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**J**ob listings can be absurd. We've all seen what has become the generic job listing and, quite frankly, I'd rather read an obituary. It reads something like this:

*Established 18-hole private country club seeks an outstanding superintendent to replace retiring superintendent. Applicants should possess a four-year degree in agronomy or related field. Certification by GCSAA desired.*

*Benefits include medical, dental, 401K, and expenses paid for local and national education. Club has progressive goals and seeks a team player to work with general manager and green committee chairman. Salary commensurate with experience.*

Decode the above message and it would translate into this:

*Eighteen-hole private clubs needs a head greenkeeper because we fired ours since we think we need a change. We have no idea why it would take four years to get a degree in grass growing, but we'd like to think you are dedicated if you took the time to do such a thing. We don't really understand what "certified" means, but we think it is better than "noncertified."*

*We saved money again this year by getting our benefits package from a member's friend so your health insurance probably won't cover you very well. You probably won't be around long enough to be fully vested in our retirement plan, but we'll offer it anyway. You can go to seminars, but we have a policy that you can't spend more than \$35 per day on meals and lodging.*

*General manager has recently been authorized to buy a book on turfgrass management and wants to put you in the middle between himself and the green chairman. The green chairman is selected on his ability to pontificate at the men's grill every day. We really don't want to pay much money, so if you have lots of experience, you are probably overqualified for the position.*

It's tragic, but probably not far from the truth. Maybe a factual (and brutal) listing would be better. Like this:

*Eighteen-hole high-end public daily-fee golf course seeks a superintendent. Our last superin-*

## Seeing Job Listings as They Really Are

BY DAVE WILBER



**"WE MIGHT OFFER  
A BONUS IF THE  
COURSE EVER  
MAKES MONEY. BUT  
IT PROBABLY WON'T  
SO YOU'LL HAVE TO  
LIVE ON THE SMALL  
BASE SALARY WE  
OFFER"**

*tendent quit when we stopped paying our bills. Applicant will need to do more with less while being prepared for us to either sell the course or hire a management company to run the place. Your maintenance budget has been constructed by fantasy writers and includes a large lease payment for equipment that has been worn out already.*

*Superintendent must be able to do all jobs, as we've already cut the staff by more than 10 people. We might offer a bonus if the course ever makes money. But it probably won't so you'll have to live on the small base salary we offer.*

What's that? It's too negative, you say? Well, OK — here's a job announcement that we'd all like to see but is really an endangered species:

*Nice golf facility that is what it is and intends to stay that way seeks a superintendent who can manage assets and staff to the best of his or her ability. Position reports to a benevolent dictator who has been the long-term green-committee chairman.*

*Salary will allow you to have a comfortable life and live within a 15-minute drive of the club. You will work long hours as a self-starter, and we will insure that you have a budget to allow for a capable staff. Getting away for education and mental health is encouraged.*

*You will be evaluated on the things you can control as a superintendent, and not be treated harshly for acts of nature and other things out of human control. We can't pay you more money than the general manager, but you will be paid on par with the rest of the department heads at the club.*

Fantasy, you say? Well, let's hope the above job listing becomes more of a reality for Turfheads who deserve positions like it.

---

*Dave Wilber, a consultant and agronomic advisor, can be reached at [davewilber@soil.com](mailto:davewilber@soil.com).*





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# Performance, *Not* Perfection

Fertigation doesn't require a flawless irrigation system, but retrofitting an old system takes careful evaluation



MIKE KLEMM

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR., MANAGING EDITOR

**C**onventional thinking says you could never switch to a fertigation system with your old single-row, quick-coupler system. Well you could, but to do it correctly, you'd have to rip out your old system and install a technologically advanced system at a cost of millions of dollars. You'd probably never be able to sell your board on that, so fertigation would clearly be out of your reach.

Not so, says Jim Barrett, president of the American Society of Irrigation Consultants and president of James Barrett Associates, a Roseland, N.J.-based irrigation consulting firm — and he has a real-life example to prove it.

At one well-known club, Barrett says he was designing a new irrigation system for both of its courses. The committee initially chose a course to start the work on, so Barrett built a pump station equipped to do fertigation and was ready to start work on replacing the older irrigation system from the ground up. Then the committee changed its mind and decided to start work on the other course instead. So the fertigation system pumped away on the first course for seven

years without a serious upgrade to its single-row coupler system. The superintendent told Barrett that the fertigation program was still effective despite the ancient system.

