

USGA GREEN SECTION WEB UPDATES

A Great Resource For Communication

By Todd Lowe

Communication is a vital component of an effective golf course superintendent. Yet sometimes, golf course superintendents need additional backup when dealing with issues like the impacts of weather, seasonal differences on golf course conditions, the need for increased maintenance practices, and sensitive subjects like tree removal.

Some golfers cannot be reached through newsletters or even direct contact with the golf course superintendent; and it helps to have an outside opinion from an unbiased professional. USGA agronomists are often called upon to communicate important information to golfers through the Turfgrass Advisory Service, which are on-site agronomic consulting visits.

USGA agronomists occasionally hear phrases like, “We’re the only club that looks this brown,” or “No other courses have winter fairways as tight as ours,” or “Why are we the only club that aerates greens more than once yearly?”

The weather, seasonal playing conditions, and cultural management practices are all common issues discussed during TAS visits. USGA agronomists each visit more than 100 golf courses annually and they provide a wealth of information concerning topics that courses face. An important part of our job is explaining these common issues to golfers.

Superintendents and course officials can also glean the benefits of our travels by visiting the Green Section Web site and reading the Regional Updates published each month. Agronomists from each region write updates every three to four weeks on current playing conditions and factors affecting turf quality.

Updates are usually only a few paragraphs in length and are excellent resources to help golfers quickly understand important golf course



issues. Comments from unbiased professionals like USGA agronomists, are often easily received by golfers, since there is no motive for our remarks other than “for the good of the game.”

The USGA Green Section Web site (www.usga.org/turf) has valuable resources including Regional Updates, *Green Section Record* articles, golf course construction guidelines, course official information, environmental publications, and turfgrass research.

With the click of the mouse, golf course superintendents have access to all of this information and can get a feel for what’s going on in each region. The Regional Updates are archived on our Web site, so viewing past updates is easy.

Here are a few suggestions on how to access and utilize them:

- **Receive Regional Updates via e-mail.** To ensure you receive current updates, contact Kimberly Erusha at kerusha@usga.org and request to be added to the e-mail list. Regional Updates are sent out automatically, ensuring you won’t miss one.

- **E-mail Regional Updates** to officials like Green Committee members, the general manager or director of golf.

- **Add this link** on your club’s Web site so that golfers can easily access the information: http://www.usga.org/turf/regional_updates/regional_updates.html

- **Print Regional Updates** and place them in a visible area for golfers to read.

Improve your communication prowess by utilizing this free source of information. As always, never hesitate to contact me or John Foy if you need additional information or possibly some one-on-one consultation at your club.

Communicating the Sustainable Use of Pesticides to Golfers

By Todd Burkdoll

Superintendents are faced with all kinds of job-related questions, particularly about the agronomics of using pesticides and other chemicals on their courses. Many are having a hard time clearly explaining the benefits of chemical use to curious golfers and community members, and as a result, sometimes avoid the topic.

However, communicating with the public is no longer optional; superintendents must address questions, ease concerns and take part in community education programs on a regular basis in order to continue building and sustaining community confidence. Many golf course superintendents now take a proactive approach to combat the general public’s misperceptions and fear of pesticides and convey their role as an environmental steward.

INDUSTRY PEERS GET THE WORD OUT

Superintendent Jed Spencer, CGCS, for Chenal Country Club in Little Rock, Ark., participates in monthly Greens Committee meetings and now hosts annual open houses to give all members a behind-the-scenes look at how he maintains his course. In addition to addressing topics such as chemical and fertilizer use, maintenance and even golf etiquette, his crew operates equipment for participants, allowing them to get a firsthand look at what his crew does and how they do it. Spencer’s goal is to educate the community, and show members the purpose behind his crew’s actions.

“The response to our communication efforts has been extremely positive,” Spencer said. “Community members really appreciate the visual component. It reduces concerns about the possible effects our treatment plan could have on them and their surroundings.”