

Are YOU Fiscally Fit?



36 How to Tackle the Annual Budget ... And Enjoy it!

It's not as horrible as you might think. Here are some tips to make the process ... shall we dare say ... fun.

42 Post-Patent Exploits

Superintendents turn to generics to save money.

50 On History or a Hunch?

Superintendents discuss how they budget for pest management.

60 Sand Dollars

Golf course maintenance budgets get bigger because of bunker maintenance boom.

66 You And Your Machines

It helps to consider the following items when tackling the "Equipment Maintenance Repairs" line item.



How to Tackle the Annual Budget *... And Enjoy It!*

It's not as horrible as you might think. Here are some tips to make the process ... shall we dare say ... fun

BY RON FURLONG, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

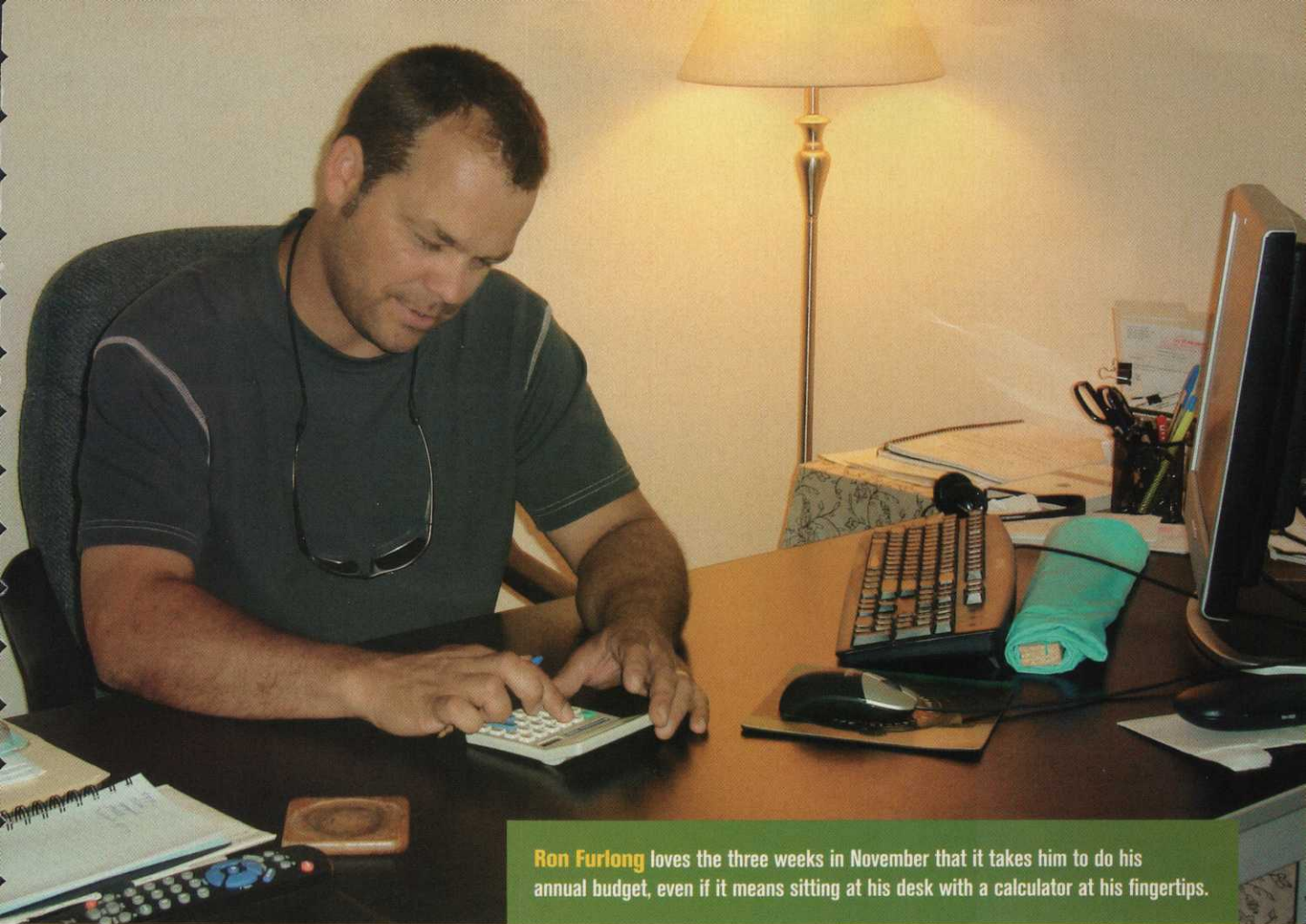
I have a few little quirks, if you will, that my wife has chosen to fondly refer to as my OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) behavior.

Things like, I need the house spotless at all times. That's not really all that strange unless you have two small children like we do. And then there's my need to have perfectly clean windows at all times. I Windex the windows of the house, inside and out, three times a year (which I happen to think is not nearly enough). Then there's my incessant quest at all times for organization.

Here, with the organization thing, I must admit I'm a bit compulsive. I drive my wife batty with notes and calendars and plans and messages. I've actually been known to leave small sticky notes in the bathroom telling her where the larger sticky notes with the real messages can be found in the kitchen.

It is, perhaps — no, it is definitely because of this organizational obsession — that I may be the only superintendent who not only looks forward to but actually enjoys tackling the annual budget each fall. I look forward to it as much as preparing the course for the members' invitational in the spring or finally being able to aerify the poor greens in late summer.

I do my budget in November each year. Usually it takes about three weeks to complete it. I love those three weeks. I even love the couple of weeks leading up to it, almost like anticipating a vacation as it draws near. Other superintendents to whom I've confided this dark secret think I'm nuts, which is probably fair. How could anyone actually enjoy the budget process? Why would you look forward to something so tedious and, well, boring?



Ron Furlong loves the three weeks in November that it takes him to do his annual budget, even if it means sitting at his desk with a calculator at his fingertips.

First off, I don't find the budget process as tedious or boring. (However, let me make it perfectly clear that if I did the budget as a profession, 365 days a year, I'd hate it.) The main reason I enjoy it is that it is so different from anything else I do during the course of a year. I enjoy it as a diversion. It comes for me at the perfect time of the year, right after all the fairways have been aerified and top-dressed and just as the winter rains hit the Seattle area. November is the wettest month in a very wet climate. It is a great time of year to find an excuse to stay in the office and immerse myself in something like the budget.

Second, I enjoy the budget process because of my love for organization. What amazes me about it is that I can take everything I do in the course of a year and give it all a home somewhere on an 8.5-inch by 11-inch sheet of paper. Golf course maintenance is anything but cut and dry, as we all know, but every once in a while it's kind of nice to just consider it that way, as though it were something that could be anticipated and categorized in neat rows and columns.