"Fertigation is typically used to keep levels of nitrogen constant in the soil," Barrett says. "It's not as if superintendents are putting their entire loads of fertilizer strictly through this system. So despite the limits of an older system, it can still work."

In an older system, you may not get the fertility exactly where you want it, but as a labor-saving device you can't afford not to put some part of your fertility program through your system, says Paul Granger, president of Aqua Agromonic Solutions, a Clinton, N.J.-based irrigation-consulting firm.

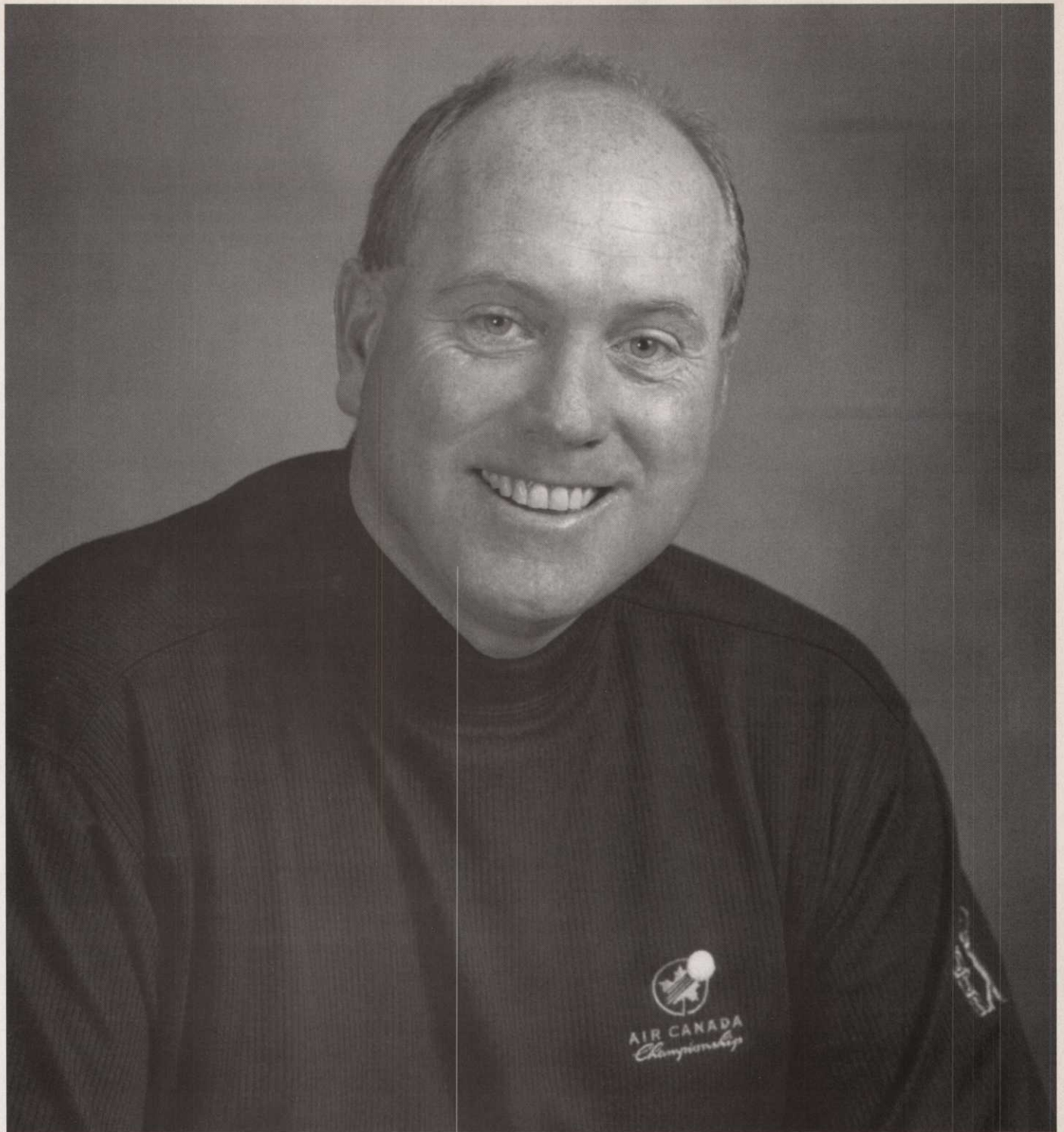
"If you have a new system, you'll get more even distribution," Granger says. "But even if you can't afford a new system, you can tweak the old system to give you enough coverage to make it a viable option."

