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# No-Fear Computing!



us — not you, me or anyone else — can really grasp the magnitude to which the computer is going to directly or indirectly change the way we work and live our lives over the next few years. We're not talking the Jetsons or Star Trek (as in futuristic) — we're talking about the next two? three? or maybe five years down the road. (Possibly before your favorite jeans wear out.)

• It's also safe to say there is no industry — or ever has been one throughout history — that is evolving as rapidly as the computer

world is today. We're not talking about years (or even months) here. Dramatic changes and improvements in software and hardware are announced virtually every week, if not every day — which will trickle down to our industry.

• Although golf course management is a primarily "outdoor sport," this will change somewhat over time. One of the driving forces will be the integration of very sophisticated technology, including GPS (global positioning systems).

Read that as satellite) and GIS (geographic information systems) technology into irrigation, pest and disease tracking/prediction models, pesticide application and labor management systems.

GPS-based irrigation control software packages and GPS-based pesticide application technology were unveiled at the Las Vegas GCSAA show earlier this year.

Both GPS and GIS technology will allow (and mandate) management of more and more of the golf course from within, either by yourself or one of your staff. As technology evolves, golf course superintendents will spend less time *doing*, and more time *managing* their resources, including information.

• Perhaps the most important reason to take the plunge is evidenced by the growing number of superintendent and assistant job announcements today that specify "advanced computer literacy required." Enough said.

So what is this No Fear! business about?

Having been asked to speak at several of the upcoming conferences and seminars, on subjects ranging from computing in general, to the Internet, to TurfNet Online specifically, I have been forced to try to distill my own personal learning curve over the past few years into its basic elements.

What has allowed me to start from scratch and learn how to use one of these things at (ahem) the gateway to middle age? It boils down to (borrowing a phrase from the athletic apparel company): No Fear!

If you are envisioning mountain climbing, parachuting or hang gliding, that's not the image I meant to portray. Better, picture a four-year-old, perched on a stool, gazing at a computer screen, deftly wielding the mouse, navigating a simple game. That is the essence of no-fear computing!

Kids have no preconceptions or misgivings. It's a toy, with one big button on it. Turn it on, turn it off. Doesn't bite. Doesn't scratch. Doesn't sting. The computer doesn't hurt them, and they, by-and-large, can't hurt it!

BY PETER L. MCCORMICK

*TurfNet Associates, Inc.*

**T**his is the time of year when the season winds down for many of you around the country. You're on the downswing, over the hump. During this calm before the approaching storm of winter conferences and trade shows, I thought I would take a step away from our traditional format and focus on the mechanics and mentality of using (and learning to use) computers in golf course management today.

Now, before you say, "I couldn't give two flying foxes about computers" and turn the page, read on.

Why computers? Let's start with several assumptions:

• It would be safe to say that no one of

### Doing it

Make the decision to do it.

It's a natural first step for anything. Now is as good a time as any. Don't wait for New Year's Day to make the resolution though, because then comes the National, then vacation, then you're back into it before you know it. Take advantage of the off-season (if you have one) for some personal development. Do it now.

### Do a little homework.

Pick up a copy of one of the Computers for Dummies series of softbound books, which are good primers for getting started. If you try the library, check the copyright date. Older than last year? Forget it. Find another book. Many magazines will swamp you with jargon.

Buy a decent computer capable of running today's software, preferably for home. Surprise the kids for the holidays. Or, better yet, treat yourself. Don't try to start with someone's castoff from a garage sale. You'll only add to your frustration.

### The price is right.

You can buy a Pentium 166 or 200 today with all the bells and whistles (CD-ROM drive, faxmodem, sound card, monitor and all) for less than \$1500. Add a color inkjet printer (or a low-end laser) and tax and you're at \$2000. Half of what that system would have cost 18 months ago. It's plenty to get started, and will more than likely serve you well for several years.

### Why buy for home?

The workplace is no place to learn to use a computer — way too many distractions. Set yourself up with a desk in a quiet corner of the house, with a good desk chair, decent lighting and a phone jack nearby. Once things quiet down, power up!

### Play a game.

Before you dive into the heavy stuff, fire up the Windows Solitaire game. Beyond entertainment, Solitaire is there for a reason: it's a great way to learn to use the mouse. What's the big deal? The first time you move a mouse with your right hand and try to coordinate it with the little arrow moving around on the monitor, you may wonder if your fingers are actually connected to your brain.