Once a year it's nice to simply consider a seasonal employee as just a dollar figure. Only during that one time of year will he or she be just that. The rest of the year they are a face with a life and tardy problems, time-off requests, golf car speeding problems and, well, everything that comes with it. Don't get me wrong, I need seasonal help just as much as anyone, but just for that one time of year, it's nice to have them simply as a monthly dollar figure.

So, putting the compulsive disorder organizational freak thing aside for just a moment, let me share with you a short list of things that might make the entire process of doing your annual budget slightly more palatable. You might not get the perverse enjoyment out of it that I do, but you just might save a few bucks on Tylenol.

■ **Make a game out of it.**

Challenge yourself to be more prepared and have the most thorough budget you've ever had. Consider yourself in a competition. The

Continued on page 40



Think of the money that you're spending as your own money. This is a good philosophy anytime you're purchasing something for the golf course, but even more so at budget time.

Continued from page 37

best budget wins a trip to Hawaii. And, after you're done, if you feel you gave it your best and did a good job, give yourself the trip to Hawaii.

■ Don't procrastinate.

Waiting to tackle the budget just before your deadline is never a good idea. Start jotting down notes at least a couple of weeks before you begin the actual budgeting process.

■ Pick some brains.

There is no one who can relate to your budgeting experience like fellow superintendents, so don't hesitate to call them to ask them for assistance.

■ Communicate with the powers that be.

Get a feel for what the spenders (owner or board member or general manager or whomever) really want for the next year. Do they want the course to keep improving, or would they prefer a year of status quo to keep

spending in check for a bit? Often you can get a percentage increase dialed in even before you start the budget.

■ Get some ammunition.

When attempting to increase your budget, it is often prudent to have some cold hard facts to back up your requests. Show why you need to start plant growth regulator applications on the fairways, or increase wetting agent use, or why your equipment technician needs an assistant. Know the status of all leases and payments. Know what equipment is coming off the books and make a plan as to how you're going to replace it. Make sure to have three or four quotes for every piece of equipment you want.

■ Give yourself a break.

Don't try to do the budget in one or two massive sittings. Do a couple of hours a day at most. Keep yourself fresh and your mind sharp.

■ Find a quiet space.

This is unlikely to be in front of the television at home. It's even challenging for a superintendent to have any consistent quiet time in the office. It's not a bad idea to let everyone know to go through your assistant with any questions for a few hours so you can free yourself up to do the budget.

■ Consider the money you are spending to be your money.

This is a good philosophy anytime you're purchasing something for the golf course, but even more so at budget time.

Like I said before, I don't know if following these suggestions will actually make you look forward to doing your next budget, but it might just make it a little less horrible than normal.

And even if it doesn't, remember this: After you've finished, you have another year before you have to think about it again. ■

Furlong, superintendent of Avalon Golf Club in Burlington, Wash., can be reached at rfurlong5@gmail.com. But don't e-mail him in November when he's doing his budget.



Post-Patent Exploits

Superintendents turn to generics to save money

BY DAVID FRABOTTA
SENIOR EDITOR

The incredible shrinking budget. It's the reason superintendents are using more post-patent chemicals.

About two-thirds of superintendents apply generic pesticides to their golf courses, and about one-third spend half of their total chemical budget on post-patent products, according to a 2006 *Golfdom* survey of 495 superintendents (for methodology, see page 48).

Of those who use generic pesticides, 93 percent say the primary reason is cost.

"My responsibility as a manager is to take a look at this from a business standpoint of the financial responsibility of the club," says Chris Gray, director of golf course operations at the Marvel Golf Club at Kentucky Lake in

Benton, Ky. "If I can get the same protection for \$25,000 or \$30,000 less, then we're obligated to take a look at that."

Post-patent herbicides have been used for some time now, but superintendents have a real opportunity to save money by using generic alternatives of higher-priced name-brand fungicides. Of those who use post-patent fungicides, almost one-third spend at least 50 percent of their fungicide budgets on generic products, according to the *Golfdom* survey. And trend data suggest they will use more each year if they believe generic products can perform as well as their name-brand counterparts (see chart, page 43).

More than 60 percent of respondents said they increased their use of post-patent products at least 25 percent from 2004 to 2005



Of those superintendents who use generic pesticides, 93 percent say the primary reason is cost.

Generic Fungicide Use

In 2006, we asked superintendents, what percentage do you plan to increase your generic fungicide use? Here's how they responded:

- **29.4%** of superintendents said they plan to increase usage by 10%.
- **16.7%** of superintendents said they plan to increase usage by 20%.
- **11.2%** of superintendents said they plan to increase usage by 30%.
- **10.3%** of superintendents said they plan to increase usage by 40%.
- **12.1%** of superintendents said they plan to increase usage by 50%.
- **4.8%** of superintendents said they plan to increase usage by 60%.
- **4.8%** of superintendents said they plan to increase usage by 70%.
- **4.2%** of superintendents said they plan to increase usage by 80%.
- **3.6%** of superintendents said they plan to increase usage by 90%.
- **2.7%** of superintendents said they plan to increase usage by 100%.

(see top chart, page 46). Nearly 50 percent said they believe generics are as good or better than the original brand (see bottom chart, page 46).

"I would say they are just as good as the name brands," says Doug Terrell, the certified superintendent of Deer Brook Golf Club in Shelby, N.C.

Terrell has been using generics for about three years on all 18 greens in the transition zone. His modest budget of \$350,000 was the main reason he switched to generics, and he estimates he saves about 10 percent to 15 percent versus the price of name-brand products.

Terrell's use exemplifies a growing number of superintendents willing to use generic products on their precious greens.

Many superintendents reason that if they are willing to give their children generic pharmaceuticals, then why not their putting greens?

Tees and fairways long have received post-patent products to help mitigate costs over the large-acreage portions of the golf course. But ever-increasing budget constraints and well-proven fungicide formulations of generic products has made superintendents willing to use them on their most treasured turf as well.

Chlorothalonil and iprodione are among the chemistries that have been off patent long enough in different generic formulations to establish a good track record, and many

superintendents are happy with their respective performances.

Jim Tollefson, certified superintendent
Continued on page 46

It's crucial to test generic products to gauge how different formulations might vary in different climates and locations.

BUGGED BY PESTS? Get to the root of the problem!

Weed out your turf care problems with

Scotts PROFESSIONAL IDENTIFICATION GUIDES



Quickly and easily identify and diagnose pests, diseases and weeds with Scotts® Identification Guides.

Used by lawn care professionals throughout the world, Scotts® Identification Guides feature full color photos and illustrations that accompany comprehensive, easy-to-read text.

Contact Scotts® today at www.scottssti.com to order these invaluable resources.



