



## BRIEFS

### CORNELL OFFERS SHORT COURSES

ITHACA, N.Y. — Cornell University has announced the start of their 2002 short course season. The one-week turfgrass management short course will be held here in January and in the Lower Hudson Valley area in February. Fundamental principals of soil management, grass identification, selection, establishment and primary care will be covered. Also, a new Organic Turf Management short course will be held in late January and focus on establishing and maintaining turf relying on fewer chemical inputs. Registration forms for these courses can be obtained by contacting Joann Gruttadauro at 607-255-1792.

### GCSAA APPOINTS BORMAN

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's CEO Steve Mona has named Chuck Borman as the organization's chief operating officer. Borman, who has been the executive director of the Carolinas GCSA since 1998, had previous experience on the GCSAA staff as the director of membership and coordinating advisor. As COO, Borman will oversee GCSAA member programs and services in areas of education, research, environmental stewardship, career development, membership/chapter services, communications and publications.

### 2001 Newsmakers

## Winterkill, drought and floods dealt hard lessons in 2001

By JOEL JOYNER

HOUSTON — Mother Nature was both forgiving and unforgiving to superintendents in regions throughout the country this year. Winterkill, drought, disease, and floods dealt some hard lessons and reminded superintendents that there's only so much that can be done when faced with the unleashed force of nature.

### WINTERKILL

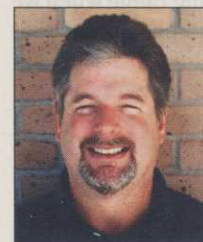
Superintendent Michael Wing at the 18-hole golf and ski resort, Sugarloaf Golf Course in Kingfield, Maine, started the 2001 season off with 14 greens severely damaged from winterkill. In the mountainous, western part of the state the golfing season is limited and soil temperatures make it a tough region to grow close-cut bentgrass.

"With a new construction course, you normally grow-in greens 12 to 18 months before play is allowed on them," said Wing. "We tried to do it in four weeks."

The course, usually open around mid-May, delayed its opening to the first of June. The greens were cultivated and

end of June to the first week of July," he said. "We got the last two back by the middle of July."

George Hamilton, agronomist at Penn State, paid a visit to the course in the spring to access the damage. "He said he had never seen anything like it," said Wing.



Randy Dayton

Fall preparations for this winter were altered slightly, mentioned Wing, but nothing radically different. "Unfortunately, I don't think there's a cure-all for this kind of damage," he said. "The best thing you can do is have a good, healthy stand of turf going into the winter. We've hardened the turf off with some high-potassium fertilizers and tried to keep any water on the surface of the greens to a minimum."

The greens were verti-drained in October and dormant seed was used in areas where there is quite a bit of *Poa annua*. "Chances are we'll be under enough cover to kill the *Poa*," explained Wing. "I've also placed permanent covers on all the greens for added protection. Hopefully, next spring, the covers will get soil temperatures up quicker to help the germination of the dormant seed."

"I've been here 18 years, and it's rare to come through the winter in real good shape," he said. "But this spring was one of the worst."

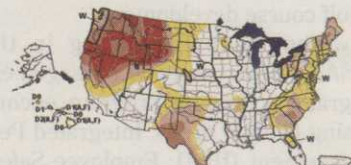
### FLORIDA DROUGHT

Florida has spent the past three years in a drought. This spring didn't look very promising to most superintendents who were faced with phase two and phase three water restrictions. However, by late summer and fall, the state was on the

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### U.S. DROUGHT MONITOR

Red, brown and yellow areas show drought-affected areas. The "bulls-eye" on Florida has disappeared this fall following a three-year period of drought.



Source: National Drought Mitigation Center, Lincoln, Neb.

overseeded a number of times, according to Wing. "With the exception of two, we had the greens back into condition by the

### 2001 Newsmakers

## WOLF-Garten striving to ready laser mower

By JOEL JOYNER

BETZDORF, Germany — WOLF-Garten introduced its prototype laser mower, the Zero, in Europe earlier this year (GCN January). The company is now refining the "revolutionary" machine in order to take the product to the worldwide marketplace.

