

# Fundamentally Speaking

with *Scott Curtis*

*Like most superintendents, Scott Curtis earned his current position at Eagle Crest GC through hard work and dedication. The cornerstone of his success has been setting high standards and lofty goals. His current goal is "to be the #1 public golf course in the state". While the scenic views of the Arkansas River Valley make for a beautiful track, the thin soils and rock shelves create a number of turf management challenges.*

## Professional Profile

### Alma Mater:

Penn State  
-Turf Management

### Age:

41

### Career Highlights:

- Superintendent Eagle Crest GC, 2000-Present Alma, AR
- Superintendent Shadow Creek GC, 1987-2000 Sallisaw, OK
- Assist. Superintendent Hardscrabble CC, 1983-1987 Fort Smith, AR

### Most rewarding professional experience:

*"I really enjoy attacking tough challenges. My time here at Eagle Crest has been particularly gratifying. I'm having fun."*

Eagle Crest GC

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Russel "Rusty" Tisdale (front) feels more at home with a shovel in his hand.

“Leading by example is the easiest way to get people to do what needs to be done.”

### Rusty Tisdale

SUPERINTENDENT  
OF COBB'S GLEN CC

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than what some others have. Spotts doesn't have a desk because he doesn't have an office to put it in. His course's maintenance facility resembles a four-car garage. "I have a little table with a phone on it," Spotts says.

But Monson, Spotts and their down-and-dirty colleagues aren't overly concerned with office size and cool things to hang on their office walls. Heck, they don't spend enough time inside to enjoy such amenities. They also realize that they have to get by with what they have because of their slim maintenance budgets.

"We don't have a lot of money," Monson says, noting his maintenance budget is a mere \$40,000, not including salaries. "One of our fairway mowers is 15 years old, and one of our triplex mowers is from 1989. But they work good as new."

Keeping a low profile is another trait of these superintendents. Spotts says he doesn't care if golfers don't know his name. But he says he likes it when he overhears golfers say, "The

### Profile of the Down-And-Dirty Superintendent

- Enjoys manual labor.
- Wears faded jeans and crusty work boots. In some cases, wears a uniform.
- Leads by example.
- Works with a small maintenance budget.
- Enjoys taking something apart and putting it back together again.
- While sitting, it's usually not in a fancy office.

ROB BELKNAP

guy out at the barn keeps this place looking really good."

While Spotts admits he's not the sort to be a superintendent of a high-profile club, he respects the superintendents at those tracks and realizes their job descriptions might not call for them to dig ditches and grind reels.

"That's a whole different profession than what I'm doing," he says. "I'm basically cutting the grass for Joe Sixpack."

*Continued on page 44*



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“I’m kind of like Pig Pen. Even if I’m not going out to dig a ditch, I still come back dirty.”

### Dave Spotts

SUPERINTENDENT  
OF EAGLE CROSSING GC

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Ondo says his course’s players appreciate that he’s willing to get physical and dirty. “For this type of course, it’s a good thing,” says Ondo, whose public track receives about 75,000 rounds a year and charges \$24 for 18 holes on the weekend.

Ondo, who’s active in the Florida GCSA, says he knows superintendents who never get dirty because it’s not in their job descriptions. Their courses’ members don’t want to see them on fairway mowers.

