

Commentary

Lending aid to Asians expands Americans' knowledge as well

Dr. RICK L. BRANDENBURG

The golf industry has grown by leaps and bounds in Asia during the past few years. Despite the recent economic downturn, many believe this slowdown is temporary and some areas seem to have been only modestly affected. As the industry matures there will be many research and educational programs necessary to better serve the needs of the superintendents working in these areas. At the same time there are significant and unique challenges in meeting these needs.

These challenges for educators in Asia include the diversity of conditions, cultivars, environment, pest problems, availability of equipment and technology, labor and other factors throughout this region.

A regional seminar thus assembles an audience with a magnitude of diversity rarely seen in the United States and a unique challenge to the instructor. Add to this the lack of available local research data and publications for many countries, and the instructor often finds that the best approach is to extrapolate information generated in the United States and fit it to the Asian continent.

In my 17 years as a professional entomologist helping solve insect problems, including those that attack turfgrass, I've been fortunate to travel to a number of countries. I've had the opportunity to teach seminars on integrated pest management in the Golf Asia conferences in Singapore in March 1997 and 1998.

The challenge of working with superintendents with various levels of training from a large number of Asian countries was both demanding and rewarding. The linkages and collaborations that develop are invaluable. But, more importantly, I left Singapore with a realistic appreciation of the challenges that face superintendents in this part of the world. There are two major issues that seem to be at the heart and soul of the superintendents needs in Asia:

- One is the unquenchable desire of the superintendents to get more information and have more educational opportunities. In this characteristic, they are like their counterparts in the States.
- The second is the need for sound research programs conducted under local conditions to help superintendents with the unique sets of problems they often face. This concern is much different from the U.S. situation in which superintendents benefit from a rather extensive research effort.

A key question to ask is, how do those involved in turfgrass research and education provide answers for the problems unique to the Asian golf industry? The logistics of doing business in Asia are different from seminars in the United States. The cost, time and energy in-

vested in developing programs in Asia are significant. However, despite the cost, there is definitely the need and interest, and even with the recent economic problems, this situation may only have modest long-term impact on the continued development of golf in Asia.

In effect, the need and demand for additional training will most likely continue to increase. The limited turfgrass research effort in Asia is comparative with the growth of the turf industry in the Southeastern United States. As the golf industry grew so rapidly over the past few decades, in many instances research was lacking. Only in recent years have some institutions been able to "catch up" to the industry with enhanced research efforts.

But this situation is of great importance, not just for the superintendents living and working in Asia, but for the future of the golf industry as a whole. As golf continues to grow, the problems of managing high-quality turf will grow along with it.

One example of a significant need for research input in my area of expertise is development of effective management strategies for mole crickets on golf courses. In some areas of Asia we are still uncertain as to the species that infest the turf and have limited information on their life cycle. Both of these pieces of information are critical for effective management.

In addition, the species and life cycles probably vary considerably from Singapore to southern China and Hong Kong. The challenges of addressing problems of turf management, or assisting in research programs in Asia are significant, but not necessarily insurmountable.

Our ability to adapt data from the United States and other countries to the Asian environment is often difficult and sometimes dangerous. The cost and time investment of U.S. scientists working collaboratively with Asian counterparts may be prohibitive. However, the needs and opportunities will remain until the issue is addressed.

