

minutes. "When there are not enough workers, and we have to get the greens cooled off, we have to do it the quickest way we can," Denholm says.

In Arizona, syringing by hand is a must because of weather elements, such as the wind, that adversely affect syringing by automated irrigation, Snyder says. However, the course also does its share of syringing by automated irrigation because it's less labor-intensive. When syringing by the latter, Snyder points out the importance of making sure that sprinkler nozzles are working properly to ensure adequate coverage.

Some superintendents prefer hand-watering solely, including Nels Lindgren, certified superintendent of Loch Lloyd CC in Belton, Mo. He says he would never rely on automated irrigation to syringe greens. "The only reason we would do something like that is if we were way over the edge as far as dry goes, and we were in a panic mode to try and save grass," he says.

Denholm also prefers syringing by hand, even though he has nothing against cooling off greens and their surrounds by overhead irrigation on a sweltering day. "We try to do a lot more syringing by hand because the [irrigation system's] heads don't always get water where the course needs it," he adds.

Experience counts

It's important that workers assigned to syringing are experienced at the task.

"Some guys on my crew have been here eight to 10 years and have been in the business for 15 years," Denholm says. "They're the people I'd rather have syringing because they understand it. Some of the newer guys and college kids are smart and hard workers, but it's harder to teach them what to look for when syringing."

Bob Miller, superintendent of Enjoie GC in Endicott, N.Y., says he assigns two or three seasoned workers to hand syringe at the course because they "have a feel" for the process. The

workers know the course well enough to know what areas to scout for dryness. They also test the areas with a soil probe.

Miller says the best syringers have a deep understanding of the process. Snyder couldn't agree more and points

"We try to do a lot more syringing by hand because the [irrigation system's] heads don't always get water where the course needs it."

JOHN DENHOLM
SPARROW POINT CC

out that while computerized irrigation systems have helped superintendents become more specialized in certain maintenance areas, including syringing, they can't replace the human touch completely.

"You have to go out on the course, and use your eyes and your hands to get the job done," Snyder says. "I don't care how many computers you have in your office. If you don't go out and inspect with your hands and eyes, you'll run a greater risk of failure."

Lindgren says there are tools of the trade to help superintendents monitor the temperature of greens, but he prefers simply to put his hand down on a green to see how hot it is.

Denholm instructs employees to scout for wilt when on syringing duty. If you lay your hand on a green and it leaves a print, the turf is wilting, Denholm says he tells them.

Denholm also requires his syringing crew to take a soil probe with them.

"If there are areas that are wilting badly, I'll have them check the areas with a soil probe," Denholm says. "If the soil moisture is really low, I'll have them hit those areas a little more."

Snyder says superintendents should mark hot spots on the course to aid them in syringing. They can do that through mapping or cataloging.

"Then they'll know from one year to the next where the course's soil problems are, where its drainage problems are and how they'll be able to track them from year to year," Snyder adds. "They're never the same from year to year, but they give you a good idea of where you need to go to attack certain areas by hand with supplemental irrigation."

Lindgren likes to run the greens firm and fast at Loch Lloyd. He instructs two or three workers to watch for hard and dry spots on the greens. Lindgren says the workers carry small knives or screwdrivers with them to probe areas on the greens for dryness.

Just because a turf spot is brown or slightly off color doesn't mean it

Continued on page 82

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Real Life Solutions: Syringing

Continued from page 81
needs water, Lindgren says. "If it's soft, it doesn't need water," Lindgren notes. "If it's hard, it needs water."

Time is the essence

Superintendents have different philosophies regarding syringe time.

"That's a hard thing to try and teach somebody," Denholm says. "I judge time by looking at the turf. If the grass responds quickly to the syringe, you're done."

Michael Masterson, superintendent of Gowanda CC in Springville, N.Y., says how long to syringe directly corresponds with how much water to apply.

"Too much is no good, and not enough is no good," he says. "There's a happy medium for it to be just right. But you don't want there to be a lake when you're done."

Don't drown the turf, Miller warns. "You want to water just enough to moisten the soil and keep the grass blades alive. It only takes a few minutes."

Soil infiltration has much to do with syringe time. The greens at Rio Verde are push-up greens with poor drainage.

"Our infiltration rates are anywhere from 1.27 inches to 1.24 inches an hour," Snyder says. "If I turned on the sprinkler heads for five minutes, most of the water I applied would run off the surface and go somewhere I don't want it to go. We can't water too much at one time. We have to do a lot of short cycles to get water moving down [the soil profile]."

