

USGA UPDATE

The Rain Continues

Fall Cultivation Practices Critical

By John Foy

On Aug. 14, a tropical depression moved across Florida and dumped another 1-3 inches of rain on a good portion of the state. After reaching the Gulf of Mexico this depression gained strength and became the fifth tropical storm of the season. We are approaching the peak of the Atlantic hurricane season, and while no major storms have threatened, frequent and at times heavy rains have occurred throughout the

eration rotation should be performed on greens, tees, and through the fairway and primary rough areas so that adequate time is available for a full recovery. While active bermudagrass growth is occurring, recovery from aggressive cultural management practices can be slow because of the additional environmental stresses that prevail. It is suggested that coring



times no larger than 0.5 inch be used on greens. The importance of these late-summer and fall practices cannot be over emphasized for preparing for and surviving the winter play season. This is true regardless of whether winter overseeding is conducted.

Editor's Note: Tropical Storm Henri inundated the southwest Florida coast with nearly 7 inches of rain in some areas in early September.

ronments and have been increasing in numbers on golf courses throughout Florida. Frequent rainfall makes it difficult for herbicides to be applied as they often require a rain-free period of several hours following treatment. Herbicide application following heavy rainfall also is difficult due to tire rutting caused by chemical sprayers. With all of these factors, forecasting the weather and scheduling herbicide treatments becomes difficult.

Routine rainfall brings with it extended cloudy weather and the need to increase mowing heights on putting surfaces. Bermudagrass requires at least eight hours of sunlight each day and closely mowed surfaces such as putting greens are especially stressed due to less leaf area (chlorophyll) to intercept the sunlight. Increasing mowing height improves photosynthesis. Studies at the University of Florida have shown that increasing mowing height by only 1/32-inch increased photosynthesis by 17 percent on bermudagrass putting greens. This may slightly decrease putting speeds, but other cultural practices like double cutting and rolling can be implemented to



Summer rains have closed courses, delayed projects and grow-ins, and hampered normal maintenance routines and preparations for fall overseeding. Photo by Joel Jackson.

state. Many areas are 10-12 inches ahead of normal year-to-date rainfall.

As Todd Lowe notes in his regional update below, the rains have been quite favorable for the proliferation of weeds, and also have complicated post-emergent herbicide treatments. The frequent cloud cover and resulting reduced sunlight is impacting bermudagrass growth. After just a few days of no sun, bermudagrass begins to take on a chlorotic appearance and density declines. With a decline in density, algae invasion can quickly follow. I have not yet visited any courses that are having major problems nor have I received any "S-O-S" calls. However, it is summer, and providing peak winter-season conditioning during this time is not a realistic expectation. The late summer and early fall is often a difficult period for Florida golf courses because of the adverse weather during the hurricane season.

Along with just trying to survive and complete renovation projects, it is time again to begin preparing for the winter. After Labor Day, a final core

Weeds Abound During Wet Summers Months

By Todd Lowe

Much of Florida has been experiencing periods of scattered, and at times heavy, rainfall since early June. This annual cycle brings with it challenges in maintaining quality turf, and among the most prevalent is the increase in weeds. The warm, humid Florida climate supports the growth of a variety of plants, and it is no wonder that Florida golf course superintendents spend nearly three times as much on herbicides as do superintendents elsewhere in the United States. According to a survey of Florida golf course superintendents, weeds are the second most-reported management problem after insects.

An increase in weeds has been observed on many recent visits, and routine rainfall has been a major contributing factor. Sedges thrive in moist envi-

improve playability. Remember, a long-term benefit of raising mowing heights at this time outweighs the short-term inconvenience and it will not be long before the weather will allow more aggressive practices.

Keeping up with bermudagrass growth on



fairways is difficult during periods of extended rainfall. Falling behind on daily mowing leads to increased clippings (baling hay once mowing resumes) and increased scalping of the turf. A common tool that many golf courses incorporate is the application of plant growth regulators (PGRs) to decrease vertical growth and clipping yield.

In addition to decreasing clipping yield, PGRs improve turfgrass quality by increasing shoot density.