Bringing down the price is the primary objective for the company. "The price, at the moment, is too expensive," said Hubert Bihner, manager for motorized products. "We've dis-



The "Zero" will be marketed worldwide.

cussed it with our European suppliers, and we believe that in one or two years it may be more viable.

"It's possible in that time to reduce the price from 60,000 German marks [about \$27,500] — for just the laser cutter itself — to between 10,000 to 15,000 marks [about \$4,600 to \$6,900, respectively]," Bihner said. "Once that is achieved, then we'll start to bring the machine to the market. At the moment, there's no chance because the mower would be around 100,000 marks [approximately \$45,800]."

### WORKING TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

Ten years ago, Bihner explained, costs for the same laser cutting system

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### 2001 Newsmakers

## Superintendents initiate innovative plans to get golf courses Audubon certified

By JOEL JOYNER

CHICAGO, Ill. — Audubon International provides information and guidance to help preserve wildlife habitat and protect natural resources, but superintendents are the ones who make it a reality by implementing innovative plans to make golf courses more environmentally friendly.

Superintendents fulfilled Audubon International's environmental mission this year by protecting bald eagles and creating trout spawning channels, establishing buffer zones and native areas, identifying and attracting wildlife, and sharing their environmental message with their communities.

This year has shown an impressive turn out in the number of courses striving to get



Jerry Kienast

their courses registered and certified with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP). There are now more than 300 golf courses worldwide that have met the challenging but rewarding certification process.

### SEA MARSH AT SEA PINES

Identifying wildlife and maintaining 600 acres of preserved land at the Sea Pines Plantation on Hilton Head Island, S.C., has helped superintendent Jim Cregan at the Sea Marsh course (GCN May) reach certification. The course has gone above and beyond certification requirements by having 100 percent of their landscape plans native and buffering as much as 25 percent of their shorelines.



Brian Bossert

"Members and people in the area know

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### 2001 Newsmakers

## GCSAA to launch Internet venture by year's end

By ANDREW OVERBECK

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Despite industry objections and the general unwillingness of superintendents to purchase supplies online, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America has finalized its e-commerce strategy and plans to roll out the refined Web site before the end of the year.

When the association announced its e-commerce intentions in late April, the industry and superintendents bristled at the idea that the GCSAA would profit from the venture at the expense of its members. In order to gauge response, the association held a 90-day pilot program that was followed by a series of industry feedback meetings. By late summer, the association had abandoned its net market strategy (that would have levied a percentage fee on all transactions) in favor of a more traditional storefront model that protects existing distribution channels.

"People had it in their minds that the GCSAA had already decided what they wanted

to do with e-commerce," said Bryce Gartner, senior manager for Internet services for the GCSAA, who stepped into his role during the end of the pilot program. "The industry and superintendents had opinions on where they thought we should take this. Since the pilot,



Bryce Gartner

we have changed the approach and gotten a more favorable response."

According to Gartner, the storefront model will preserve existing relationships between suppliers, distributors and superintendents.

"We are not trying to cannibalize the distribution channels or affect relationships," he said. "We are trying to take advantage of the traffic on our site and be the third party that helps our industry partners get together with buyers in a way that gets the local distributor involved

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## Foul weather

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road to recovery.

"It seems like it has been raining forever," said Kevin Downing, superintendent at the Willoughby Golf Club along the southeast coast in Stuart. "In early October, the South Florida Water Management District relaxed the water restrictions. They've pretty much rescinded all the phases of the program. Even though we didn't have any major storms this year, we had enough sporadic rainfall through the fall to relieve the pressure on Lake Okeechobee [a main reservoir in South Florida]."

A number of courses, businesses and homeowners were cited for water use violations during the restrictions. "Water control is something that will not permanently go away in Florida," said Downing. "I think the drought situation was positive overall in getting awareness levels up, especially with individuals learning the capabilities of their watering systems."

"It also helps promote legislation to regulate water use for the future of the state – not only golf," he said. "Golf course usage represents a little less than two percent of water usage in this area, according to the water management district. We're just more visible."

## Zero mower

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alone ranged to as much as \$160,000. One of the biggest issues in bringing down the price has been working to focalize the laser using power efficiently.