Snyder's advice is to study the soil profile. "You have to know how much water moves through the soil profile and try to balance that between the application rate vs. the infiltration rate."

To help with the process

Some superintendents use wetting agents to aid in syringing. Lindgren buys about four 55-gallon barrels of wetting agents a year and injects them into the course's irrigation system, which covers the course's 40 acres of bentgrass tees, greens and fairways. "The entire course gets wetting agents, but we use specialized wetting agents on the greens that last longer," he says.

Denholm sprays a wetting agent on the course's greens about every three weeks. "They help the areas of the greens that don't get hit with sprinklers as much," he says, noting that wetting agents also reduce water from running off.

Snyder advises superintendents to find a good wetting agent and stick with it. ■

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Cool It

TURF'S SOIL OXYGEN MUST BE INCREASED TO IMPROVE ITS HEAT TOLERANCE

Bill Meyer and other turf researchers feel the heat, so to speak, to develop more heat-tolerant bentgrass for greens.

"Certainly, you feel the pressure to come up with good products if you're a variety developer," says Meyer, a turf researcher and faculty member at Rutgers University's Center for Turfgrass Science. "This is a competitive business."

It's especially competitive when you consider that researchers must deal with superintendents who are cutting greens lower and lower to make them faster and faster. The maintenance procedure definitely has an impact on the turf's heat tolerance, says Milt Engelke, professor of Turfgrass Breeding, Genetics and Management Science at Texas A&M University.

"We have a lot of data to show that cutting heights have an impact on root depth," he says, noting that it affects the turf's ability to cool itself.

"As we cut lower and lower, we're changing the dynamics and the architecture of the plant," Engelke adds. "So the question is: How short do cutting heights need to go? Are golfers going to putt on tile?"

Texas A&M's bentgrass breeding research program is on hold because of decreased funding, Engelke says. However, Engelke adds that future studies will focus on the relationship of soil temperature and soil gases (oxygen) to the plant's respiration rate. Engelke points out that a plant's ability to respire is tied to transpiration, which goes hand in hand with cooling.

Engelke says that because many superintendents overwater turf, its root zone has more water than it needs. More water reduces the turf's soil oxygen, which is vital to root growth and heat tolerance. A plant must be able to cool itself, and it has to be able to pump water to do so, Engelke says.

"The only way it can pump water is if it has roots," he adds. "The only way it's going to have roots is if you have good gas exchange and you have a sufficient amount of oxygen in the root zone to support the plant."

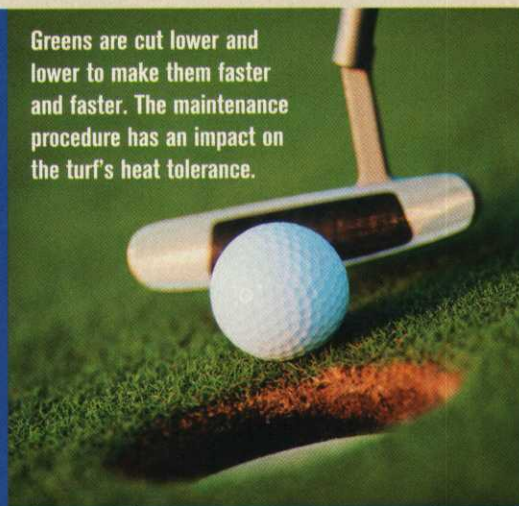
Engelke says researchers need to do more genetic work to target plants that are more efficient under water-saturated root-zone conditions.

As far as turf that displays strong heat tolerance, Meyer cites the new varieties of velvet bentgrass.

"They're outstanding," he adds. "But the sad thing is that most superintendents, unless they're in Rhode Island or Massachusetts, aren't familiar with velvets and are afraid to use them."

If using the variety, a key thing to remember is that velvet is susceptible to pythium root disease early in the growth process, Meyer says. If the disease is not caught and treated early, the turf gets off to a poor start.

Greens are cut lower and lower to make them faster and faster. The maintenance procedure has an impact on the turf's heat tolerance.