THE SCOTTS COMPANY LLC
14111 Scottslawn Road
Marysville, Ohio 43041
Phone: 800-221-1760, ext. 800-7429
Fax: 937-645-2590
www.scottssti.com



© 2007 The Scotts Company LLC. World rights reserved.

"Until you put [a generic product] on your golf course yourself, you won't know if it will be good or bad for your spray program."

- CHRIS GRAY

Comparing Generic Chemical Usage from 2004 to 2005

- 6.4% of superintendents said they increased usage by 100%.
- 5.2% of superintendents said they increased usage by 75%.
- 17.3% of superintendents said they increased usage by 50%.
- 32.7% of superintendents said they increased usage by 25%.
- 33.9% of superintendents reported no change in usage.
- 3.0% of superintendents said they decreased usage by 25%.
- 0.6% of superintendents said they decreased usage by 50%.
- 0.6% of superintendents said they decreased usage by 75%.
- 0.3% of superintendents said they decreased usage by 100%.

Continued from page 43

of A-Ga-Ming Golf Course in Kewadin, Mich., has used post-patent products on his entire golf course since 1994. He says he saves about 20 percent in his fungicide budget versus buying name-brand products.

But it's crucial to test generic products to gauge how different formulations might vary in different climates and locations. For superintendents who deal with several microclimates, it's a good idea to conduct a few different test sites around the property any time new chemicals of any kind are tried on turf.

"We've had great success for many years, so I don't see any problem at all," Tollefson says. "But before I used any of them, we did a couple tests over a month to six weeks. We go right down the middle of the green to see

if there is any difference between brand A and the generic, and if we don't see any difference, then we'll usually go with the generic because prices are usually substantially less."

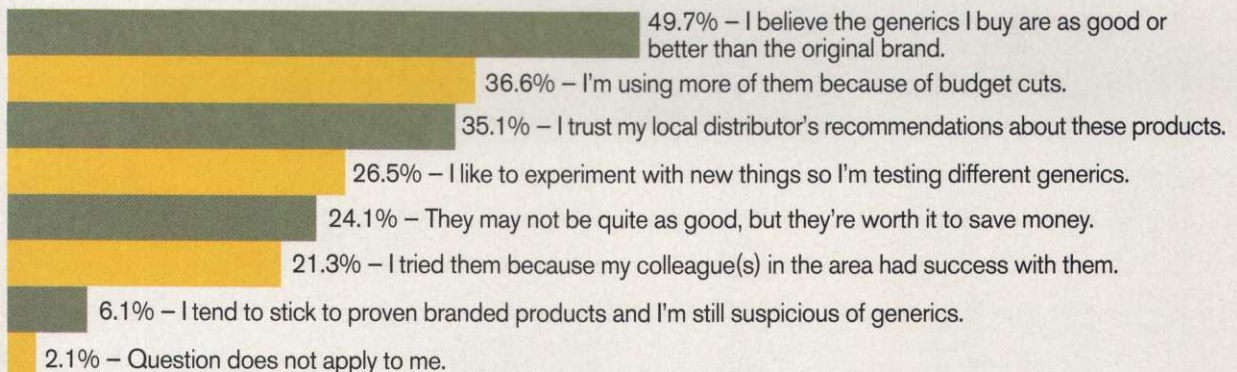
Gray says he uses generics for about 25 percent of his products on his bluegrass course.

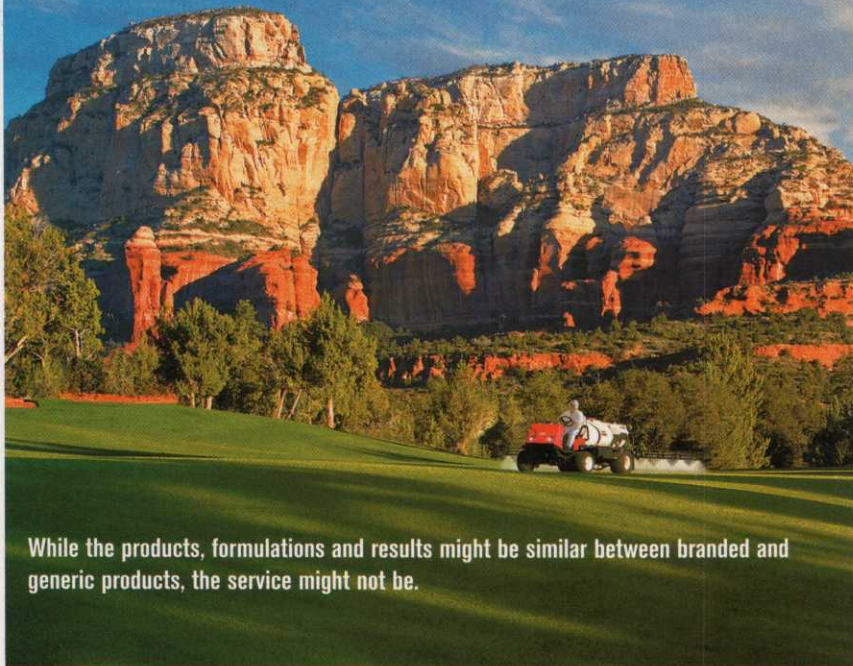
"The way things happen at university tests or your colleagues' golf courses down the road might be completely different," Gray says. "Until you put [a generic product] on your golf course yourself, you won't know if it will be good or bad for your spray program."

Gray says it's important to experiment not only for efficacy, but to make sure you're putting down the same application rate on the greens to compare apples to apples.

He says his program probably saves about 15 percent to 20 percent on the products he

Why Use Generics?





While the products, formulations and results might be similar between branded and generic products, the service might not be.

buys, but it could be a lot more if he had a bentgrass golf course.

While the products, formulations and results might be similar between branded and generic products, the service might not be.

Post-patent formulators don't have the research and technical expertise typically found with larger chemical developers, sources say. That means if you're accustomed to lobbing a call into a company for guidance or diagnostic assistance, you're probably not going to get that type of service from generic suppliers.

"The brands are definitely better with service," says Eric J. Feldhusen, superintendent of Persimmon Country Club in Gresham, Ore. "You can get a hold of company reps. If I'm dealing with disease on my greens, it's worth the extra price."

So most superintendents hedge their bets by purchasing their generic products through trusted and reputable distributors. It was a saving grace for Tollefson a few years ago.

"We've only been burned one time," he says. "After several years of using the product, we think they did a different formulation. We ended up having the distributor take the product back, but it's

the only time in 13 years. I don't know how good of support we would have had from the company that actually made the product, but if you have a good distributor, it shouldn't be a problem."

But large chemical companies with branded products give more than just product guarantees and help with disease diagnosis. They also offer continuing education opportunities via product training seminars and sponsorships of professional association meetings. They're also the only ones conducting research and development, which helps build the foundation for future turfgrass maintenance programs.

