

Members Won't Pay for Luxury of Experimentation

**A Superintendent Tells Why He and His Colleagues
Have to See New Products "Proved" Before They Buy Them**

By William Smart

Dutchess G & CC, Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

In his Turf Roundup article, "Accurate Testing," (Golfdom, January, p. 56), Fred Grau made this statement: "In many instances it was clearly evident that teachings based on research had not been put into practice and probably had not even been comprehended."

I'm the last who would be critical of Fred, but nevertheless I feel that a supt's views must at times differ from those of a person who isn't directly responsible to 300 members for the conditions of a course. So, I'd like to express some of my thoughts which, I believe, may be backed up by many supts:

- Research has given us a great deal — 2-4-D, chlordan, better fertilizers, etc. Many of the materials I use today were literally unknown a few years ago. But, as Fred points out, research has many variables. Thus, we supts. can't do anything else but go slow in accepting new products or methods. We can't afford to be experimenters, especially if research has been carried out under conditions that don't apply to our courses.

Test vs Combat Conditions

- Two years ago I had occasion to inspect a putting green plot into which had been put a lot of thought and hard work. Just about every known fertilizer, insecticide, fungicide, etc. had been tried out on it along with a dozen types of grasses. The results of the various tests were interesting and certainly not without value. But the area was and had been subject to little traffic and was mowed only two or three times a week at a very high cut. All the products and grasses performed well under these conditions, but if they had to undergo heavy, daily traffic, who can say for certain how well they would hold up. Even if I am accused of impeding progress, I can't buy them completely considering the conditions under which I have to maintain my putting surfaces. There are still those 300 members and my green chmn. to whom I have to account.

- Don't get me wrong! Whenever possible I use new products and methods. I haven't stuck my head in a sandtrap to the extent that I don't think these things aren't solutions to many of my problems. Every supt. owes it to himself and his club to keep abreast of new developments. If nothing else, he has to keep up with the times in self defense. His green chmn. and many of his members are interested in turf innovations. Some of them try them or, at least, read about them. When I'm confronted with some of their questions or comments about new products or a new type of grass, I had better have some intelligent answers ready or I am going to be downgraded in their estimation.

Try It Just Once

- From my experience, the research variables, that were mentioned before, aren't nearly as much of a menace as the salesman who would have you try his product "on just one green." He can take comfort in the fact that if it doesn't work, it isn't going to affect him. But with the supt. it's a different proposition.

About ten years ago I was persuaded by a salesman to try a high analysis inorganic on nine of my greens in midsummer. He assured me I wouldn't have any trouble if I worked the material into the turf with the back of a rake and then watered it in. The salesman was so convinced that I would get good results that he offered me the material for nothing as a final inducement to try it. I finally gave in. That was on Monday. By Wednesday, I had nine very sorrowful looking greens. Every footprint, every spreader wheel track came out brown. The greens weren't lost, fortunately, but I almost was — by the club. But how is anyone to know if things your regular greens as a proving ground; and never use an inorganic in a dry application during hot weather.

But I'll say this for the salesman, the product and the experiment: Where the inorganic was used under the same conditions at other clubs, it worked out fine.

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Members Won't Pay

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But how is anyone going to know things are going to work out as they should or adversely? The supt. certainly isn't in position to take chances, to experiment, if there is a possibility that the variables exist.

Use A Small Plot

• What experimenting I do is carried out on a small plot. It really catches hell. I just about finished it one year with a crabgrass killer which was first applied at half the recommended dosage and, on a graduated scale, finally at three times the recommended dosage. The last shot took all the crab, weeds and turf. It was a month before the bent started coming back.

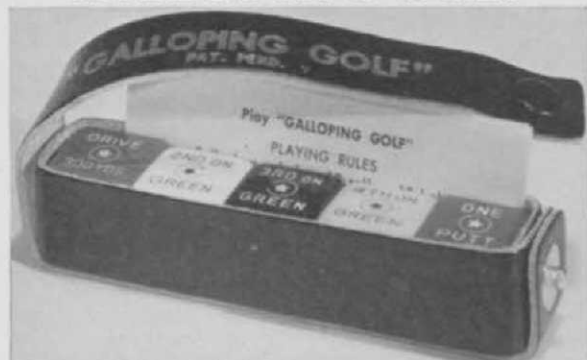
• Researchers and turf experts, to the contrary, it is wise to go easy on any product or method with which you are not familiar. Either may work well for the fellow across town, but it won't always work for you. Why? Nobody, and that includes some salesmen and turf specialists for whom I have the greatest respect, can tell me.

There is a well known fungicide that

has many boosters in our part of the country. Most supts. have had good results with it and only a handful, one salesman tells me, have been hurt by it. I'm one of the handful. I did a great deal of checking before I put the blame on this particular fungicide for damage done to some of my greens. I finally came to the conclusion that, due to some kind of chemical reaction, the product liberated stored nitrogen that caused a lush, tender growth that wilted almost as fast as it grew. It wasn't possible to convince the salesman or his company of this. They maintained that it had to be something else, and let it go at that. Since there was a shadow of doubt, I think they should have investigated. There can be preventive as well as productive research.

• From what I have said thus far, it appears that I am the "All-American Out" so far as new products and their applications are concerned. I don't want to leave with that impression. In the past few years I have tried a new type fertilizer with excellent results; I have combined two kinds of fungicides, at the suggestion of a turf specialist, and found that the combination worked out perfectly. I was one of the first to use wetting agents

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and I've had a great deal of success with them; 2-4-D and chlordanes have been winners since the first day I tried them.

Can't Gamble on Variables

The point I want to make is that as a supt., I can't gamble with the variables that Fred Grau has mentioned. If I do, that may make me a hero in the eyes of the research people, but I'll be an unemployed one. Salesmen and others in the turf business have accused some supts, including myself, of "resisting the new." I don't deny the charge. But I'll counter it by saying that I have been hurt upon a few occasions by new products and it's only natural that I want to see the new thing proved before I go overboard on it. My 300 members are paying me to be pretty consistent in picking the right horse.

Glenn Morris, Former NGF Director, Dies in Accident

Glenn H. Morris, for many years one of the most active and popular figures in the golf business, died in the Barstow (Cal.) Community Hospital following fatal injury in an automobile accident April 3rd. As the first executive director of the National Golf Foundation, Glenn's experience, enthusiasm and foresight contributed greatly to the successful development of the Foundation's market development program. He joined the Foundation after serving as general manager of the L. A. Young Golf Co., previously having been advertising manager of Wilson Sporting Goods Co. For the past 14 years Glenn operated the Portal Motel, Lone Pine, Calif., which he and his wife owned. He is survived by his wife Olivia, daughter, Marilyn Silverthorne, son, Earl and his father John Morris.



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