DIGITAL STOCK

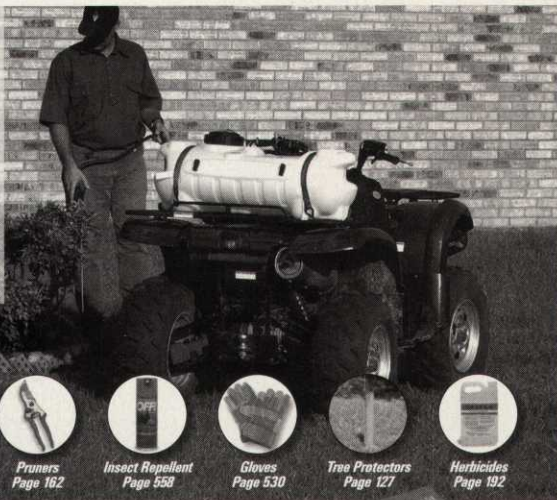
It's a reason superintendents are cautious of the variety.

"Superintendents are conservative people, and they're not going to stick their necks out too far to try something new," Meyer says.

That said, Meyer expects more superintendents to gain interest in velvet as the varieties continue to improve. He also adds that researchers need to develop more creeping bents that are as heat-tolerant as the velvets. — Larry Aylward, Editor

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Talking Shop



Mechanics sound off on what to look for in a lift, what tools are absolutely essential to their jobs and what they would create if they were “manufacturers for a day”

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR.

Managing Editor

(Editor's Note: The participants in this discussion are all members of the Online Turf Equipment Technicians Association. You can find out more about the group at www.oteta.org.)

No one ever knew what lurked deep in the hearts of golf course mechanics — until now. *Golfdom* went to the source to find out what these vital employees think about lifts, what tools they couldn't live without, and what tools they would like to have that aren't currently being produced. Here are some of their answers.

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Q. What do you look for in a lift to fulfill your basic mechanical needs? What would you like to see improved on lifts?

Bill Hughes, turf equipment manager/technician, Forest Dunes Golf and CC, Roscommon, Mich: I want a lift with no floor obstruction and one that can be adapted from one piece of equipment to another. The Trion lift we purchased recently meets all of my expectations. I'd like to have a higher ceiling in my shop because I can't raise the equipment high enough to access all of the components easily as it is.

Eric Kulaas, equipment manager, Renaissance Vinoy Resort & GC, St. Petersburg, Fla.: Price is secondary to performance. This is a capital piece of equipment — meaning that it will be around for a long time. Paying \$1,000 or \$2,000 more to get the lift you really want is immaterial over a 15-year lifespan. I would also look for a lift that is easy to use, designed specifically for turf equipment and has a good reputation. I'd also like to see a 2-foot higher ceiling in my shop.

Craig Cassaday, equipment manager, Merion GC, Ardmore, Pa.: I'm looking for something versatile. Right now, I've got one lift for trucks and another for turf equipment. You have to maintain two because if you only get a car lift and have to adapt it every time you want to work on a piece of turf equipment, it can take you two to four hours to change it over. So versatility is something that I think needs to be improved significantly on lifts.

Steve Spuhler, equipment manager, Merrill Hills CC, Waukesha, Wis.: I would look for something that will allow you to adapt it to all types of wheelbases and frame sizes. I'd like to see the manufacturers add a sliding swivel hoist to the lift to make it easier for me to put the heavy fairway and rough reels on a workbench. It would also let me tilt big rotary decks so I can work on them easily.

Q. What are the shop tools you absolutely can't live without?

Cassaday: I'd say that I'd start with a lift and then go from there. I think mechanics also need a bench grinder, a parts washer,

a welding iron, a shop vice and a shop press. I also recommend that you have a set of oxygen and acetylene torches. You must have these tools so when the superintendent comes and says, 'Can you make me a tool that will do X?' you can say, 'Absolutely.'"

Spuhler: I would list my Accu-Gauge, a Rubbermaid stepstool and my creeper. I have 16 walking greens mowers, and I use all of these tools to make sure they're in the best condition possible before they go out every day. I tilt the walker backwards on to the stepstool at about a 45-degree angle. Then I roll in front and check the front face of the bedknife for any damage — cleats, small stones and other debris. Then I check the bench cut and the height of cut, and it's ready to go. It takes three to five minutes per walker — if there are no problems — with the tools I mentioned.

Hughes: I couldn't get through my day without the Trion lift, a Foley AccuMaster 650 reel grinder, the Foley AccuPro 670 bed-knife grinder and the Ingersol Rand air compressor (with its associated air-powered tools).

Kulaas: My needs are practical. I need a good set of wrenches, screwdrivers and sockets. I need an oxygen/acetylene torch, pri-

marily for cutting and heating. I need a welder, and an inexpensive band saw for cutting metal. (Some of my colleagues would consider this a luxury, but I've had the same one for 11 years. It cost \$250 when it was new and has been a great value because of its longevity.) Any mechanic worth his or her salt needs a good set of reel and bedknife grinders and a lift, which is by far the most productive piece of equipment in the shop.

