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## Off The Fringe

# Investing in Tomorrow

BAYER, DEERE COURT THE NEXT GENERATION OF SUPERINTENDENTS

By David Frabotta, Senior Editor

Assistant superintendents think this school is cool. Almost twice as many of them visited Bayer Environmental Science's research facility in Clayton, N.C., this year for Green Start Academy, a continuing education and networking event, than attended the inaugural event held last year.

Education sessions for the event, held in October and geared specifically toward assistants, focused on golf course care and maintenance, professional development, industry regulations, turf science and recent research. Bayer and John Deere sponsored the event.

"Bayer and John Deere recognize the greater role assistants are playing in the day-to-day management of golf courses," said Michael Smith, assistant superintendent of Three Crowns Golf Club in Casper, Wyo. "The advances in science and technology require those of us in the turf business to constantly update our knowledge. A strong turf education goes a long way, but I have found that the experience gained in the work place, along with keeping up with the new products and techniques, is crucial in good management practices."

Irrigation was the topic for debut speaker Grady Miller, Ph.D., a professor at North Carolina State University. With the Southeast and Southwest now measuring droughts in decades, water seems to be on the mind of every golf course operator.

"We're experiencing one of the worst droughts that North Carolina has ever seen on record," Miller said.

Regarding water, Miller said growth rate, evapotranspiration rate, length of growing season, soil type, grass type, rain, intensity of cultural practices and available soil moisture all influence the amount of water needed on a golf course.



Assistant superintendents play Cornhole while waiting for an evening barbecue.

With water shortages now plaguing many parts of the country, effluent water use is becoming more common. But it's not always in the turf's best interest.

"You test soil all the time, but you had better test the water, too, because it has the ability to change the quality of your turf," Miller said.

USGA Green Section agronomist Dave Oatis, director of the Northeast Region, said water management provides an opportunity for burgeoning superintendents to differentiate themselves within the profession.

"Effective water management is always the key to long-term success," Oatis said. "There's a common thread among the best superintendents: They are the ones who spend the extra time and effort to properly manage water."

Attendees also heard and learned from: Dave Fearis, director of membership for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America; certified superintendent Bruce Williams, director of golf and grounds management at Los Angeles Country Club; certified superintendent Bob Farren, grounds and golf course manager at Pinehurst Resort; David Spak, biological development manager for Bayer Environmental Science; and Nick Hamon, director of development and technical services for Bayer Environmental Science. ■