So there is some concern among superintendents that widespread adoption of post-patent chemicals could force longstanding sponsors to moderate their industry support.

"It really comes down to three different areas when I'm evaluating between generic and branded," Gray says. "No. 1: effectiveness of the chemical. Am I going to get the same amount of coverage and protection with a generic that I normally get with a branded product? No. 2 is price. And No. 3 is support, which is kind

Continued on page 48

IR

HONOR THE GAME.

START EARLY. WORK LATE. IT DOESN'T MIND AT ALL. Introducing the new Carryall Turf 252 with the exclusive IQ Plus System.™ With IQ Plus you don't have to plan your day around the life of your battery. The high output charger, controller, onboard computer and battery system give you fast charging — and superior power and range. How can we help your operation succeed? 1.800.CLUBCAR

Club Car

www.clubcar.com



Continued from page 47

of sticky because it has to do with not only my support if I have a problem here, but also industry support.

"If everyone goes to the generics, then the companies who traditionally have supported the industry are going to need to back off of that," Gray says. "So there could be some

far-reaching effects. It makes you think when you are making a purchase about the effects to the overall industry. Some people don't see those far-reaching effects, and some only see the far-reaching effects."

But could those far-reaching effects be academic in an era of smaller budgets and heightened expectations for golf course conditions?

"The brands are definitely better with service. ... If I'm dealing with disease on my greens, it's worth the extra price."

- ERIC J. FELDHUSEN

Not all superintendents can give all the issues the same weight when considering which products to buy.

"The industry support is an issue," Terrell says. "Unfortunately, I'm in a situation where I need to do my job as cheap as I can, and that's the main reason we switched." ■

patented **impermeable** protection • **ripstop** reinforcement

an impermeable barrier
between your turf & the winter elements!

greenjacket®

- Minimizes temperature fluctuations & protects against ice damage, crown hydration and desiccation.
- Lightweight and durable—years of easy installation & storage.

for more details and free samples
GreenJacket.com or 888-786-2683

millions of square feet of turf protected • see photos & research results online

2007 Empire State Green Industry Show

November 13-15, 2007

Rochester Riverside Convention Center
Rochester, NY

For more information visit our web site:

www.nysta.org

or call (800) 873-8873 or (518) 783-1229

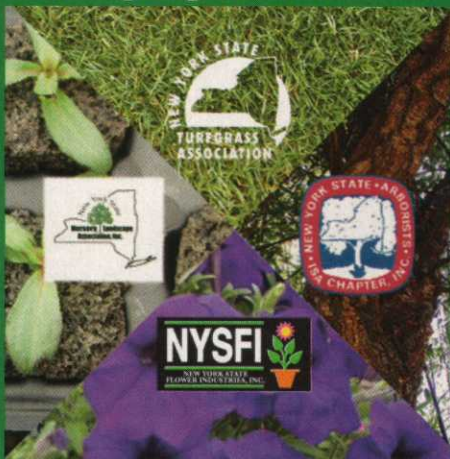
**43 NYSDEC
Credits Offered!**

**1.85 GCSAA
Education Points!**

**1.85 STMA
CEUs Offered!**

NYSTA Annual Meeting

Growing Together...



Growing Stronger

Research Updates

Buy 3 - Get 1 FREE
Trade Show Passes

Trade Show Demonstrations

NYSTA New Member
Orientation

Green Industry Careers

Comprehensive Professional
Development Program
Exclusively for the
Green Industry

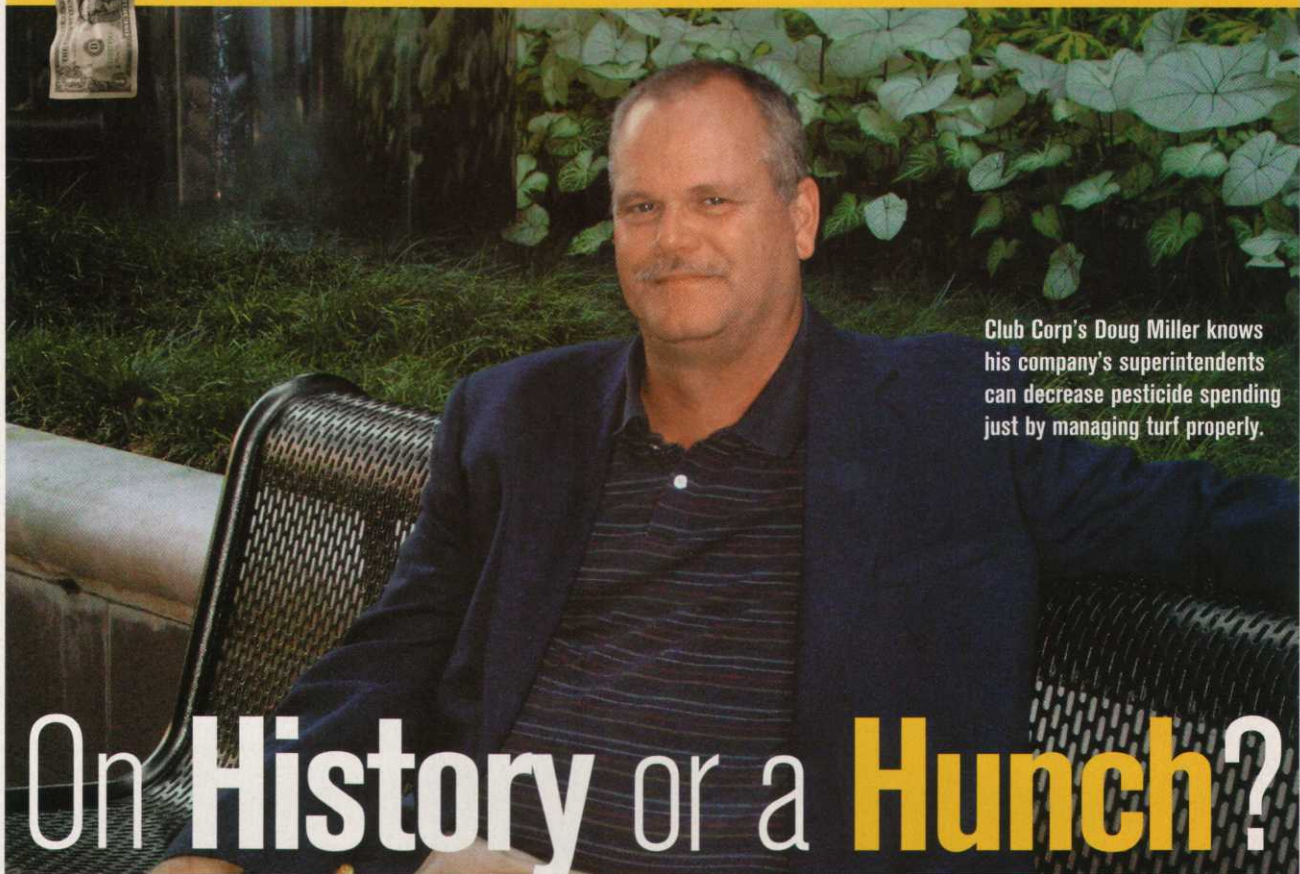
Recertification Credits
Available for: NYSDEC, MA,
PA, RI, VT, GCSAA, PGMS,
NYSPRS, ISA, STMA
and NYSN/LA

About the Survey

Golfdom surveyed 495 of its readers (3.6 percent response rate) about their use of generic chemicals. The e-mail survey was in the field for 30 days, and a chance to win two \$100 American Express gift cards were offered as incentives.