### Start simple.

Most new computers today come

loaded with an assortment of software. Many offer one of the "suites" of applications, like Microsoft Office or Lotus Smart Suite, which have advanced word processors, personal information managers (electronic Rolodexes and datebooks), spreadsheets, and database programs.

The advantage of the suites is they have a common "look" and "feel" throughout the variety of applications. The downside for the novice is these advanced programs can be overwhelmingly complex. I doubt even serious users barely scratch the full

potential of Microsoft Word. Not the place to start!

Some computers also have a simpler group of programs, like ClarisWorks, which are generally easier to learn how to use. My best suggestion: start with a very simple word processor, like Windows Wordpad. Compose a short letter, practice changing your margins, highlighting text, changing fonts and text sizes, bolding, italicizing. Then, save your work, and print it.

### Learning is cumulative.

One of the fascinating aspects of learn-



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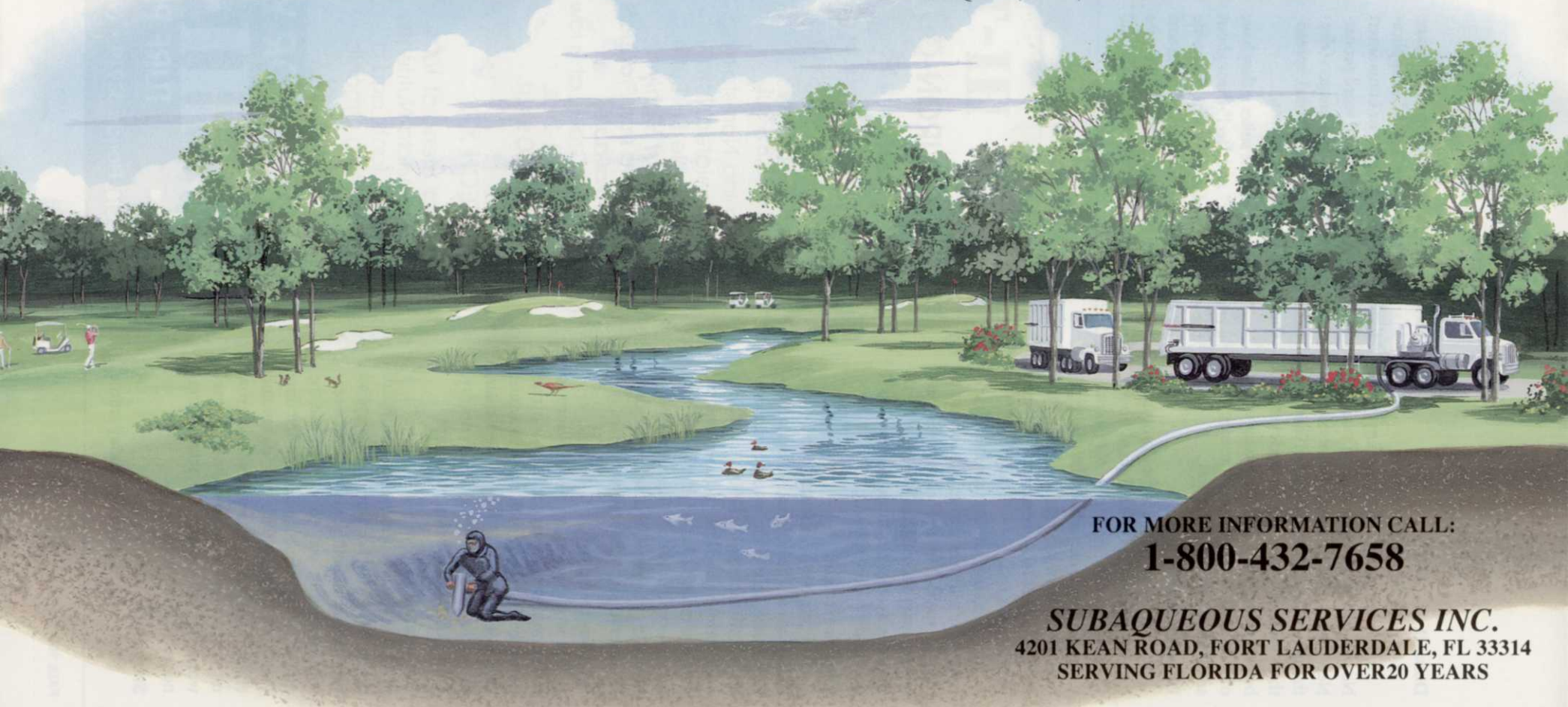
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Each of the four individual chambers articulates in two planes, allowing the deck to wrap over hills or flex up a bank. This out-front rotary mows places other rotary mowers cannot.