Benham's Beat

Can You Spare Five Bucks for the Future of Golf?

By Don Benham

Many golf superintendents have either read or heard about the proposed \$5-a-member grassroots



Don Benham

program for turfgrass research in Florida. The basic idea is to get club members involved by donating \$5 a member once a year. The money is to be used for basic research on products or problems in Florida.

The media repeatedly reports "Golf" as being a huge user of our limited water resources.

Golf is also often accused of polluting drinking water wells within our state. As environmental groups were making accusations without any scientific basis, the university was forced to provide sound research to disprove these accusations.

Counties and cities began passing their own legislation to "protect" their citizens from problems supposedly brought on by golf courses. Politicians began to speak out against this threat to their community. SWFWMD and other water authorities imposed rules on water use even though the golf courses had usage permits. They were told what day and time of day they could water. Finally, after two years of working with the SWFWMD and with research provided by the University of Florida, the water management district will allow golf superintendents to water when they need to if they stay within their permitted amounts.

Golf course ponds have proved to be a great benefit to water birds according to a study recently completed by IFAS. Joel Jackson and I were in a meeting a couple of years ago hosted by the Florida Department of Health, which was widely covered by the media. An outspoken environmental activist referred to golf course ponds as toxic holding ponds. How we

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would have liked to have had the results of this study in our hands at that meeting.

There are more requests for funding of research in Florida now than ever before. Each year the FTGA turns down many projects because we don't have the money. The USGA and the GCSAA have helped with many projects in Florida but their funding also has to be spread across the whole United States. Dr. Terri Nell and I have presented the \$5-a-member donation plan at many meetings with very limited success. We had a meeting together yesterday to evaluate our success and failures. Dr. Nell stated that we had never had anyone tell us that they didn't like the program. We have had several general managers and management companies tell us they would just like to send in a check from the club instead of billing the membership. We certainly would welcome their support in this manner.

This year we have received endorsement and permission to use the logo of the FGCSA, the Florida chapter of the Club Managers Association of America and the USGA in our fund-raising campaign. IFAS researchers Drs. Laurie Trenholm, Philip Busey, John Cisar, Lawrence Datnoff, and Robin Giblin-Davis have all written letters of need in support of this program. The club manager's association board of directors has agreed to request donations from their members when dues are billed.

The FTGA has donated \$2 million for research in the last 20 years. You as golf course superintendents could really help the program by talking to your club managers and green committees about sup-

porting this funding program and assuring them that this research money returns far more to the members than the meager \$5 donation. If only half of the private clubs participated, we could achieve in two years what it has taken the FTGA two decades to accomplish. Don't you think \$5 is a worthwhile investment in the future of golf?

GCSAA News

Committee Structure Changes

To Increase Involvement,
Elevate Strategic Focus

Increasing opportunities for meaningful member participation and raising discussions to a more strategic level are key goals in a phased transformation of the association's committee structure.

The transformation will start in 2004 with the creation of two new "umbrella" committees, which will be composed of members and others with relevant expertise and will be chaired by board members.

As needed throughout the year, the committees will convene task groups consisting of two or three members of the umbrella committee (one serving as chairman) plus additional members and other experts in the specific area. Task group assignments may involve commitments as brief as one or two conference calls, or as extensive as multiple in-person meetings over two or three years, which will provide more flexible opportuni-

ties for volunteer service. Once its assignment is complete, the task group will dissolve.

"We think it is critical to have a wide range of perspectives in the room when we are developing strategies," said President Jon D. Maddem, CGCS. "Our aim is to bring members with experience and expertise together with experts in relevant disciplines and our professional staff. This new structure will allow us to take a higher-level, integrated approach overall, with great flexibility in targeting specific issues as they arise.

"We are using a phased approach to implement the system so that we can apply what we learn during 2004 as we implement additional changes."

For 2004, the umbrella committees will be formulated as follows:

- The environmental programs committee and its related task groups will replace and expand upon the current environmental stewardship, government relations and research committees and begin work on the priorities identified during the July 2003 Environmental Institute for Golf strategic planning meeting.
- The strategic communications committee and its related task groups will replace and expand upon the current member communications and Web strategy committees.