Eighteen percent had maintenance budgets more than \$1 million; 15 percent had maintenance budgets more than \$750,000; 22 percent had maintenance budgets more than \$500,000, and 28 percent had maintenance budgets between \$250,000 and \$500,000.

Most (72 percent) work at 18-hole courses. Forty percent work at private courses, 29 percent at private courses, 17 percent at semi-private courses and 14 percent at municipal courses. Thirty-four percent of respondents were age 45 to 55, while another 33 percent were age 35 to 45. Many had worked in the golf industry for 10 to 20 years (40 percent) or 20 to 30 years (31 percent).



Club Corp's Doug Miller knows his company's superintendents can decrease pesticide spending just by managing turf properly.

On History or a Hunch?

Superintendents discuss their strategies to budget for pest management

BY ANTHONY PIOPP
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

In his role as vice president of golf course management for Club Corp., Doug Miller knows that correctly managing the pesticide budgets at the company's 160 golf courses can save thousands of dollars. But he is also aware that skimping on chemicals and applications can be devastating to the turf and, therefore, the quality of the golf course. He says the key to this business equation is to trust the individual superintendents to do their jobs.

"A lot of our guys have been at the facilities a lot of years," Miller says.

Through their experiences they know the weather patterns, the signs of impending disease outbreaks and the timing needed for preemptive applications. Club Corp. superintendents also have the added advantage of

having five regional agronomists behind them. Miller, though, says he and the agronomists know not to meddle, letting individual superintendents make decisions.

"We do not dictate plans; we try not to micromanage," he says. "We try to hire good guys who know what they are doing."

Sometimes, the superintendents Club Corp. hires can reduce expenses just by managing the turf properly, thereby reducing pesticide applications. In one such example, water use at a desert course was reduced \$10,000 per four-week period.

Mike Brower has been the certified superintendent at Minnesota Valley Country Club in Minneapolis for seven years. In that time, his pesticide budget has remained at \$53,000 per year, an immense source of pride

Continued on page 52

PHOTO BY: COURTESY OF CLUB CORP.



Many superintendents are thinking of dollar spot (top) and brown patch when they consider how much to allot for fungicides in their pesticide budgets. Mike Brower, certified superintendent of Minnesota Valley Country Club, says application timing and using the correct product is vital to the process. "If you don't, you're only wasting time and money," he says.

Continued from page 50

for Brower. He has been able to do this through a combination of coming to know the intricacies of his golf course, how to apply his products efficiently and maintaining the healthiest turf he can. He also uses some generic products, which has led to a reduction in cost over the years.

At his previous course, Hillcrest Golf Club in St. Paul, Minn., Brower was superintendent at a layout where members wanted conditions like Minnesota Valley but with a budget that was 40 percent less at the time. At Hillcrest, Brower says he learned to maximize the dollars he had to fight diseases, such as snow mold. Applications for that problem alone consumed 20 percent of his annual budget. Although he admits he has enough money to handle any disease issue, he remains vigilant in his spending.

"They key is timing and using the correct products," he says. "If you don't, you're only wasting time and money."

By "correct products," Brower means the most efficient chemistry.

"The key thing is knowing what products are out there and knowing what they can do," he says. "I pride myself in knowing what is out there. I teach my assistants to try and learn as much as they can about pesticides."

Brower points out there are plenty of people who will give a superintendent advice on what to use but it is best for a superintendent to find out for himself.

"You can't leave the decisions up to the salespeople," he says.

For Paul Veshi, superintendent at the semi-private Dudley (Mass.) Hill Golf Course, his budget does not provide for enough pesticides to combat all of his ills. An anthracnose outbreak in late August last year sent him to the green committee looking for an additional \$600 to pay for an immediate application.

Veshi, who is in his 10th season at the nine-hole course, says he uses the knowledge he has acquired in his time there to help determine his budget, which is focused on protecting the putting surfaces while, at times, the fairways suffer.

"We do everything we can to get a comprehensive program on the greens," he says. "We

Continued on page 54

Continued from page 52

can deal with a little dollar spot on fairways.”

Knowing what has happened in recent years does not always prove to be a good indicator of the present. In 2004, for example, the heat index in that part of central Massachusetts hit 115 degrees Fahrenheit, and summer patch made its presence known on a much larger scale than usual. This year, in

spite of the anthracnose, the summer has not dealt any adverse unexpected conditions; cool nights have helped the cause.

“Our best employee is the weather,” Veshi says with a chuckle.

His advice to those who are hit with the unexpected pathogen is to be confident enough to ask for additional funds to help combat the problem, something he says he was hesitant to do at prior jobs.

“I wasn’t smart enough to ask for more money,” he adds.

At Old Memorial Golf Club in Tampa, Fla., certified superintendent Trent Inman says he has never had to go back and ask for more money at the private golf course since he budgets for a worst-case scenario when it comes to disease. Inman was at the 36-hole Royce Brook Golf Club in New Jersey prior to Old Memorial and says that job was more difficult because of the “fluctuation in disease pressure,” based on weather conditions. In Tampa, he is virtually guaranteed to have the same conditions day in and day out.

“You plan on having hot, ugly weather,” Inman says.

At his old club, a series of nights where temperatures never dipped below 75 degrees was cause for concern.

“Here you get 75-degree nights every night,” Inman says about Tampa.

His biggest problem is nematodes and he uses a fumigant applied directly into the soil using a slit process performed by an outside contractor. There is no re-entry on the course for the following 24 hours. Applications are usually made every two or three years at a cost of about \$25,000 per 18-hole course.

Inman acknowledges that having plenty of money allows him to combat his weeds and pests in a way most superintendents can’t.

“The more money you have to play with, you don’t have to be as precise,” he says.

For the seven courses in the Parish of East Baton Rouge, La., there is no such luxury, according to Buddy Gautreau, senior golf course superintendent and assistant director of the golf department of the park and recreation commission. The organization is a not-for-profit, and courses can only spend what is taken in.