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## Specifications

- Deck Configuration: Out front deck with a right hand trim offset. Four individual chambers jointed for articulation. Hinges down  $-20^{\circ}$  and up  $+20^{\circ}$ . One blade per chamber.
- Cutting Width: 82".
- Height-of-Cut (HOC): 1" to 4" by .25" increments.
- Blade Size: Four 22" long by 2.50" wide by .25" thick heat treated steel blades with formed parallel sails.
- Anti-Scalp Features: 11" diameter anti-scalp cups on each blade.
- Discharge: Rear discharge with partial recycling.
- Blade Drive: High efficiency gear pump on the Groundsmaster® 3000 transaxle. Four integrated spindle hydraulic motors.
- Overhang/Trim: 21" on the right and 6.5" on the left, from the outside of the drive tire.
- Safety: Deck and traction unit comply with ANSI B71.4-1990 and CEN standards.
- Productivity: Mows up to 4.6 acres per hour at 5.5 mph.

Commercial Products



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\*Ultra™ is a trademark of Ultra Hydraulics.

ing to use a computer (and believe me, the learning never stops!) is that it builds on itself.

I recall the first evening with my first computer four years ago, trying to fumble through WordPerfect. It took me two hours to figure out how to center the text on the page. But I discovered how to do ten other things during the process. And so it goes.

#### Read the manual.

Do real men ever read a manual? Only if you want to shorten the "exploration" process in the previous paragraph from two hours to about 10 minutes.

Don't attempt to read it like a novel. Your chin will hit your chest in about three minutes. Use it to solve specific challenges.

#### Better yet, use online help.

One of the downsides of loaded or downloaded software is you often don't get a printed manual at all! Many software manufacturers are building their manuals into the help sections in the program itself.

And that's really better, because it's searchable by topic, and usually much faster to find an answer than thumbing through a manual.

#### Ask questions.

Leverage anyone you know who knows more than you do. Your assistant, wife, assistant's wife (easy now), crew, neighbors — yes, even your kids. Several months ago, when I first tackled HTML to do our website, I found my Internet service provider to be of great help, dramatically shortening my learning curve. Swallow your pride. Ask!

#### Take a class?

I really shouldn't comment on this one, because I've never done it. I have heard numerous guys tell me, "Yeah, I'm going to take a computer class one of these days" — but there it ends. You're better off just diving in, rather than procrastinating further by waiting for the time, place and motivation to come together all at once in order to do the class thing.

#### Safety nets:

Save your work early and often.

I learned the hard way. Too many

times. Start a new project, spend an hour working on it, then go to print it. Before you can hit the PRINT icon, the power goes off.

Poof!

Kiss your hour's work goodbye. The remedy: When you create a new document or file, name it, save it, and save it again periodically. If the program has a "prompt to save every "so many minutes" feature, use it.

Create a "data" directory or folder, and save all your files there. Then, back it up.

It's much easier and simpler to back up (create duplicate copies of) your files if they are all located in one central place, rather than scattered all over your hard drive among your program files. Get a tape drive, or one of the newer ZIP or JAZ drives, to make a backup copy of your important files, in case of a problem.

#### SITHOAWA

This is perhaps the most valuable

tip of all. A wonderful acronym. When you're stymied, stuck, frustrated, aggravated, or ready to put your fist through the monitor, invoke the SITHOAWA rule:

Shut It The Hell Off And Walk Away!

Learning to use a computer is much like learning to play the piano. At first intimidating, at times frustrating, yet ultimately rewarding and enjoyable. Progress at both is maximized by frequent practice of short duration. But you can't learn either until you sit down at the keys.

Computer geeks and accomplished pianists are no smarter than you or I. They just started a little earlier and perhaps applied themselves a bit more.

To coin another phrase from that athletic apparel company: Just do it!