As a result of this more flexible form of involvement, it is expected that the environmental programs and strategic communications committees, and their related task groups, will involve at least as many members as the current five and more over time. Other

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than the Institute focus group, which will complete its service in January 2004, all other currently active committees and resource groups will continue in their current form for 2004.

The next phase of implementation, anticipated in 2005, would reconfigure most of the other existing committees into two additional umbrella committees in the areas of professional development and member/chapter services, along with numerous related task groups in each area. The nominating, election and standards/bylaws committees would continue as stand-alone committees, in accordance with the bylaws.

Maddem provided participants in the September Chapter Delegates Meeting with a preview of the changes to the committee structure.

"Serving on a committee or task group is the chance to help mold GCSAA's strategies and policies," Maddem said. "It also is a fulfilling way to share your experience and expertise while you build leadership skills that you can use at work and in other organizations."

Members interested in serving on a GCSAA committee or task group must complete the online volunteer form by Dec. 1. Members who serve on GCSAA committees or task groups are eligible to receive service points for their participation.

Outcomes of The Environmental Institute for Golf Strategic Planning Session

In keeping with the spirit of the above-mentioned pooling of resources and integrating overlap-

ping areas of interest, 58 golf industry leaders and GCSAA staff met at headquarters in Lawrence, KS on July 29-31 to discuss how the newly named Environmental Institute for Golf, could build on the basics provided by the former GCSAA Foundation. Attending on behalf of the FGCSA were David Fry, Tim Hiers and Joel Jackson.

This gathering of stakeholders from a variety of disciplines is in keeping with the new format indicated above for committees and resource groups. The inter-relationships of various areas of interest will be combined to maximize results and avoid duplication of effort.

The meeting was facilitated by Jeffrey Cufaude of Idea Architects, Inc. After the ground rules were discussed the group was asked to leap forward in time to 2008 and develop a shared vision of what the Institute might accomplish. Remembering these are intended to be far-reaching goals, here is how the Institute might be viewed.

It is 2008 and the Institute

- Conducts an organized, collaborative effort to lead golf's environmental stewardship activities.
- Focuses on delivering programs and services that are targeted at maximizing the environmental sustainability of the game and golf courses.
- Operates as "the" organization that funds sound science and documentation on environmental issues that can be used in a practical manner by all stakeholders resulting in changes in behavior.
- Provides education in the formats appropriate to

the various audiences (superintendents, owners, builders, architects, developers, golf professionals, club managers, policy makers, regulators, environmentalists and golfers).

- Serves as the clearinghouse of information in the environmental and golf arenas.
- Generates positive PR and public awareness based upon the results of the environmental work of the golf industry.
- Operates with sufficient funding to conduct meaningful information collection, research, education and outreach programs.

This is a very simple list and does not do justice to the discussions both in small working groups and general sessions where detailed questions and ideas of how to accomplish those goals were brain stormed, argued, defended and debated for two and a half days. Steve Mona, the CEO of GCSAA, thanked one and all for their open and candid comments. He congratulated the group on the successful sharing of ideas and addressing tough issues. Mona reiterated The Institute will operate under three principles:

- Collaboration
- Accountability
- Responsibility

Jeffrey Cufaude closed the session with this quote from philosopher Huston Smith:

*"Infinite gratitude toward all things past.
Infinite service toward all things present.
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Owners' Outlook

Supers as General Managers Make Perfect Sense

By Bill Stine

While talking to a group of course owners at an industry meeting, the subject of property managers - or the lack thereof - came up. It is true that there is a shortage of qualified course managers out there. This led to a search of possible training grounds and where to look for qualified managers. There are college programs with internships. There's growing them through the ranks and or training done by the larger golf corporations. The conversation eventually led to the superintendent.

As a board member of the National Golf Course Owners Association, I am proud to say that several members of our board are course owners who started in the business as a superintendent. And why not? It makes perfect sense. Superintendents have their own business units to run.