Continued on page 56



After 45 years of experience, Turfco® is the #1 brand of topdressers and material handlers.

THE WIDESPIN™ 1530 IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE REASON WHY:

- **Patented 3-position switch.** Guarantees precise application and the new throttle switch reduces engine RPM for quieter transport.
- **Patented WideSpin technology.** The widest range of topdressing—from 15' heavy after aerification to 30' super light and every application in between.
- **Adjustable angle of spinners from 0-15°.** Allows for broadcast applications or to drive the sand into the turf.
- **Rust-free, galvanized hopper.** Worry-free durability—no paint to get sanded away.
- **Versatile.** Available as a tow-behind or truck-mounted for all popular turf vehicles.



For a demo, or to request product information, call 1-800-679-8201 or visit turfco.com.



THE LEADER. SINCE 1961.

Turfco's #1 ranking is according to the National Golf Foundation's Turf Brand Share Report.



What if billbugs invade your course and you need to make an insecticide application that isn't in the budget? Would you be willing to ask for more money?

Continued from page 54

"If the revenues don't cover the expenditures, then we have a problem," he says.

Now in his third season, Gautreau was superintendent at Santa Maria Golf Club when the parish purchased it. He continued to run it and another before taking on his new position. Since then he has spent a good deal of time learn-

ing about the parish's five other layouts, which helps him develop the budgets for each course.

Working off the historic needs of the courses and the local knowledge of the individual superintendents helps him to plan. If more money is spent than budgeted, he can put in an additional request.

"We can go back," he says, "but I don't think we ever have."

If he does need an increase, the process gets a bit complicated. His first stop is the golf division. If there is no money there, then he moves up the ladder to the park and recreation department to search for funds.

According to Gautreau, one of the biggest problems in his area is the sudden rain storms that roll through, making timing of application very important. He says it is not uncommon for an entire pesticide application to be wiped away.

"Down here we say, 'You can't count on it to rain, and you can't count on it not to rain,'" he says. ■

PHOTO COURTESY: THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

World's Fastest Grinders

Why the world's fastest grinders make for better running mowers and greener grass...

The **EXPRESS DUAL** spin grinder is much faster than backlapping with no messy cleanup. Fifteen minutes floor-to-floor for a reel grind makes lapping a thing of the past. And everyone knows a freshly ground mower delivers a better cut to grass than lapped mowers. Instead of grass blades that are torn; you get a smooth, surgical cut resulting in greener, healthier turf.

Find out for yourself, test drive a dual.
Call **1-888-474-6348**.



AMERICA'S FAVORITE GRINDER

www.expressdual.com



Golf course maintenance budgets get bigger
because of bunker maintenance boom

and Dollars

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR IN CHIEF

Golf course superintendents say they can't be faulted for grumbling about the expensive chore that has become bunker maintenance. Bunkers are where golf balls go to die, after all. Why then should they be maintained to play firm and easy? And why do they have to look so darn pretty?

If golfers aren't complaining about green speed, they're complaining about imperfect lies in bunkers, says Dale Caldwell, superintendent of the Minneapolis (Minn.) Golf Club.

"They don't understand that bunkers are hazards," Caldwell adds.

Jason Straka, a senior golf course design associate for Hurdzan/Fry Design in Columbus, Ohio, says many golf courses are spending as much on bunker construction and upkeep as they are on greens.

"I'd say that's probably accurate with us," says Dennis Bowsher, superintendent of The Ohio State University Golf Club in Columbus, noting that many of today's golfers demand "flawless" bunkers.

Bowsher joined Ohio State last year after the club's Alister MacKenzie-designed Scarlet Course underwent a \$4.2-million renovation

directed by Jack Nicklaus. The course's bunkers received much attention as part of the restoration and now require more handwork because of their maintenance-intensive design.

Alas, golf course maintenance budgets are getting bigger because of an increase in bunker maintenance. And while Straka says it's a crazy trend, there's not much anybody can do about it.

It's the We-Want-That-At-Our-Course Syndrome at work again. Well-traveled golfers see perfectly maintained bunkers at other courses and decide they want the same at their clubs back home.

"It's hard to reverse that trend," Straka says. "[It's the same with] the distance issue, with Pro V1 golf balls and 460cc titanium drivers. I'm not going to be the person to tell golfers that they can't use that equipment anymore."

And superintendents surely aren't going to tell golfers that they can't have finely edged and firm bunkers either.

But as long as golfers are willing to pay for what they want, Caldwell is fine with fulfilling their requests. He told the club's members it would cost about \$1 million to restore the course's bunkers to their liking at the Minneapolis Golf Club. The members said "fine."

That's not to say the course's bunkers didn't need attention. The previous sand in the bunkers had become contaminated with soil that eroded into it after heavy rains. The

bunkers are being reshaped and will be filled with some of the best sand on the market from the Chardon, Ohio-based Best Sand Corp., Caldwell says.

Even before the bunker renovation, which began in mid-August, Caldwell says maintenance costs for bunkers at the Minneapolis Golf Club have soared the past decade. Caldwell has had a \$13,000 line item in his golf course maintenance budget for bunker repair and renovation for several years.

"It's mostly for adding sand in the bunkers," he says, noting that he and his staff monitor closely the sand's depth.

So meticulous

Bunkers didn't receive nearly the attention 10 years ago as they do now. Their maintenance requirements have increased steadily since. Caldwell's staff has gone from raking bunkers with a machine to raking them by hand.

Bowsher, who's in his 20th year as a superintendent, says he never thought he would spend so much of his maintenance budget on bunkers, especially labor.

"When we prep them for tournaments, there's a lot of meticulous work that goes in to make them consistent," he says.

After the Scarlet course's restoration, Bowsher had to hire 10 additional employees on his staff because of the increased maintenance caused by renovation of the 65 bunkers, many of which were transformed with high faces to make them appear "dramatic."

"On a given day, we're sending eight to 10 guys out [to work on the bunkers]," Bowsher says.

It's not just the bunkers themselves that require more maintenance, Bowsher says. It's an entire bunker complex. The turf around steep bunker faces is often on steep slopes as well and must be hand-mowed and hand-trimmed. And then the grass clippings often must be blown out of the bunkers.

"It all adds up," Bowsher says.

It all adds up faster, though, for golf courses that can't afford to throw a lot of money at bunkers. Straka visited a facility recently that had been hit hard by poor economics, which was evident on the golf course maintenance crew that had shrunk from 14 members to six

members in a year. But that didn't mean that golfers' expectations for excellent conditions had shrunk, Straka points out.

"How are you supposed to maintain your bunkers the way you did last year with half of your staff?" he asks.