## What to do

Not all systems — particularly the larger systems in the West that operate year-round — can be

*Continued on page 106*





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*Dave Fair, Superintendent, Northview Golf and Country Club—Surrey B.C.*

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Continued from page 104

retrofitted, of course. Dave Davis, president of David D. Davis and Associates, a Crestline, Calif.-based irrigation consultant, says a common problem is that a green committee tells a superintendent to buy and install a fertigation system without checking to see if the older system will be able to handle it. Wear-and-tear on older systems often render them impossible to retrofit for fertigation.

"The problem is that some guys know when their systems are worn out and others don't," Davis says. "When you don't do your homework, you get into problems."

Davis says he's also seen a second scenario where the course has had a recent upgrade to the irrigation system within the past three or four years, but the fertigation system wasn't installed immediately. The problem with such a setup is that the wear-and-tear may not be visible, Davis says. "If the superintendent can't see the problems, he may not know that fertigation won't accomplish what it's supposed to do."

To determine if your system can handle fertigation, Davis says the most important item you should check is the sprinkler's nozzles.

"Nozzles are often worn by sand and other debris in the water," he adds. "You need to make sure they're in working order. If they're

**Wear-and-tear on older systems often render them impossible to retrofit for fertigation.**

not, you need to replace them."

Davis recommends superintendents test nozzles with a can test. Place a container within the range of the irrigation heads and see how much water it collects during a regular operating cycle.

"When your nozzles are older, there's a good chance they have been damaged by debris," Davis says. "It's increasingly rare to have water so clean that they won't wear down a system over time."

He also recommends getting a full audit of the irrigation system, which includes looking at everything from distribution patterns to electrical bills to see if there are any underground leaks or other problems that prevent the system from working at peak efficiency.

Your system should also have a central-control system that allows a superintendent to make adjustments efficiently. Davis adds that a real-time weather station will help the superintendent get the most from the system.

Finally, a superintendent should check to see if the pump stations pumps water sufficiently to make fertigation worthwhile. "If a pump station puts out too much water or too little water, you're going to end up with an imbalance of nutrients that could hurt your turf," Davis says.

Brian Vinchesi, president of Irrigation Consulting, a Pepperell, Mass.-based irrigation consulting firm, says the fertigation pump must deliver between 120 gallons and 150 gallons per hour to be appropriate for fertigation applications. "You want to have as much flexibility as possible," he adds.

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### Change in thinking required

Davis says that once the system is retrofitted, superintendents have to change the way they think about their fertility programs to accommodate the new method of applying small amounts of nitrogen. If they don't, adding a fertigation system may not provide the benefits expected.