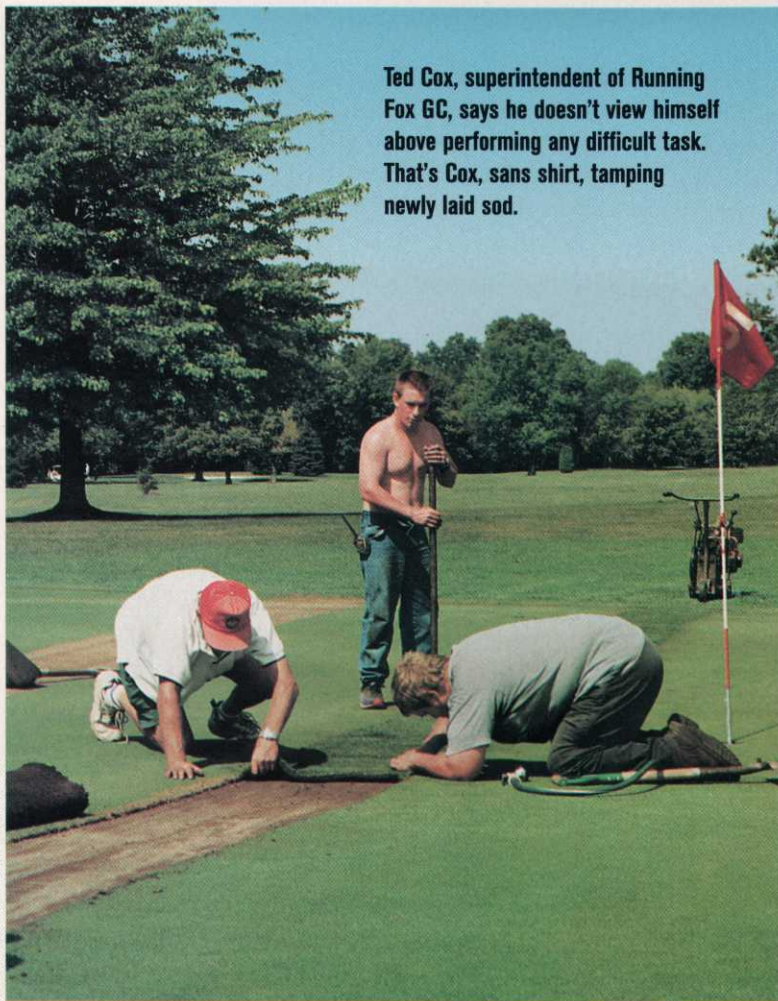
“There’s nothing wrong with that,” Ondo adds. “Their green committees feel they have crews working for them to do that work.”

Tisdale, however, is no fan of what he calls “elitist superintendents” who do nothing but drive around in utility vehicles and bark orders to workers. “I know they have their ways,” Tisdale says. “But with their budgets, their people and my attitude, I could do 100 times better.”



LYNN PELHAM

**It’s a good thing Joe Ondo wears a uniform on the job. If he was wearing an expensive golf shirt, it might get ruined.**



**Ted Cox, superintendent of Running Fox GC, says he doesn’t view himself above performing any difficult task. That’s Cox, sans shirt, tamping newly laid sod.**

COURTESY OF RUNNING FOX GC

It shouldn’t be assumed that all superintendents at high-profile clubs don’t like to work up a good sweat, however. Take John Szklinski, superintendent of Southern Hills CC in Tulsa, Okla., who says he makes it point to let his employees know he’s not above what they do. “I look for opportunities to get into the trenches,” Szklinski says.

It also shouldn’t be assumed that down-and-dirty superintendents are the type who keep to themselves and couldn’t give a four-iron about growing in their profession. Tisdale is heavily involved in extracurricular activities and is currently a board member of the Carolina GCSA. Ondo, a certified superintendent, is past president of the Florida GCSA.

“I’m politically active,” Tisdale says with pride.

### Mr. Fix Its

A common trait these superintendents possess is a love of mechanics. They love to take stuff apart and put it back together again. Hence, you’ll often find them in the maintenance shop repairing mowers and other turf maintenance equipment.

“Working on equipment is like therapy to me,” Tisdale says. “I can take anything apart and put it back together again.”

Cox does most of the mechanical work at Running Fox. "I really enjoy it," he says.

They also like the detective aspect that comes with their jobs. If there's a funky-looking fungus on the fairways, they want to find out what it is. If the irrigation system has gone awry, they want to find out why.

Spotts says diagnosing such problems is his favorite part of the job. "I enjoy problem-solving in the field," he says. "It's a real mental challenge for me."

Monson says something is always breaking at Long Prairie, but that's OK. "People might think I'm nuts, but it's neat," he says of tracking down problems and repairing them.

Monson relates a story about a solenoid going bad on a sprinkler. He worked like Sherlock Holmes to find it and fix it. "When you fix something, it gives you satisfaction."

### Less pressure

Since many down-and-dirty superintendents work with low-maintenance budgets and less refined golfers, the pressure to provide Augusta National-like conditions isn't as severe as it is at high-end clubs.