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# Taking care of business

*How important is administrative help to a golf course maintenance operation?*

BY SHELLY FOY

*USGA Green Section*

AND ROBIN RABY,

*Administrative Assistant*

*Royal Poinciana Golf Club*

**T**imes have changed for golf course superintendents. Gone are the days of spending most of your time where you need to be spending most of your time ... on the golf course. Today's superintendent can be found in the office working on budgets, ordering supplies, answering the phone, fielding questions from members, and trying to keep up with mounting administrative paperwork.

A recent poll of superintendents in Florida who do not have administrative help revealed the following:

- On a normal day, there may be 20 phone calls to respond to, and during construction or renovation, as many as 30 to 50 calls daily.

- Many superintendents who need administrative support are still trying to convince their boards or general manag-



ers that there is a need for a secretary or administrative assistant. Depending on the golf course, administrative duties for superintendents are averaging 15 to 20 hours per week, or more.

For those of you in need of administrative help, how do you justify this extra support?

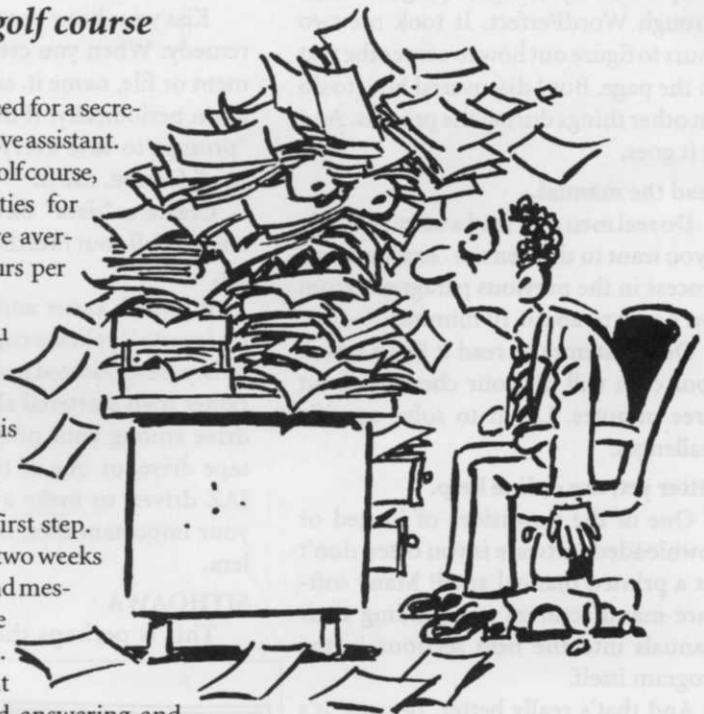
Documenting your needs is the first step.

- Keep a log for two weeks of all phone calls and messages you receive during the day.

Record the amount of time you spend answering and following up on those calls. Were you able to return the calls in a timely manner, or was it a couple of days before you could get back to them?

- Record the time you spend on paperwork each day. Be sure to include time in meetings with managers or staff, as well as seminars you attend to maintain your certification and licenses. How much time do you spend typing memos, reports, and club newsletters? Who takes care of the office when you are away, another employee, an answering machine or no one?

Before turning in your request to the board or general manager, look over your budget and see if there are things you would not mind giving up to have administrative help. Be willing to



compromise if necessary. Having someone to share the load is worth a little compromise, even if your budget will only allow part-time help.

Another option may be to let an existing employee split their day between the golf course and the office. There may be someone who would not mind spending some of the day inside and taking on a little extra responsibility. One golf course superintendent said that having office help was as important to his golf course operation as the irrigation or spray technician. He also said he would sacrifice one person on his golf course to have administrative support.

Bill Jeffrey, CGCS, expressed great frustration at the lack of administrative help because he is spending more hours at his office just trying to keep up with it all. He spends one hour before the crew comes in, at least an hour and half after they leave, and 4-5 hours every Friday afternoon working on administrative duties. Bill had office help for 12 years at a previous golf course, and now has been 10 years without that help.

"In that 10 years, the amount of administrative work has increased tenfold," says Jeffrey. "When I had office help, I felt like I got more accomplished, was more efficient, and I was definitely less frustrated."

For Bill, who has small children, taking work home is not an option. There is no office space, and no quiet time to do paperwork. "Personal time? Ha, forget it".