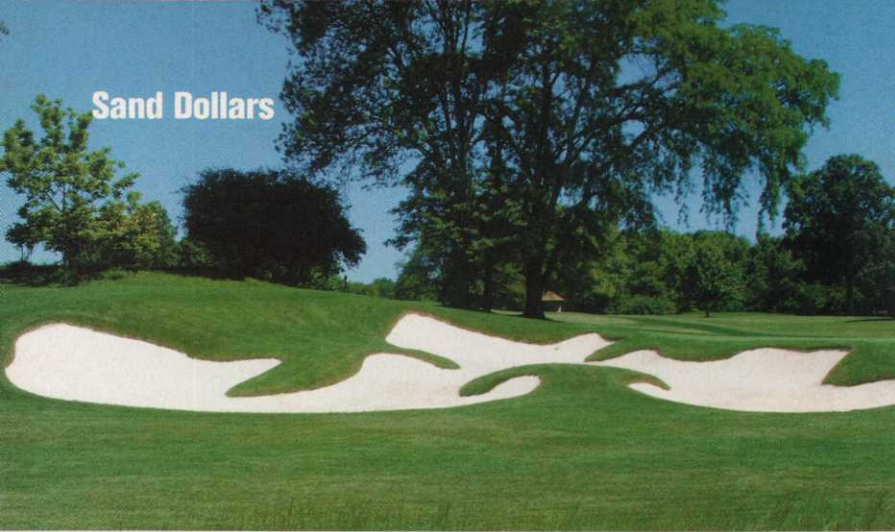
Not every superintendent can increase his or her budget for the betterment of

Continued on page 62

It's not just the bunkers themselves that require more maintenance. They often must be hand-mowed and hand-trimmed. And then the grass clippings must be blown out of the bunkers.



Sand Dollars



At The Ohio State University, the Scarlet Course's bunkers received much attention as part of a \$4.2 million renovation.

Continued from page 61

bunkers. In his previous job as superintendent of Virginia Oaks Golf Club in Gainesville, Va., Bowsher says he struggled with upping the budget for bunker maintenance because he couldn't do it at the expense of other important tasks.

Caldwell says he has never had to rob Peter to pay Paul to spend more on bunker maintenance. He simply tells members "that it will cost this if you want this." He tells them money must be added to the budget to com-

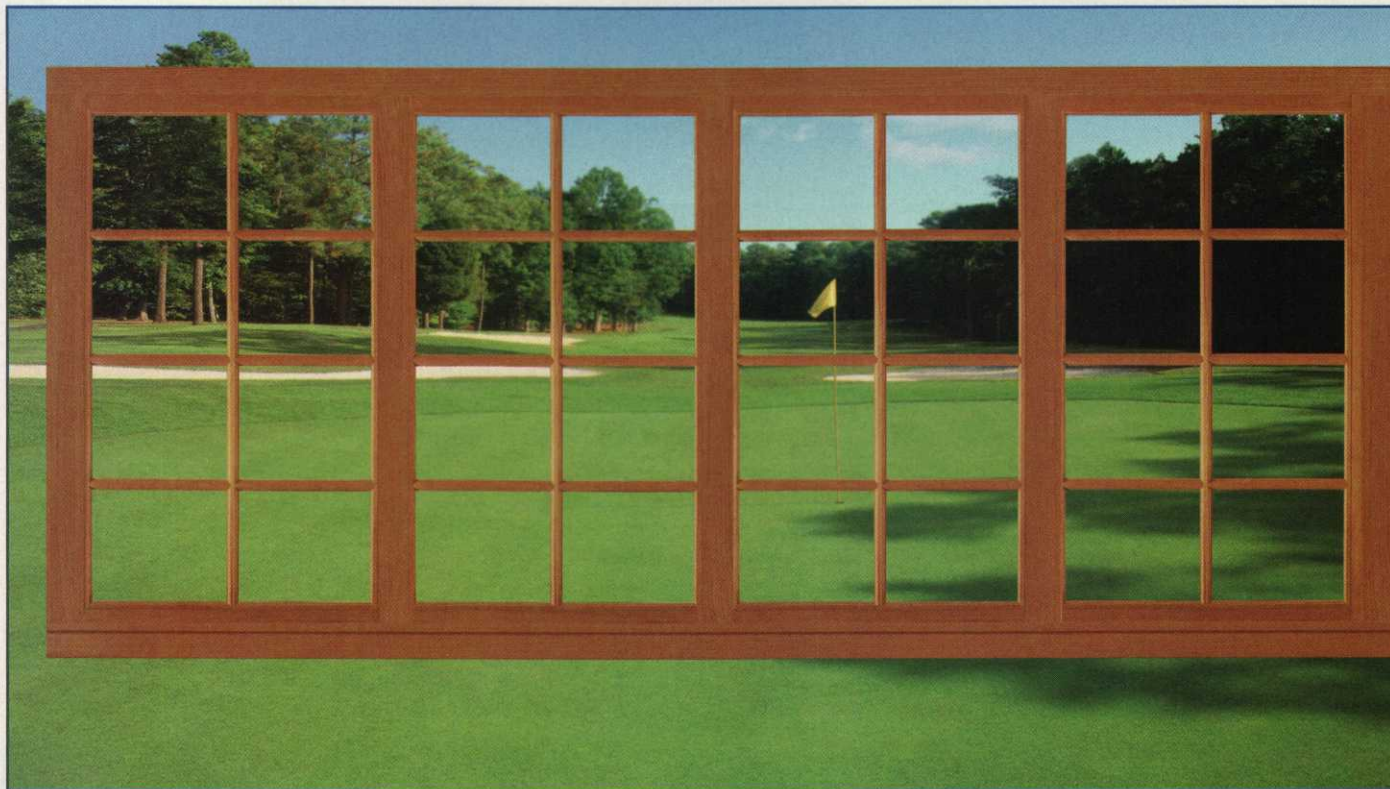
plete the task, or something must be trimmed from the budget to create money. And it's always something not expendable that Caldwell tells them he'll have to cut.

"You tell them something they don't want to lose, and then they're more likely to raise the budget," he says. "That's the politics of the deal."

Spending more money on bunker maintenance upfront can help reduce it later. Straka says recent technology, such as bunker lining, has helped to combat increased bunker maintenance. While courses might spend more to build or renovate bunkers by implementing the technology, those courses are spending less in the long run to maintain the bunkers because of the benefits associated with the bunker lining.

Brian Flynn, the marketing manager for IV-GOLF, says it has taken several years for bunker renovation products, which are proven to control damage and erosion caused by washouts, to catch on with superintendents.

PHOTO BY: LARRY AYLRARD



But he's not surprised. "The golf industry is a slow-moving industry," says Flynn, whose company manufactures Sandtrapper, a bunker lining that features a polymer technology. "[The product] pays for itself in the long haul," he says.