"It's a little more laid back here," says Spotts, who's able to take most weekends off. "The clientele isn't as demanding."

Spotts earns \$35,000 and has no complaints.

"I could probably make more somewhere else, but I'm satisfied with the pay here," he says. "It's just that there's so much more intense pressure that comes with the big salaries. I went for a lower salary and more job stability."

Monson, who also earns about \$35,000, says he's had solid relationships with the course's board of directors and players over the years.

"I don't get much flak," he says. "There are no politics here. I don't get afraid when a member says to me, 'Can I talk to you for a minute?'"

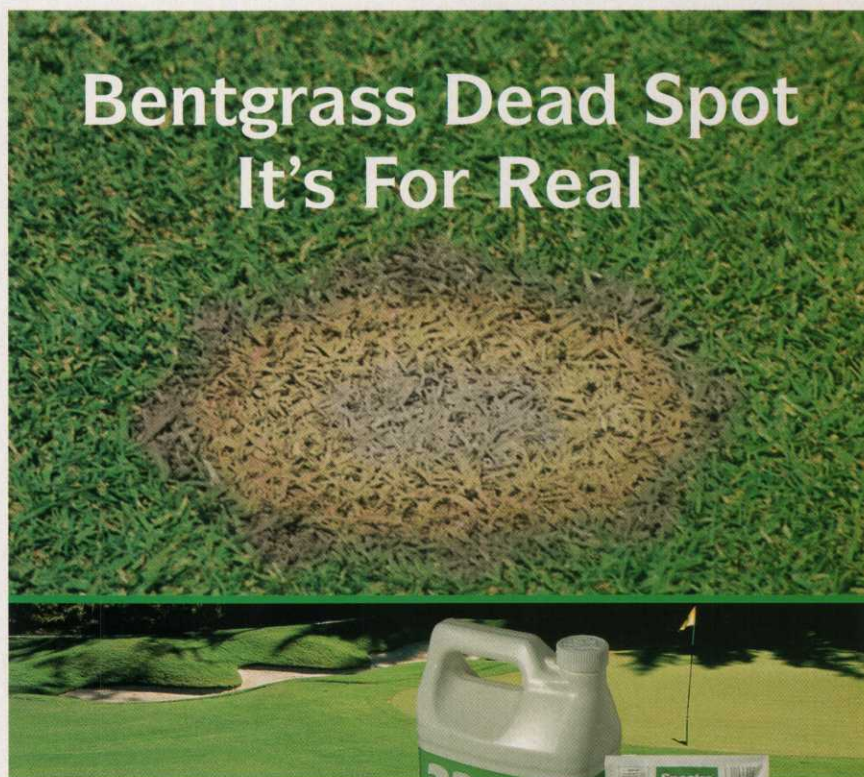
Monson is actually in the midst of his second career. He taught biology and astronomy at the local high school for

more than 30 years before retiring in 1998. Monson joined Long Prairie when it was a nine-hole course and worked part-time. When he retired from teaching, he became the course's full-time superintendent, just as the course was expanding to 18 holes.

Monson, who never earned a turf science degree and basically learned golf

course maintenance through on-the-job training, chuckles and flashes one of those you-can't-be-serious looks when asked about his plans for retirement. "I can't quit because I'll go nuts," he announces.

It's only a matter of time before another pair of tattered gloves are hanging from Monson's office wall. ■



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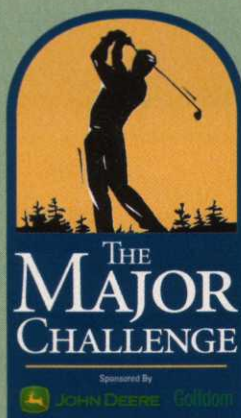
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# TURFGRASS TRENDS

## PESTICIDE RESTRICTIONS

### EPA Restrictions on Chlorothalonil Make Sense

By Paul Vincelli

**W**ith this past summer being a high disease-pressure year for cool-season turfgrasses in Kentucky and other locations, fungicides have been an important tool for turf managers.

Many turf managers are aware that the label for the important contact fungicide chlorothalonil includes restrictions added relatively recently. Chlorothalonil is found in such products as Daconil, Echo, Manicure, Chlorostar and Concorde SST. This material is a low-cost fungicide with broad-spectrum activity, providing partial to complete control of important turfgrass diseases such as dollar spot, brown patch, leaf spot/melting out, gray leaf spot and others.