Q. If you could request that shop tool manufacturers create a new tool to meet a previously unmet need, what would it be?

Hughes: I can't think of a tool that I would use that isn't already in production. I don't have all the tools I would like to have, but that's because of a lack of cash on our end, not a lack of availability.

Kulaas: We're pretty good at making our own tools, so I can't think of anything I need that isn't being manufactured already.

Cassaday: I'd like to see the mower manufacturers add an on-the-mower reel-sharpening tool so I wouldn't have to spend so much time in the shop taking them off and sharpening them. It would reduce the downtime of the mower, and it would streamline the system considerably. ■



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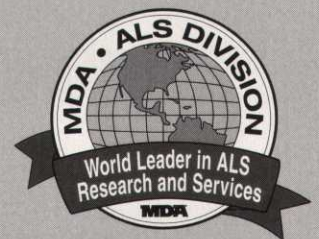
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The watermelon-size lump in your stomach says it all. Your eyes can't focus. "It" has happened. You've been playing poker with Mother Nature, and she just threw down an aces-over-kings full house while you bet and bluffed and bet again while clutching a pair of deuces. Nice try turf guy, but you just lost.

It is no mistake that I'm writing this for summertime viewing. Because, face it, summer and growing grass have always had a front-row seat together in the play of *Les Turf Miserables*.

Tragedy happens. You think you have it all figured out. Then, without warning, something that is no fault of your own goes wrong. It could be Abnormal Weather Influenza or any combination of things to create illness at your facility.

I've been on the receiving end of the 9-1-1 calls when nature goes wild. I wish I'd kept some of the recordings because they are unbelievable. Although the events and circumstances are all different, there are a few common denominators to share in the pain.

What I'm talking about here is not "invented events." Not much is as dishonorable as dreaming up an overpowering invader to cover for a major screw-up or general inability. Giving a disease or insect or some other technical name to the wreck you created is just bad form, and you'll go directly to Karma Jail without passing Go and collecting your \$200. If you kill some grass, fall on your sword and take the pain.

Premonition or not

When you wake up on the morning of your personal turfgrass tragedy, you might have a bit of a bad feeling. I've heard this time and again — that somehow victims didn't know what, but they knew something was going to happen. I remember a superintendent telling me that the day before a forest fire started a few blocks from his golf course that he knew "something" wasn't right.

This isn't true in all cases, however. Plenty of superintendents never have a guess that something is about to go wrong.

The nature of being a superintendent means that you are the go-to person at your facility. Being "in the know" is a key trait of superinten-

Welcome to 'Les Turf Miserables'

BY DAVE WILBER



TRAGEDY HAPPENS.

YOU THINK YOU

HAVE IT ALL

FIGURED OUT. THEN,

WITHOUT WARNING,

SOMETHING THAT

IS NO FAULT OF

YOUR OWN GOES

WRONG

dents. Don't be surprised that everyone will likely think and expect that you have the answers. And that's a key point: Nothing will earn you a pink slip faster for an event that isn't your fault than coming up with some silly bit of turfspeak to explain it. If you don't know the answer, don't pretend you do.

A selfless survivor

No doubt that you're feeling down when all 18 greens just died or your shop just burned down. And you'll definitely have a fleeting moment where you just know that you should have updated your résumé. But the situation at hand demands your attention, and worries about yourself may be best kept to yourself. The true survivor of the storm is selfless and shows it.

Second-guessing is part of growing turf and hindsight is always clear. You'll ask yourself, "What if I woulda ...?"

And there might even be some answers that you could share with others if you find something that may have helped lessen the impact. A downward spiral of self-doubt could, however, cause you to go past introspection and break down.

A superintendent once told me that if "he" just would have built the shop on higher ground, the flood wouldn't have destroyed all his equipment. I suggested to him that the clubhouse, built on the highest spot on the property, flooded too. Thus, short of creating the "hovering shop," there was nothing he could have done.

Turfgrass tragedy happens and when (not if) it happens to you, don't be afraid to remember that you aren't and won't be the only one it happens to.

There's healing in that knowledge.

Dave Wilber, a consultant and agronomic advisor, can be reached at davewilber@soil.com.