"It requires a lot of power at the moment," said Bihner, "about six to 10 kilowatts to cut the grass. We're working to bring it down to around one kilowatt. It will make it a very small and efficient system."

The Zero mower will be marketed worldwide, according to Bihner. "But we'll start it off in Europe first to solve any issues with safety regulations," he said.

Developed on the chassis of a Mercedes Smart Cabriolet—a two-seat convertible—the laser mower comes with Internet capabilities and is approved for use on public roads. The machine is known as the Zero because of the vehicle's features. There's zero noise emitted because grass is cut by lasers rather than rotating blades. There is zero disposal since grass clippings are chopped and dried in a siltidry process and redistributed to the turf as tiny particles. There are zero exhaust emissions from its environmentally-friendly engine with a catalytic afterburning of fuel. Also, there are zero problems with thatch and mold formations due to the special drying process. ■

Most of the state received at least normal rainfall for the summer, according to assistant state climatologist David Zierden at the Climate Prediction Center in Tallahassee. "In north Florida and the panhandle, we had Tropical Storm Allison come through and drop nearly 12 inches of rain in the Tallahassee area," he said. "Shortly after that, Tropical Storm Barry came through with another strong rainfall event. On

top of those storms, we've had our normal afternoon thunderstorms."

The only lingering effects of the drought is that, in some areas of the state, aquifers and lakes fed from aquifers remain below normal. "They're not at the critical levels we had this spring," said Zierden, "but they still bear watching. The worst areas for that are in north-central Florida, like Ocala and

Gainesville."

In October, the state entered its dry season. "That's just the normal climate," explained Zierden. "The peninsula, from about Ocala southward, stays fairly dry averaging two to three inches of rain a month. It's certainly not time to let the guard down and stop water conservation measures."

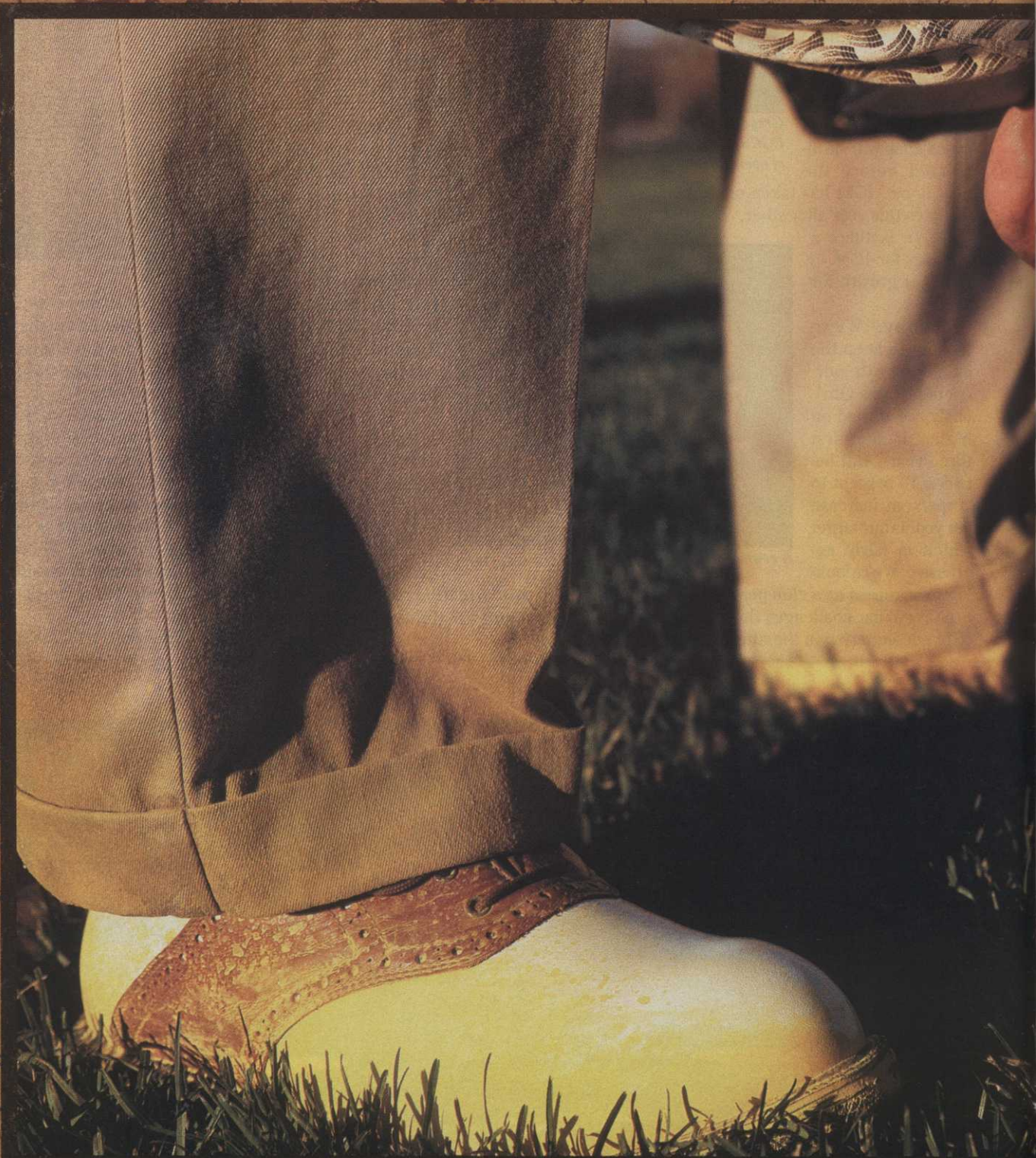
The phenomenon of El Nino and La Nina effect rainfall pat-