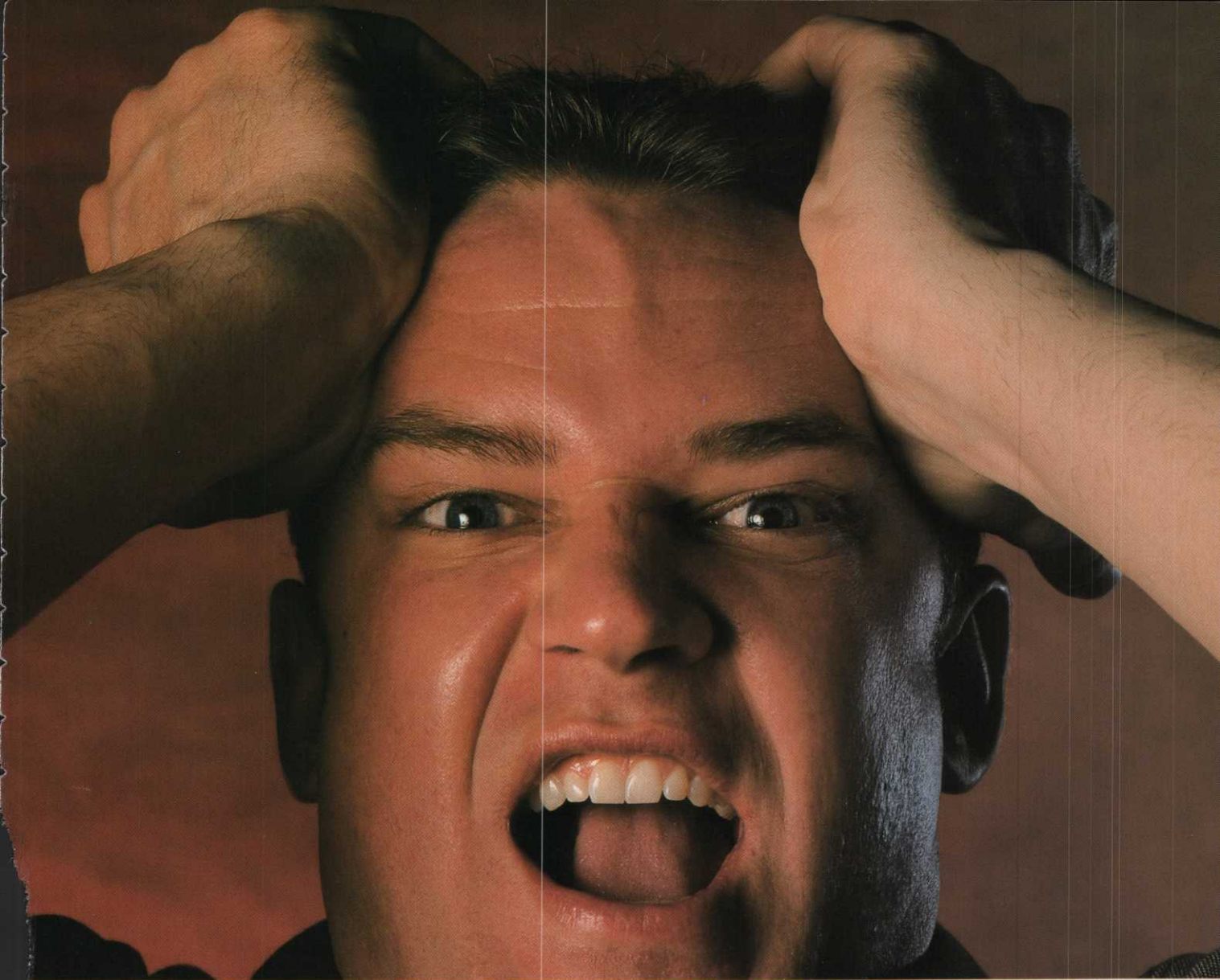
"You don't want to put yourself in a situation where you're overfertilizing, which can happen if you're not used to using fertigation," Davis says. "You need to keep accurate records of each type of chemical or fertilizer used, or you could end up applying too much or too little. Remember, you probably won't use fertigation to apply 100 percent of the fertilizer."

Davis also warns superintendents to check local ordinances before they decide on going through the expense of adding fertigation to their systems. "There are some municipalities that don't allow fertigation, so you want to make sure you're not violating any laws," he says.

Granger says more superintendents need to understand fertigation.

"There are some guys out there who don't understand how fertigation works, so they're scared to make the move [to use it]," Granger says. "I don't believe you can run an effective golf course without it anymore. It's become an essential tool in the management of high-quality turf." ■





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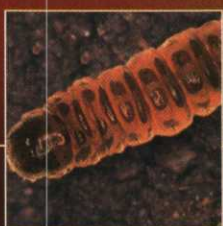


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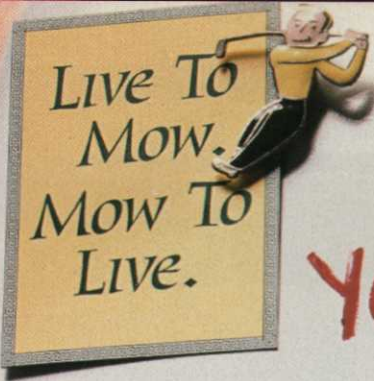
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