Once you have documented the need for office support, the second step is determining the duties and responsibilities of your administrative support person.

The following are suggested guidelines.

**1. Review the position;** define responsibilities and the required education level for the job. Basic duties may include:

- Processing purchase orders
- Comparing invoices and related documents to determine correct billing for products received

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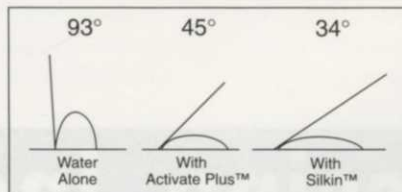
## Using Adjuvants In Your Plant Protection Program

**Here's how adjuvants can improve the performance and coverage of your plant protection product applications.**

Using adjuvants in your turf management program can help you improve plant protection product performance. They can even make the difference between peak and poor performance. The starting point is to find the right adjuvant for the job. The most commonly used adjuvants for turf are: wetting agents; spreader/stickers; spreader/activators; sticking agents, and buffering and compatibility agents.

### Wetting Agents

If you've been making thorough herbicide, fungicide and insecticide applications but still aren't getting the control you expect, your plant protection product may not be penetrating plant tissue surfaces. This reduces control and leaves spray residue susceptible to wash-off. The wetting agent Riverside® Silkin™ helps sprays penetrate plant tissue quicker for improved overall performance.



The wetting agent Riverside Silkin and spreader/activator Riverside Activate Plus™ reduce surface tension of spray so that it forms "flatter" droplets, improving coverage and absorption.

### Spreader/Stickers

Good control in some areas and poor control in others could mean drift and wash-off are taking their toll on spray performance. During application, spray droplet size varies, reducing adhesion and causing spray to miss the target. To improve coverage and adhesion, use the spreader/sticker Riverside Complex™. It adjusts droplet size for better performance, even under adverse conditions. By reducing surface tension in the spray droplet and keeping the spray mixture suspended, Complex can dramatically improve the efficiency of herbicides, fungicides and insecticides.

### Spreader/Activators

Droplet size varies during applications, making retention and distribution more difficult. Spreader/activators work in much the same way wetting agents

do. They deliver more uniform droplet distribution, quicker wetting and increased spray retention on leaf and stem surfaces when used with herbicides, fungicides and insecticides.

The spreader/activator Riverside Activate Plus improves performance and efficiency by moving the spray into plant tissue more quickly. By speeding up penetration, you get increased pest control.

### Sticking Agents

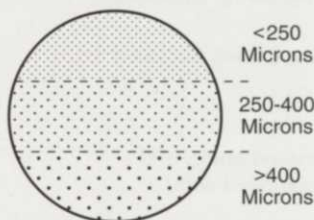
Contact herbicides, and non-systemic fungicides and insecticides can sometimes be washed away by rain, irrigation or even dew. Plant protection product sprays are also affected by drift. The sticking agent Riverside Plex® helps plant protection products penetrate the vegetation canopy and stick to plant tissue. That also helps control drift. Using



**Riverside®  
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Plex will help you make applications that will last longer, even in wet conditions.

### Approximate Actual Size



Spray droplets under 250 microns are susceptible to drift and poor coverage. Using Riverside Plex or the spreader/sticker Riverside Complex to control droplet size effectively controls drift and

improves coverage. Both maintain droplet size near 400 microns, ideal for the best application.

### Buffering and Compatibility Agents

If you're not getting the control you want but have followed label directions to the letter, it could be a pH problem in your tank mix. The buffering agent Riverside Combine® will help you correct the pH level for maximum performance from your spray mixture. If you're unsure of your pH level, use a pH test kit or, if you don't have one, contact your Terra representative.

### Combine® pH use chart.

		Starting pH			
		9	8	7	6
Desired pH	8	2	0	0	0
	7	4	2	0	0
	6	16	12	8	0
	5	20	16	12	8
		Oz/100 gal. water			

A chart like this one makes it easy to adjust pH level for optimum results. For example, if your desired pH is 7 and your starting pH is 9, you would need to mix 4 ounces of Combine per 100 gallons of water to get the proper pH.

In addition to buffering, Combine also works as a compatibility agent. The compatibility agent Combine should be used when: more than one plant protection product is included in a tank mix; when tank mixing different formulations like wettable powders and liquids; or when applying micronutrients or plant protection products with fertilizer. Also, Combine improves spray mix stability and dispersion.