Two restrictions that have particular importance for use patterns for turf disease control are highlighted in this article, with an explanation of the rationale for these restrictions. This information is based on the Reregistration Eligibility Decision for chlorothalonil published in 1999 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This document is an impressive 337-page, 2-inch thick document that describes the scientific basis of EPA's decision to allow reregistration of chlorothalonil, as well as the conditions under which reregistration was permitted. Under the 1988 amendment to the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), all pesticides registered before Nov. 1, 1984, must be reregistered to ensure that they meet current stringent standards.

The restrictions described below are not limited to certain soil types or turf situations, other than what is outlined in the tables. Furthermore, these restrictions cannot be waived by state regulatory agencies. State governments may take action that is more restrictive than federal action but not less restrictive.

#### Use for home lawns

Chlorothalonil is no longer labeled for use on home lawns. While this restriction has been in place for several years, it is such an important one that it is worth revisiting.

Prior to the institution of this restriction, chlorothalonil was probably the No. 1 fungicide used on residential lawns. This restriction was agreed to by manufacturers of chlorothalonil in order to reduce overall exposure of two populations to the active ingredient: toddlers exposed after the application on home lawns, and residential handlers and applicators of chlorothalonil on home lawns.

Keep in mind that chlorothalonil is registered for disease control on a variety of

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When applied, chlorothalonil can contaminate surface water as a result of drift or application to standing water.

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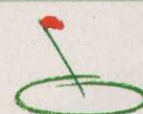
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TABLE 1

**Maximum allowable application rates for chlorothalonil**

Site	Maximum individual application rate per acre (minimum retreatment interval)*	Maximum seasonal total
Golf course greens	11.3 lb ai (14 days)	73 lb ai/A
	7.3 lb ai (7 days)	
Golf course tees	11.3 lb ai (14 days)	52 lb ai/A
	7.3 lb ai (7 days)	
Golf course fairways	11.3 lb ai (one application)	26 lb ai/A
	7.3 lb ai (7 days)	
Sod farms	11.3 lb ai (one application)	26 lb ai/A
	7.3 lb ai (7 days)	
Turf (general)	11.3 lb ai (one application)	26 lb ai/A
	7.3 lb ai (7 days)	

\*Higher application rates require longer intervals between sprays. Lb ai = pounds of active ingredient.

*Continued from page 47*

crops, including food crops. In order to reduce overall exposure to chlorothalonil in these populations and be in compliance with the Food Quality Protection Act, manufacturers agreed to voluntarily remove home lawn uses from the label.

### Use restrictions on golf courses

Chlorothalonil may be applied only according to the maximum allowable application rates given in Table 1. The restrictions outlined in Table 1 are based on ecological concerns regarding aquatic ecosystems. When applied, chlorothalonil can contaminate surface water as a result of drift or application to standing water.

After application, chlorothalonil can move to surface waters in two ways: through runoff as a dissolved chemical and through soil erosion as active ingredients are adsorbed to soil particles. Chlorothalonil is highly toxic to various aquatic organisms: fish, aquatic invertebrates, mollusks and shrimp.

I was surprised to learn that a limited number of fish kills have been documented following application of chlorothalonil, including applications to turfgrass. Although chlorothalonil is used on many crops, turfgrass uses are considered to pose a high risk to aquatic ecosystems because of the high application rates used frequently and repeatedly. EPA concluded that institution of the restrictions outlined in Table 1 would bring ecological risks from chlorothalonil applications down to an acceptable level.

An example of how these restrictions apply to a formulated product is provided in Table 2.

### Honoring these restrictions

In the real world of day-to-day turf disease management, complying with the restrictions outlined in Table 1 undoubtedly poses difficulties in some instances. Some turf managers conscientiously follow these restrictions. However, when the health of a putting green, tee or fairway is on the line, a turf manager is under a lot of pressure to take all available steps to maintain turf health and may even fear for his or her job. Faced with that, the incentive to overlook these label restrictions certainly can be powerful.

