

# Safe holidays wished for all

My recent November travels took me once again to Southern California where I found the norm for that part of the country. . . beautiful weather, nice people, good business climate and, it seems, more cars than people. It took me 45 minutes to plod 20 blocks along Wilshire Blvd. one afternoon.

I did have the pleasure of visiting a magnificent new facility in the Westlake/Thousand Oaks area. Sherwood Country Club (so named because the area was the locale for the original Robin Hood

movie) has been carved out of mountains and caverns that are spectacular in this part of the country.

It took millions of dollars to develop this property *before* the first fairway was graded. David Murdoch and company have created a premier property. Many of the property's ancient oaks were transplanted to make way for the course, which is another Nicklaus sensation. I noticed many *huge* oaks that were wired for stabilization after being moved. Rushing creeks wind throughout the course creat-

ing monumental hazards for the average player. Murdoch and company have observed the new standard for golf course real estate development; that is, investing tens of millions of dollars in the course, clubhouse, etc. before building the first residence. I did not see a model residence or a sales office.

Superintendent Rick Wagner and his staff did a great job in preparing the course on short notice for the Ronald McDonald Children's Charities Tournament, which was played just prior to Thanksgiving. My short visit was

during the pro-am event on Wednesday to see architect Nicklaus play his latest masterpiece.

As *Golf Course News* winds up its first year of publication, I simply want to thank our readers and advertising clients for the overwhelming response to our new publication.

To you and all those who have contributed to our initial success, have a safe, peaceful and happy holiday season.

Sincerely,  
Charles E. von Brecht  
Publisher

## Artificial fertilizer use defended

BY GARY D. MYERS

Not too many years ago, there was an aura attached to those who worked the soil. They were viewed as the protectors of our nation's heritage, the heirs of the hardy people who built this country.

No more. Now, those who work the soil are considered the desecrators of our streams and waterways, making our water unsafe to drink. Any application of commercial fertilizer or pesticide is looked upon as favorably as a smoker in the hospital.

Many of the challenges we find facing agricultural applicators will also face lawn and garden applicators, particularly large users such as golf courses.

The largest challenge facing anyone who uses commercial nitrogen is the way groundwater concerns are being used to attack the commercial nitrogen industry. In agriculture, the result has been an emotional effort called LISA - low input sustainable agriculture. The main tenet of this approach is that leaching of nitrate into the groundwater supply can be prevented if we force farmers to use organic sources of nitrogen, such as manure, in place of

commercial nitrogen. Clearly, this approach is based upon an anti-commercial fertilizer bias rather than a scientific understanding of nitrogen, since organic nitrogen has at least as much potential for leaching as does commercial nitrogen.

Nevertheless, current legislative proposals call for implementation of national nutrient management programs aimed at reducing commercial fertilizer use up to 50 percent.

All nitrogen users will be challenged to be more efficient and environmentally aware in their application. For farmers, this means greater use of what we call Best Management Practices - production methods tailored to a farmer's needs and land as a way of preventing or reducing soil erosion and runoff and preventing nutrient losses. These practices include crop rotation, irrigation water management, precise timing and application of fertilizers, soil and tissue treating, manure management, and the use of grass waterways and vegetative buffer strips.

Farmers will be challenged in the future to use practices which also may be adaptable to golf courses, including soil and tissue testing, moni-

toring of nutrient levels, and better practices regarding the timing and methods of application.

While we all have to be more conscientious in the use of nitrogen, let's realize there is also a public relations battle to be fought. The use of fertilizer, whether on the farm or golf course, has provided mankind with a better quality of life. The benefits of fertilizer go largely unrecognized in the focus on the risks. So while we work to reduce the risks, we must also focus more attention on the tremendous benefits.

How does the use of fertilizer benefit the golf course industry? Here are a few ways that come to mind:

\* Recreation. It's an obvious point, but important in a society that places a high value on all forms of recreation. How many of your users understand the important role of fertilizer in the maintenance of their favorite form of recreation?

\* Air purification. Green leaves are natural air purifiers. They absorb carbon dioxide from the air and release oxygen, which is essential for all animal life. The vital oxygen supply is dwindling in major metropolitan areas, crowded out and used

## COMMENT

up by a growing population of people, internal combustion engines and other energy-consuming machines.

\* Noise abatement. Turf grasses and other green vegetation act as acoustical sound blocks to deflect, absorb and muffle undesirable street and community sounds.

\* Erosion protection. Grasses have long been recognized for their excellent soil-holding ability against the ravages of wind and water erosion. Soil lacking plant cover is easily washed from even the slightest slope to end up in streams and lakes as silt. Silt-filled streams, lakes and reservoirs destroy recreational uses, add to water pollution and create flooding problems. A healthy turf encourages rapid movement of rainwater into the soil as well as keeping good soil in place.

No one who uses commercial nitrogen has the luxury of shrinking from the public relations challenge that is at hand. Users must make sure their nitrogen application is environmentally sound, and then be willing to tell people the benefits of commercial fertilizer use.

Gary D. Myers is president of The Fertilizer Institute

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