Their area of management in the course operation is a complete business within a business. Their employee pool includes various departments such as mechanics, spray techs, irrigation techs, assistant

supers and laborers. This department comes complete with all the human resource responsibilities, such as the proper hiring and firing process, employee motivation and retention, workman's comp rules, etc.

Their fiscal responsibilities run the gamut of line items, as they do with any business. They must



Bill Stine

be concerned about payroll cost, cost of products and equipment, the effects of weather on their products, environmental and other government agencies, producing and monitoring budgets and just about everything else other businesses have to deal with.

Let's not forget capital expenditures.

When does repairing a piece of equipment begin costing more than buying a new piece? Will the increased productivity of a new piece of equipment outweigh the expense?

I for one believe superintendents have income within their P&Ls. As any owner will tell you, if the super is saving money in his operation that is incremental income that helps the bottom line. Any superintendent worth his salt is concerned about getting

as many players as possible off the first tee and trying his hardest to keep the course open during inclement weather.

Public relations is another area in which supers often must get involved. Dealing with greens committees, golfers questioning why the cut is the way it is, the local paper wanting to know if he is harming the environment, or writing an article for the club's newsletter. Let's not forget that real pain in the rear they have to deal with is the owner.

Being a manager is not for everyone. In many cases, the super is paid more than the GM. Many supers are not comfortable dealing with customers all day every day and prefer working more with their hands. It seems most are happier being the super as opposed to being the general manager. However, if they have the desire and entrepreneurial spirit, the maintenance department can be a great training ground for becoming a general manager... or even an owner.

Editor's Note: Bill Stine is a director of the National Golf Course Owners Association and of the Florida Chapter of the NCGOA. This is the first article in a recurring series we will call "Owners' Outlook." In return I am writing a column for their bimonthly newsletter on superintendent and maintenance issues.

2004 Plants of the Year Part 1

In an ongoing effort to promote the production, sale and use of superior Florida-grown plants, the Florida Nurserymen & Growers Association is pleased to announce the 2004 selections of the Florida Plants of the Year. This program was launched to promote under-utilized, but proven Florida plant material. These proven ornamentals are selected on an annual basis by a group of growers, horticulturists, retailers, landscape professionals and University of Florida faculty.

For a plant to be considered a Plant of the Year, set criteria must be met. Selected plants have good pest resistance, require reasonable care and be fairly easy to propagate and grow. The award-winning plants must also exhibit some superior quality, improved performance or unique characteristic that sets it apart from others in its class. Here are two 2004 selections for your consideration:

Common Name: 'Hurricane Louise' Coleus

BOTANICAL NAME: *Solenostemon scutellarioides* 'Hurricane Louise'
HARDINESS: Zones 9b-11 (an annual outside this area)
MATURE HEIGHT AND SPREAD: 5' x 5'; more commonly 3' x 3'
CLASSIFICATION: Annual
LANDSCAPE USE: Warm season, full sun, color (from last to first frost), mixed containers, potted plant, bedding plant
CHARACTERISTICS: Upright growth habit, somewhat mounding, good strong branching habit, late season (minimal) flowering. Foliage color is white pink and bright green with frilled leaf edges. Heat and sun tolerant.



Hurricane Louise Coleus. Photo: Dr. Rick Schoellhorn, U.F.

Common Name: Lion's Ear

BOTANICAL NAME: *Leonotis leonurus*
HARDINESS: Zones 8-11
MATURE HEIGHT AND SPREAD: 2-1/2 - 7' Tall x 3-5' Wide
CLASSIFICATION: Flowering perennial or shrub
LANDSCAPE USE: Mixed border, specimen/accnt, cuttable flowers, container, foundation, massing
CHARACTERISTICS: A strong-growing perennial that may last for years and become woody. Their bright orange flowers are butterfly attractants and may be cut and used in fresh or dried arrangements. Upright square stems with aromatic foliage display fuzzy orange flower-balls stacked one just above the other on a central stalk.



Lion's Ear. Photo: Leu Gardens, Orlando