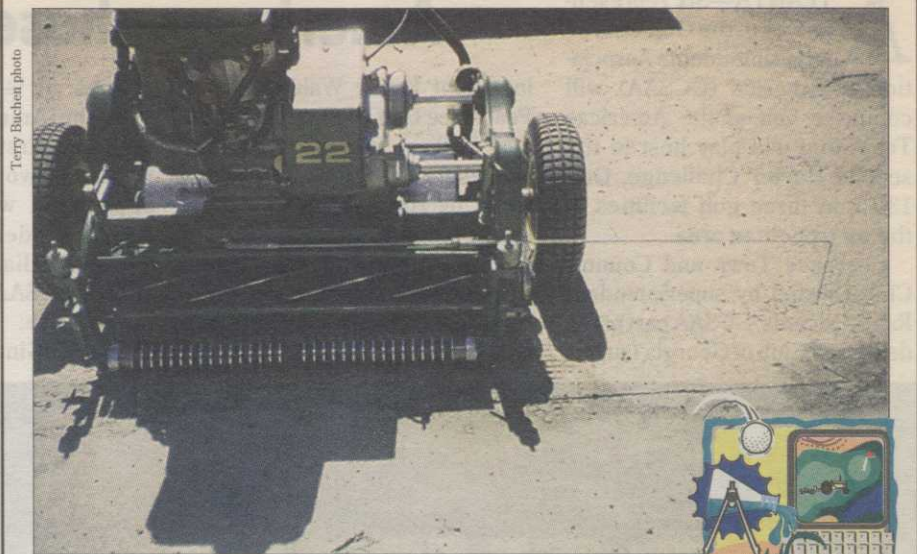
In an effort to assist in developing management strategies for mole crickets in Asia, which is one of the region's major pest problems, I'm initiating a program to receive samples of mole crickets from a number of superintendents in Asia for species identification and working out a plan to help them determine the life cycle of this pest in their region. This small effort will hopefully benefit the superintendents in this region and also help increase the scope of my own research program.

In addition, the contacts I've made result in numerous e-mail messages and letters requesting additional information. The interaction of U.S. turfgrass researchers provides Asian superintendents with additional contacts in the States.

Where do we go in the future to assist in the educational needs of superintendents in Asia? Do we build a longer-term effort to help meet some of the research

Continued on page 18

Dr. Rick L. Brandenburg is a turf entomologist at North Carolina State University.



There is no guessing about where the edge of the collar is with this unique equipment modification.



Perfect collars the easy way

By TERRY BUCHEN

BRANSON, Mo. — Cary L. Tegtmeier, a certified golf course superintendent at Holiday Hills Resort & Golf Club here, is a perfectionist — a fact that's reflected in the adjustments he and his staff have to some of their maintenance equipment. Wanting to make the collar widths more consistent, Tegtmeier's crew installed a simple guide to make the mower operators' job easier and more efficient.

"We went to our local WalMart," Tegtmeier said, "and located the longest replacement automobile telescopic radio antenna available to mount on the front of each of our walk-behind greensmowers used to mow collars. Because we obviously mow our collars clockwise and counter-clockwise, we had to make the antenna so it could flip out on either side of the mower."

They accomplished this by adding a bolt to the replacement antenna. Because the antennas were not long enough, they manufactured a slide mechanism onto which the bolt attaches and slides back and forth. The slide mechanism has a notch on either side into which the bolt locks. When it locks, it attaches to the metal safety shield in front of the mower over the top of the reel.

The antennas telescope up to 30 inches wide, which is Holiday Hills' collar width. By bending the end of the antenna 90 degrees down towards the turf, they made it easier for mower operators to see the mowed edge.

"All in all, it cost about \$10 for each antenna and about an hour's labor making the slide mechanism," Tegtmeier said.

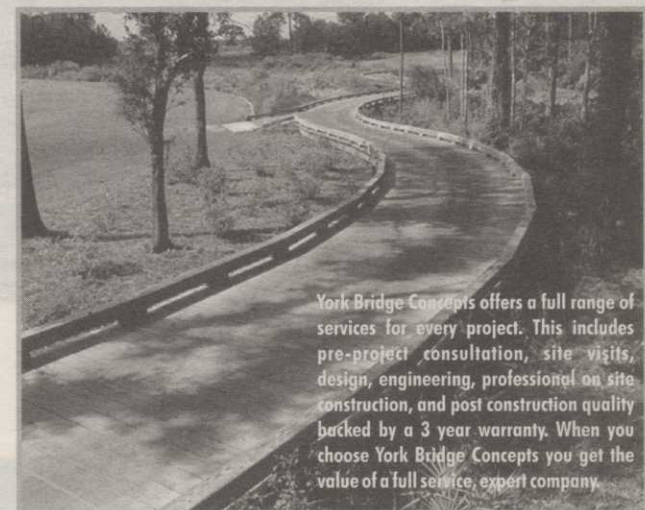
"We are very happy with our in-house idea and modification to our collar mowers as it is the little things that count, which makes a big impact in our entire operation," he added.



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