Tropical Storm Allison left a mess at the Northgate CC in Houston.

terns in the state, said the climatologist. "They were the main

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**THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO SAY ABOUT  
HERBICIDES THAT STAIN. AND**



# Mother Nature

Continued from page 12

cause of the drought," Zierden said. "All that's over, and ocean temperatures in the Pacific are back to normal. From that, we expect normal rainfall for at least the next nine to 12 months."

## HOUSTON FLOODING

In the Houston area, Tropical Storm Allison landed a punishing blow dumping nearly three feet of rain that stirred deadly floods. The damage and extensive clean-up process was something superintendent Randy Dayton at the Northgate Country Club will not soon forget.

"We've had weed pressure and insects –



Hoses and squeegees were required to remove layers of silt from greens at the Northgate CC.

especially mole crickets – on the course all summer that got washed in with the silt and infested areas covered by the flooding," said Dayton. "We used MSMA [herbicide] to help control the crabgrass and goosegrass. All we could do was keep trying to suppress them."

Trimec was applied to areas with broad-leaf outbreaks, but grassy weeds were the bigger challenge. "The cooler weather is helping us out now, but there were locations this summer we had to battle it out with weeds. There's a weed called Johnson-grass which is commonly used along roadsides, and we had that all over," described Dayton. "It grows so fast it can look like corn growing out on the golf course. It took a couple of applications of MSMA to control, surprisingly. It's a really tough weed."

The course, situated along the banks of Cypress Creek, lost some large areas to erosion. As much as 10 feet to 15 feet of property slid down into the creek, according to Dayton. "The flood washed away ground underneath the creek banking that we had not noticed before," he said. "There wasn't much we could do about it. Areas just started dropping off into the creek 30 feet below."

The course was flooded again in October following a storm that delivered five inches of rain. "There was no damage, but we're constantly seeing more and more erosion," said Dayton. "I don't think the course can take much more. We suspect that with the increase in development, particularly in the western parts of Houston, it takes less and less rain before the creek starts overflowing."

"The Cypress Creek watershed, once prairie land that could absorb the water, is now rooftops, roads and parking lots," Dayton explained. "I think the flooding here will just keep getting worse."

The longest lasting effects from Allison was the damage caused to the pump house. "We fixed everything visually to the pump station, but we ended up with internal problems with the control system," Dayton said. "It was a good two months before our irrigation system was back to normal. With a Houston summer, we ended up seeing the effects of the flood on areas that weren't even flooded." ■

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