It's important to understand that these restrictions are a foundation of EPA's decision to allow reregistration of chlorothalonil on turfgrasses. Violations of these restrictions not only pose the risks described above. Repeated violations also could place at risk the registration of chlorothalonil on turfgrasses. This is an important point.

While living with these restrictions can be difficult at times, consider the alternative: How much tougher would your job be if the registration for chlorothalonil use on turfgrasses were revoked? EPA did not single out turfgrasses. Similar restrictions apply to a long list of crops. The good news for turf managers is that chlorothalonil was reregistered. But you can't assume that it will always remain registered, particularly if its use is abused.

Turf managers must experience a great deal of

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#### QUICK TIP

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TABLE 2

## Maximum allowable application rates for Daconil Ultrex 82.5WDG

Site	Maximum individual application rate per acre (minimum retreatment interval)		Amount of product per year	
	per acre	per 1,000 sq ft	per acre	per 1,000 sq ft
Golf course greens	13.6 lb (14 days)*	5.0 oz (14 days)*	88.5 lb	32 oz
	8.8 lb (7 days)	3.2 oz (7 days)		
Golf course tees	13.6 lb (14 days)*	5.0 oz (14 days)*	63 lb	23 oz
	8.8 lb (7 days)	3.2 oz (7 days)		
Golf course fairways	13.6 lb (1 app)	5.0 oz (1 app)	31.5 lb	11.6 oz
	8.8 lb (7 days)	3.2 oz (7 days)		
Sod farms	13.6 lb (1 app)	5.0 oz (1 app)	31.5 lb	11.6 oz
	8.8 lb (7 days)	3.2 oz (7 days)		
Turf (general)	13.6 lb (1 app)	8.8 lb (7 days)	31.5 lb	11.6 oz
	5.0 oz (1 app)	3.2 oz (7 days)		

\*Apply no more than two sprays per growing season at the high rate.

*Continued from page 48*

frustration when restrictions are imposed on pesticides that play an important role in pest management. You are the people that are directly and negatively affected by such decisions. It may help ease the frustration to know that EPA did a vast amount of careful evaluation of the science regarding chlorothalonil before making its reregistration decision. There was a solid foundation in science and in sound, balanced reasoning behind this decision, and this has been my general experience with EPA throughout my 15-year career as a professor.

It may surprise readers to learn that more chlorothalonil is used as an antifungal agent in paint than is used on golf courses. This widespread use in such a common product as paint may lead turf managers to mistakenly conclude that the environmental and public-health effects of chlorothalonil use on turfgrass must be trivial. However, there typically is no significant aquatic exposure when fresh paint is applied to walls, whereas there is definitely some potential for movement of chlorothalonil into streams, rivers, and estuaries when applied to turfgrass and other crops. Furthermore, toddlers are usually not exposed to fresh paint (and, in fact, major reductions in chlorothalonil concentration in paint have also been mandated by EPA).

Perhaps understanding the rationale for these label restrictions will provide encouragement to the turf manager to use alternative products as needed. Ask yourself why you got into turf management in the first place. Many times, it's

because of a love for nature and being outdoors. Perhaps one can draw on that motivation in those times when there is a great deal of pressure to overlook these restrictions. I'll never forget the glee with which superintendent Mark Wilson showed me the fish nests in the creek running along Valhalla CC in Louisville, the site of the 1996 and 2000 PGA Tournament, proving that golf course development is perfectly at home with environmental protection. I can't imagine a better role model than that.

### Alternatives to chlorothalonil

Chlorothalonil has been a widely used fungicide against a broad range of turfgrass diseases. Clearly, turf managers need to be familiar with products that can be used as alternatives to chlorothalonil.

Your state extension turfgrass pathology program probably has a list of fungicides that may be used against the same turfgrass diseases as chlorothalonil. The University of Kentucky Extension publication PPA-1, *Chemical Control of Turfgrass Diseases*, may prove useful. PPA-1 is available on the Web site at [www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/ppa/ppa1/ppa1.pdf](http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/ppa/ppa1/ppa1.pdf). PPA-1 should be used only as a starting point from which you can look into your options since products listed there may not be registered for use in your particular state.

*Vincelli is an extension professor in the department of plant pathology at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Ky.*