

As a full-blooded Turfhead, I don't really like winter. However, I don't mind the beginning of the winter because it's a chance to catch up on important things — like sleep and food — of which the dog days of summer and the hustle of fall deprive us.

Although the warm-season gang doesn't get the same break that others do when winter arrives, the season presents a time for a lot of superintendents to catch up on things they put off during busy times. We might not like the cold weather, but winter is good for us — it's kind of like the "eating your veggies" of the business.

Turf managers' minds need to be fed, and winter is when you get all kinds of educational food. By now, everyone should know that staying abreast of developments in the field is essential to great golf course management. I'm glad to see all the education programs planned by various organizations — university, commercial or otherwise — and the effort that goes into getting information to superintendents.

While the GCSAA may think it has cornered the market on education, someone is going to do a seminar near you that will contain a few gems for you to use. You just have to show up.

Several groups of superintendents I know use the slower time to get together for breakfast once a week. When I was younger, the entrée of choice was the Bloody Mary on Saturday mornings, but that was the extreme of winter boredom at work.

Certainly, there isn't time for organized weekly get-togethers in the season, but I'd like to see this kind of thing year-round. Informal turfgrass talk is good, and there's always something to be gained. It's not hard to pick up the phone and make camaraderie happen.

You know the old saying, "Failing to plan is ... blah, blah, blah." I must say I'm stunned at how many superintendents I see not getting their acts together until the last minute. Maybe it's because we've grown accustomed to so much changing of jobs and changing of management at golf facilities these days that planning ahead doesn't pay — but that might

But What Do *You* Do in the Winter?

BY DAVE WILBER



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also just be a weak excuse. Budgeting, purchasing, staff training, equipment replacement and management and about a zillion other things that you don't want to do in the heat of battle should be easier this time of year.

From an agronomic standpoint, the weather may change your moves during the different seasons, but there's nothing wrong with sketching out the broad strokes and picking the colors of what your program is going to look like. This does not make you a cookbook-type grass grower; it makes you more efficient and prepared.

Now, for the most important part of Wilber's Winter Lesson: Your friends and family will always miss you as long as you stay in the golf business. They miss you in the summer, especially if you work on summer holidays. They miss you in the fall when you're busy setting up for a prosperous season next year.

But now the days are short, and there's no time like the present to make sure you include time away dedicated to your loved ones. A superintendent who missed his daughter's college graduation because of an event at his course in the spring told me that he didn't feel guilty about taking his daughter and wife on a nice vacation to the beach for Christmas. Sounds easy, but you would be surprised at how many people in our business miss those opportunities.

What will your winter bring? Even if you are like me and don't relish winter, the season can be your spinach — and you need your spinach. If you do some planning, it could bring you an incredible 2001.

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