To see if a compatibility agent will help your tank mix, try the jar test. Fill two quart jars each with a pint of water or carrier. Use the same source and temperature as you would in your actual tank mix. Mark one jar "with" and one "without." Add 1/4 teaspoon of Riverside Combine to the jar marked "with" and shake it gently for 5-10 seconds. Add the plant protection product(s) to both jars in the proper volume and sequence according to the label directions. Shake gently before adding each new product. Wait 5-10 minutes. Check both jars. If no gels, sludge, flakes or other irregularities are present, the mix is compatible.

If the jar marked "with" is compatible and the jar marked "without" isn't, a compatibility agent should be added to your tank mix. If the jar marked "with" isn't compatible, the tank mix shouldn't be used.

Wait 30 minutes. If the mixture separates but readily mixes again, the tank mix can be used with proper agitation.

### Adjuvants Pay Off

Overall, adjuvants can help you protect the investment you make in plant protection products by making them more effective. Whether you're using wetting agents, spreader/stickers, spreader/activators, sticking agents, buffering and compatibility agents or all five, they can help you overcome some of the common problems faced by turf professionals.

For more technical information on adjuvants, contact your nearest Terra Professional Products representative.



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## Operations Checklist

Robin Raby, administrative assistant for Royal Poinciana Golf Club, developed the following Organization Checklist for Golf Course Operations:

### • Procedures of Interviews and Hiring Practices

- Is application information complete?
- Are proper procedures maintained during oral interviews?
- Is identification reviewed and current?
- Are references checked?

### • Employee Handbook

- Does the maintenance facility have its own employee handbook? If applicable, is the handbook available in other languages?
- Do employees sign an acknowledgment for receiving and understanding rules and regulations in handbook?

### • Employee Files

Personnel files should be kept in the maintenance facility. Each file should include:

- Application
- Employee Orientation Check-list
- Medical History
- I-9
- W-4
- Emergency Contact Form

- Copy of Drivers License, Social Security Card, and/or Resident Alien ID
- Signed Acknowledgement of Probation Form
- Signed Acknowledgement of Receiving Employee Handbook
- Signed Receipt for Protective Equipment Received

### • Drug Free Program

- Is there a program in effect?
- If so, do employees fully understand policy and consequences if policy is not complied with?

### • Sexual Harassment Policy

- Is a policy written and posted?
- Is policy reviewed with new employees?
- Do employees understand policy?

### • Workers Compensation

- Are copies of completed forms kept in a separate medical employee file?
- Are they signed by employee (if possible), as well as management?

### • OSHA 200 Forms

- Are the OSHA 200 forms filled out properly?
- Are they posted, as law requires?

### • Payroll

- Is payroll done in office?
- Are backup copies of timecards/timesheets kept if originals are forwarded to main office?

- Sorting and preparing invoices for coding and approval
- Following up on deliveries or services promised by vendors
- Assisting in keeping equipment maintenance histories and inventory
- Keeping employee records up to date
- Taking phone messages and scheduling appointments for superintendent; Responding to questions that do not need the superintendent to answer
- Accurate filing for immediate reference needs
- Computer/Word Processing work (letters, memos, reports etc.)
- Maintaining records for preparation of annual budget
- Maintaining file of applications received

**2. Compare salaries, skill levels and experience** with those of similar positions in your area. When determining salary, consider the demands of the position and specialized skills required.

For example, a secretary may answer the phone and refer calls to someone else. An administrative assistant may be required to help answer the caller's ques-

tion. An administrative assistant should also be aware of labor laws and hiring practices. Making sure that these are followed will help prevent labor-related legal action against the superintendent and club.

**3. Consider the impact of the position** and to whom the person is accountable. He or she should possess organizational skills, as well as sensitivity with confidential information.

### 4. What benefits will be offered?

For those of you in need of office help, chat with a neighboring superintendent fortunate enough to have administrative support and they will tell you how valuable that employee is to their operation. Documenting your need for support will take time, but the end result will be worth the effort.

A lot of people contributed to this article by sharing information. Special thanks to Dianne Radkin, Bonita Bay; Tom Trammell, CGCS, Metro

West; Bill Jeffrey, CGCS, Bocaire CC; and Chuck Gast, CGCS, Jupiter Hills.

