

When you drop a cat, it always lands on its feet. On the other hand, when you drop toast, it inevitably lands butter-side down. That got me thinking about how we could apply those principles to managing your golf courses.

So I came up with this great new idea. It's simple: strap buttered toast to the back of a cat, with the butter facing up. The two will hover, spinning like a new style string-trimmer, about .125 inches above the ground. Buttered-Toast Cat Mowers are going to be the new thing, and I'm sure that every Turf-head is going to want at least a dozen of them to produce the best-mowed greens anyone has ever seen.

Absurd? Absolutely. Yet nearly every day, I see superintendents victimized by strange ideas because they can't look away. They may not be as sublime as my Spinning Buttered-Toast Cat Mower (I've trademarked this, so don't get any ideas of stealing it), but many of these things aren't far from being as kooky.

In a competitive business, getting ahead is part of not being eaten by the sharks. But dang it, you've gotta think just a bit before you jump.

We've survived yet another GCSAA trade show and once again there were things being offered to us that we couldn't live without. One wonders how we ever grew grass in the first place.

I'm going to consider gathering a test group of superintendents next year and giving them 100 hours of subliminal messages and mind-control videotapes where the key message is, "Just say no."

I'm certainly not saying that you shouldn't try new things. In fact, time and again, I see the innovative types always have amazing results. But some things are just plain obvious. I always follow a simple rule: If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Once, a superintendent called me and was more excited than anyone I had talked to that year. He was sure he had found his own Nirvana. It was clear to him that no

Just Say No to Outrageous Ideas

BY DAVE WILBER



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one else in the whole world was as smart as he was. He had just had a visit from a company representative who told him that for no money at all he could have a new computer, a satellite dish, access to the world's greatest database of turfgrass information, free e-mail and a ton of other things that was sure to make him the best in the world. He still hasn't been able to get e-mail sent to that address.

Strange-but-true soil amendments seem to always make the you-can't-grow-grass-without-this-stuff list.

I'm sorry, but I just can't write a letter helping you justify adding an extra \$250,000 to the construction budget for the new product that will be sure to make your bunkers perfect, no matter what sand you use or how you rake it.

I'm pretty sure that I've seen enough in the market of new cup cutters. Hydraulic, pneumatic, bionic, anodized, blessed-by-a-pro-golfer and 100 other absurd claims have shown me clearly that cutting the cup is on way too many people's minds.

I'd like to find the marketing genius who helped one company and then seemingly many more put a pretty voice on the phone to call superintendents and convince them that her brand of yellow nylon rope is heads and tails above anyone else's. After all, the Buttered-Toast Cat Mower is definitely my idea and in need of some sexy spokesmodeling.

Now if I could just figure out how to get the Buttered-Toast Cat Mower to predict the weather and add algae from Mars to soil, I could get some serious trade-show booth space — and change the world.

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