerts the others and they all dig in."

What makes the fire-ant sting so painful is that each ant inflicts a double wound: first it takes a hunk of flesh with its jaws and then it injects venom with its stinger.

Although only about six people in a thousand are allergic to fire-ant venom, about seven or eight people die every year from the shock of multiple bites.

Other useful facts about fire ants:

- ◆ If you control aphids, scale and mealy bugs in ornamentals, you will keep down fire ant populations because that deprives them of a food source and also makes them more susceptible to baits.

- ◆ They cannot swallow solids. To ingest the active ingredient in a bait, they must chew the carrier and mix it with their saliva.

- ◆ They will eat anything and can live anywhere. She once found a huge colony on a seventh-floor balcony of Shands Hospital.

- ◆ They don't always build mounds. If their mounds get knocked down by daily mowing, the ants can adapt; they'll live in the thatch layer without bothering to drag up the dirt.

- ◆ They are attracted to electrical fields, irrigation lines, water coolers and pond margins.

- ◆ More than half the colonies in Florida now have more than one queen, which makes them much harder to wipe out.

- ◆ A typical mature colony is 6 feet

deep and 24 feet in diameter.

◆ Drenches are effective on single-queen mounds. Give your golfers little flags to mark fire ant mounds and have your spray tech follow up the next morning.

◆ Baits are most effective but follow the directions carefully, since some break down quickly when they get wet or are exposed to ultraviolet light. Do not use the same spreader used for fertilizer or pesticides: the ants can detect even the slightest contamination and won't take the bait.

Course Marking

"Keep the difficulty of your course the same each day of a tournament," said Harvie, who also is responsible for marking courses for USGA championships. "We assign levels of difficulty to various pin placements and try to keep it balanced each day."

For regular play, he offered the following tips:

◆ The teeing ground must be two club lengths deep.

◆ Out of bounds must be marked so the golfer can see from one stake to the next.

◆ Be careful when staking a lateral hazard that the drop area doesn't penalize the golfer a second time. Landing in the hazard was penalty enough.

◆ There is *nothing* wrong with putting the cup in the middle of the green. Most golfers will thank you for doing so.

1001 Excuses

"Are you going to make me fire my secretary?" is a typical tactic used by golfers trying to get around the USGA's unconditional refusal to accept late entries into its championships, according to Larry Adamson, director of championship administration.

In addition to the 6,400± U.S. Open entries that arrive on time (70% within a day or two of the deadline), another 250-

300 will arrive late and almost always with an excuse.

Weeping wives, sobbing secretaries and bulging-veined bullies every year try to talk Adamson into granting exceptions to the policy that entries must be received at the USGA office by 5 p.m. on deadline day.

The USGA won't accept postmarks as proof of mailing because many golfers have access to meters, including one irate entrant who calmed down in a hurry once Adamson pointed out that, while his envelope may have been postmarked 10 days prior to the deadline, the accompanying check was dated three days after the deadline!

"They threaten, but nobody has sued us yet," he said, pointing out that the association's best defense is absolute enforcement of the policy with no exceptions — not even for a member of the USGA executive committee whose entry form really did get delayed for a few days by the U.S. Postal Service.



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