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# What value is the support for turf research?

by  
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Judging the value of research support depends upon one's perspective. The most important thought is yours, of course. You are the ultimate user (and judge) of facts, findings, opinions and observations that stem from research efforts. Sometimes it's a hard judgment to make, especially in the short run. I've learned to accept the inevitable fact that results come from research by spurts and jerks. Sometimes good information comes along the way we want it to. At other times, one has reason to wonder what's going on with all the efforts, time and money that is spent?

In this article I want to tell you of **my** perspective — from the standpoint of one who has been fortunate to receive financial support for turf research. I think it might be useful to offer a little historical insight into the question. Time was when grower group assistance was simply not as critical as it once was. Although money never really grew on trees, if a researcher wanted to pursue a given area badly enough, some sort of support could usually be found from traditional sources. Under those circumstances, one of the most common guiding factors was the recognition by the researcher and his/her administrator(s) together that the work was important enough to get done. That, in fact, is how many of the existing research positions have been created over the years. As an example, not too long ago, about 1975, the North Carolina state legislature listened to the needs of its turfgrass industry and established a new turf

pathology position, together with a full time technician, a vehicle and \$10,000 per year support to go with it. But the expansion trend is over. Common effort today is spent on developing support for existing staff to be able to conduct research. The research projects that are pursued are not always the direction the researcher might go, if given a choice. Witness the heavy emphasis upon basic research today in virtually every state. The primary support funds are found in such agencies as the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institute of Health (NIH), and similar granting agencies. I don't begrudge all of that direction, but it makes support tough to find for a person who remains vitally interested in the current problems and needs of his field "clientele".

It's no secret that Wisconsin's support base is no better, and may be worse than, states in many parts of the country for applied research. We're fortunate, though, — from my perspective — that we have an administration that remains interested and philosophically supportive of research and service, including education, that is of current value to grower groups. If external funds can be found to continue applied research, it can be done, and is encouraged. For that reason, an increasing number of grower organizations are arranging for research funds to be generated and directed to the university for this purpose.

My involvement with turf disease concerns has increased substantially over the recent years, due almost entirely to the fact that you

people have let my administrators know that turf disease problems are a high priority, and have donated several thousand dollars in support of the effort. It comes about at a time when we are encountering an extremely interesting array of crown and root problems (*Poa annua* decline, *Ophiobolus* or *Gaeumannomyces* "take-all patch", yellow patch, and necrotic ring spot are examples) as well as a new group of fungicides whose value and role for the golf course superintendent need to be determined. I'm gratified by the support that has been given, for without it, we simply wouldn't — **couldn't** — be involved in making our effort to look at it from this state's situation and experiences. We've used the funds generated to employ turf students (taking especial advantage of their interest and willingness to work for very little in exchange for the experience they gain), to conduct greenhouse and

laboratory experiments, and in some cases to travel to locations that should be investigated.

I like my job. I have the job of dealing with turf and ornamental (mostly tree) diseases. It's an interesting, and sometimes challenging task to try to handle the two crop areas simultaneously from the standpoint of both research and extension education. But I think they are reasonably compatible — providing funds are also provided for the necessary support to make it possible. The people I work with in the field have to deal with both crops in most instances! That's where your support has come in. I'll leave it to you to judge its value, as I said at the beginning. But from my perspective, it's what has made any progress in recent years possible! And it's given me an opportunity to work closely with golf course superintendents that I never had before. Thanks! □

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