Bowsher says bunkers linings were installed at the Scarlet course as part of its renovation. While there's still a lot of maintenance to be done in and around the bunkers, it doesn't include having to repair washed-out sand after a heavy rain thanks to the bunker liners.

Straka says problems arise when owners and/or architects decide to build artistic-looking bunkers with high faces of flashing sand, but they don't build them with bunker linings.

"They don't spend the money up-front," Straka says.

After a few heavy rains, the sand washes out, and the bunker's bottom begins to erode and contaminate the sand. Then the bunker looks like a melted chocolate sundae and golfers begin to gripe.

The future

Flynn understands why superintendents gripe about increased maintenance (and money) for bunkers.

"So what if there is soil or rocks in a bunker," Flynn says. "So what if the grass is growing over the edge of the bunker."

But Flynn says the trend among some owners and architects is to build dramatic golf courses, which include dramatic bunkers, and he has no problem with that.

"You're always going to have a variety," Flynn says. "That's why there's impressionist art, modern art and post-modern art."

So bunker maintenance will continue to take a chunk out of superintendents' maintenance budgets. But what's important now is to not let it become even more of a two-headed monster, Straka says. If costs are \$3 now for a square foot of bunker maintenance, they should not be allowed to rise to \$6 a square foot in five years.

"We need to keep it more at the status quo," Straka says. ■

Spending more money on bunker maintenance upfront can help reduce it later.

Your window of opportunity for controlling grubs just got bigger.

ARENA™ is the only preventive and curative grub control product proven to provide maximum application flexibility.

Unlike other turf insecticides, ARENA™ Insecticide with clothianidin lets you apply from early spring to early fall and still get unsurpassed white grub control. Plus, ARENA offers proven performance against sod webworms, chinch bugs and other damaging pests. To learn more, contact your turf products supplier, log on to www.arystalifescience.us/arena or call 1-866-761-9397 toll free.

Always read and follow label directions. ARENA and the ARENA logo are trademarks of Arysta LifeScience North America Corporation. The Arysta LifeScience logo is a trademark of Arysta LifeScience Corporation. ©2005 Arysta LifeScience North America Corporation. ARN-043

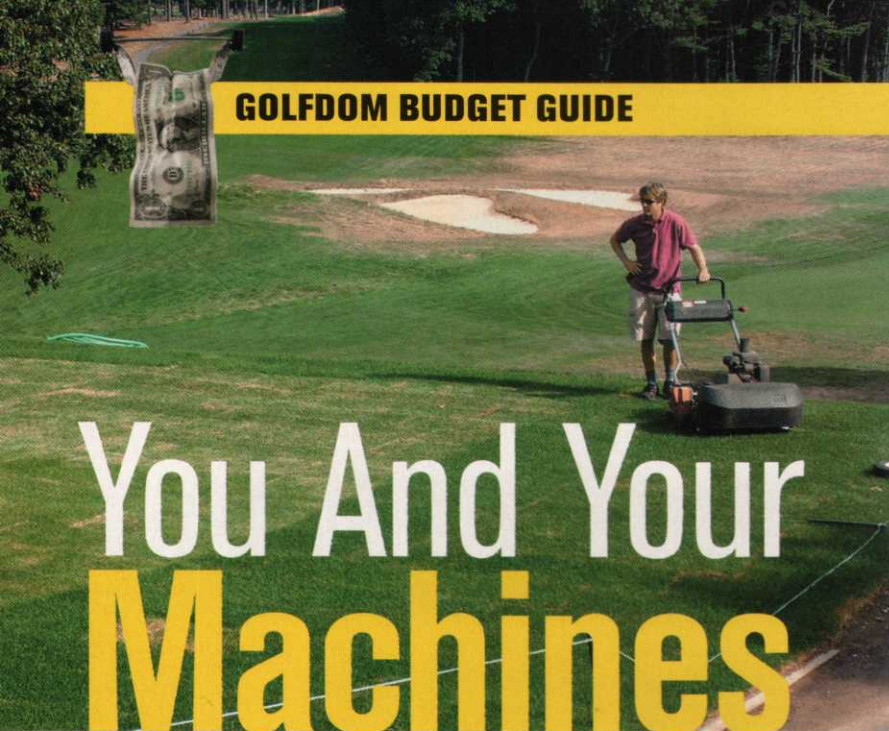
Arena™

Putting You In Control™



Arysta LifeScience

Harmony In Growth



You And Your Machines

It helps to consider the following items when tackling the “Equipment Maintenance Repairs” line item

BY RON FURLONG
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

When sitting down to tackle my budget every November, it seems like I can sail along fairly smoothly until I get to the line item, “Equipment Maintenance Repairs.”

This seemingly simple little line item usually sends my smooth ride bumping and veering off toward the ditch. Not only is it a large item (for me, the only line item with a bigger dollar figure is wages), but it tends to be more complex than anything else in the budget.

For me, it has always helped to consider the following items when tackling the “Equipment Maintenance Repairs” line item. I suggest you ask yourself the same questions:

- How many new pieces of equipment will you be adding to the fleet?
- Will all the pieces be brand new, or will you be adding on some used equipment?
- Considering the new purchases and leases, how many of the older units will be used as backups and how many will be sold or traded in? Basically, is your fleet growing in size because of the new items or staying virtually the same?
- How much was spent the previous year on this line item?

- Was the figure higher or lower than budgeted?
- Historically, do you budget high enough in this area?
- Have you created any significant no-mow zones on the golf course, cutting back on mowing hours?
- Are you reconsidering any different management practices that may influence equipment hours? Some examples: adding or subtracting a midsummer solid-tine aeration; increasing or decreasing greens topdressing throughout the season; increasing or decreasing plant growth regulators or fertility rates; changing tolerance levels on weeds; changing tolerance levels on “brown” rough conditions in mid-summer.

■ Will your crew size be larger or smaller than the year before?

■ Is your crew full of long-time quality employees who you trust not to abuse equipment? (Usually a high turnover equals more abuse of equipment.)

■ How much has the price of things increased versus last year? Oil, especially, is an item to keep an eye on.

■ Are you happy with your equipment technician?

■ Is he or she keeping up with preventive maintenance?

■ Does this person need additional training in any specific areas (like hydraulics or grinding)?

■ Are you and your assistants keeping the crew alert to maintain the equipment? Is everyone checking oil daily and greasing the zerkers that need to be greased?

Of course, not everything can be anticipated (a worker running a fairway mower out of oil, for example, or a golf car ending up embedded in the base of a cedar tree), but going through this checklist before deciding on a monthly figure is bound to make your numbers more accurate.

It just might help make the worst line item in your maintenance budget a little less of a headache. ■

Furlong, superintendent of Avalon Golf Club in Burlington, Wash., can be reached at rfurlong5@gmail.com.

PHOTO BY: LARRY AYLUARD