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Walking his dog one sunny afternoon, Fred the Bookie spied a young boy on the local links. Fred stopped for a minute to see him tee off, and stayed when he saw the boy had talent.

Actually, he'd holed his tee shot. Fred was about to congratulate him when the kid teed up again and made a second hole-in-one, then a third! Now Fred, never one to let an opportunity pass, sidled up to the prodigy and asked, "How old are you, kid?"

"Eleven, sir," the boy replied.

"Anyone else here seen you play?" Fred asked.

Told that no one had, Fred lined up a match for the very next day between the boy and the club champion.

The odds were 10-to-1 against the new young player. But the boy took 11 at the first hole and got progressively worse from there. Of course he lost badly.

Fred was furious. "You made me look like a fool! What happened to your game?" he demanded.

"Listen, dope," the kid whispered, "next week you'll get 100 to 1."

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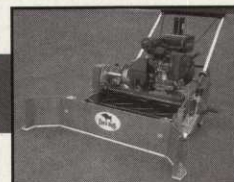
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baseball gloves

My first — and best — was a George Brett model Wilson. I still have it, even though it's too small for recreational softball. Looking at it, I see my name in faded thick Sharpie and a distinctly old-fashioned phone number 3-7131.

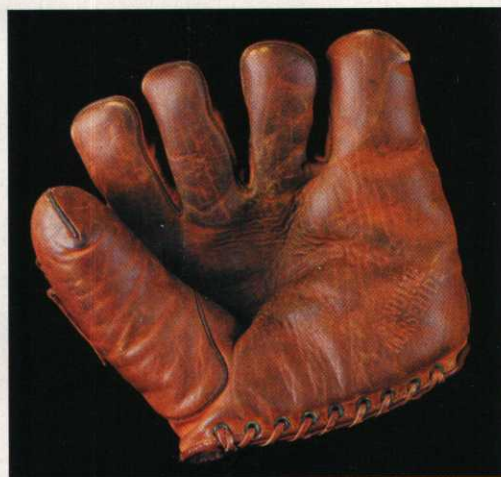
I broke it in with two baseballs in the middle, a string wrapped tightly around it, a nighttime bath of water and a daytime oven of Kansas sun. That glove, now with frayed stitching and a broken basket, rode miles on the handlebars of my bike and was a steadfast friend for more than a decade of baseball.

There's something inherently nostalgic about baseball gloves, and reading Noah Liberman's fascinating new book, *Glove Affairs: The Romance, History and Tradition of the Baseball Glove* (Triumph Books, \$19.95, 150 pages), provides a wonderful history of gloves without losing itself in the pastoral fields of innocence and sepia-toned memories that so often swamp the game.

With deftness and a friendly tone, Liberman takes readers through all the aspects of gloves. He chronicles those who make and fix them, provides a step-by-step guide to breaking them in, gives us a history of their development, peeks at the world of collectors, and peppers the

A NEW BOOK CHRONICLES
THE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE GLOVE FROM
ITS FIRST USE IN 1870
UNTIL TODAY

BY MARK LUCE



DYNAMIC GRAPHICS

entire book with wonderful glove-centered anecdotes.

On June 28, 1870, Cincinnati Red Stocking catcher Doug Allison wore, according to the *Cincinnati Commercial* "a pair of buckskin mittens to protect his hands." Allison was mercilessly razed, because, as Liberman explains, "Pro ball in the last third of the 19th century was a he-man affair, and part of the deal was you put up with the pain and disfigurement from catching the small hard ball." It would take a decade to lose the "wimpy" stigma, but by 1886 nearly all players wore some kind of protection.

The early gloves looked, literally, like gloves, although they were often fingerless. But over time, the fingers would lengthen and be tied together, the glove would become hinged and, in cases like Braves' ace Greg Maddux, enormous. In addition, Liberman tells

of people being buried with their gloves, major leaguers' superstitions about them, the booming industry in memorabilia, and, hilariously, short-stop Omar Vizquel using his Gold Glove Trophy (it's a regular glove painted gold) during infield practice.

Liberman's journey through baseball gloves' history, loaded with pictures and plenty how-to advice, is as educational as it is entertaining. About the only thing missing from *Glove Affairs* is the smell of well-worn leather. Of course, you'll have to supply that yourself with time, care and the distinctive "thwap" of the pocket cradling a swiftly whistling ball during countless games of catch.

Mark Luce is a free-lance writer who lives in Lawrence, Kan., where he plays a mean softball with a much bigger, far less cool glove than the ones mentioned here.

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