



SUDDENLY, SUMMER!

By Monroe S. Miller

Someday I want to live someplace for a time where the seasons come and go gradually, softly and comfortably.

Wisconsin's switch in seasons is almost always sudden, with a boom. You know, a warm autumn day in November yesterday and 18" of snow today. Or, as with this year, snow on April 26th and a record high on May 8th of 85 degrees and 87 degrees the next. Hey! How about 1.5" of rain on January 4th and a temperature of 40 degrees followed by 24 hours and a temperature drop of nearly 50 degrees.

All in one year. This year. In Wisconsin. But it could have been last year or the year before or the year before that.

Those 80 degree days that gave hint to the oncoming summer golf season were sorely needed in most areas of Wisconsin. Recovery from fairly widespread and frequently severe winter injury was slowed by the late and cool spring. Overseeding plans were often tabled by rain—in our town we were six inches above the normal rainfall mark in May. Some colleagues were convinced that it would be Memorial Day before their courses were dried out, firm and playable.

For most of us, May was a backwards month. The warm and rich days came and went early and most shivered in the cold and wet of the holiday weekend honoring our country's fallen soldiers. So did golf players.

Another difficult fact that made things worse for many was that some golf facilities in Wisconsin did not even get open until May. Late openings aggravate players and cash registers, and the effects tumble down through distributors to manufacturers. And we have a lot of golf course equipment manufacturers in our state.

As a matter of fact, even in the balmy southern climate of Madison, one of our courses did not really get opening until one of the first days of May. That's grim.

I received a letter from Tuck Tate in early May. He wrote "I hope your weather is and has been better than Michigan's." He reported that some of

our neighboring state's golf courses were suffering with winterkill also.

There is a lot of truth in the saw "misery likes company."

Anyway, it is behind us now, soon to be forgotten until winter arrives again in too few months.



We have five 68" Nationals in our equipment inventory that we use to mow green and tee surrounds three times a week.

These low technology machines haven't changed substantively in 25 years. No reason to, really. They are durable, easy to repair on those rare occasions when they need fixing, and can climb the old and steep surrounds of a golf course built many years ago.

Except for one thing. They are now powered by Japanese engines.

I almost didn't accept delivery of the first two I'd purchased that came with the foreign engines—no one had told me they were standard. Had I known, I likely would have specified a Briggs engine, just like those that the other three had.

Good thing I didn't know. It is very difficult for me to confess that these small Japanese engines put any similarly sized American-made engine from that time to shame. They made these little National triplexes seem as though they had undergone a complete redesign.

Sad to say—the foreign engines are quiet, smooth (absolutely no vibrations), fuel efficient and trouble-free. They always start. I was amazed and impressed.

And depressed. "Why can't we make products like that any more?" I wondered to myself more than a few times. Wisconsin was the home for the world's small engines for decades—Briggs & Stratton, Kohler and Tecumseh. I know these manufacturers are capable of giving us such a product. Why don't we see it?

That is all background information that helps explain why I am revved up about a new \$1 million engineering effort at the University of Wisconsin-

Madison. The program is aimed at helping small engine makers meet tougher federal pollution laws while protecting 90,000 jobs statewide.

The research effort is called "The Wisconsin Small Engine Consortium" and is being supported by Briggs & Stratton, Kohler, Tecumseh, OMC, Mercury Marine, Nelson Industries and Harley-Davidson.

Concern about meeting air quality standards that are to be phased in by the year 2000 stimulated formation of the group.

Small engines are currently unregulated for their emissions, and there is a big question as to how the manufacturers will meet the new standards. Of equal concern is the potential increased costs.

The research will focus on the unburned hydrocarbons given off by the small engines we use on so much of our golf course equipment. Obviously, that implies a lot of carburetor research.

The 90,000 jobs number should be clarified. Something over 17,000 people are employed by the consortium directly; 72,000 state residents work for companies that supply the consortium with parts, materials and services. Big bucks are involved here. The engine makers generate annual sales of more than \$4 billion!

Of the \$1 million to be spent, the state will provide \$470,000 and the balance will come from the companies.

The money will be used for materials and equipment to be used in the research. As with our turf research, grad students will help also. Five or six will be working on the project at any one time.

The UW-Madison College of Engineering has been doing engine research for nearly 50 years at its Engine Research Laboratory, another example of one of the things that makes it a world class institution.

By the way, American-made small engines, just like American cars, have drastically improved in recent times so that they are among the best.



We read a lot in our literature about what is good for us and what may be hazardous to our health.

The best news I have read in awhile comes from a team of researchers for the National Institute on Aging. They've discovered that dieting which prevents

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'natural weight gain' might be both futile AND hazardous to your health.

Now that's what I call good news.

They feel that middle-aged people who are 'slightly plump' might live longer than skinny people.

YES! I always figured those weight charts that determine what you should weigh were made up by skinny doctors.

No more. According to these more reasonable guidelines, I'm carrying around an 'acceptable' number of pounds. Those few extra pounds might be doing me some good, since I'm over 35.

This doesn't give license to be obese. That will never be good for you. But a few extra pounds, coupled with the exercise most of us get in our work, make us healthier than our skinny neighbor who is a banker or lawyer or preacher.

Three cheers for the plump among us!

●

I don't like retirements, and don't make a secret of that. I don't like having good green committee chairmen "retire", miss Jim Love in his retirement, and wonder what profs Worf and Newman are doing now that I don't see them much since they retired.

Clearly, I only dislike the retirement of people I like and who influence and help.

So I am sad to report on the retirement of Dr. George Sledge. He's been

working in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for 40 years. As the Dean of Academic Student Affairs for 28 years, one of his duties was administration of CALS scholarships. That included those given by the WGCSA, the WTA, the GCSAA and the NOR-AM Company. Any of our officers who dealt with his office knows how professionally it operated.

Nearly every graduate in the history of the UW's Turf Management Program was a student during Dean Sledge's tenure of office. That is a remarkable record.

What one should remember about this man is his concern—real and genuine—for students and for his ability at getting others to go along with his ideas. In an institution as large as the one in Madison, that last quality is critical for success. And success he had.

On a personal note, I am a member of the CALS Search Committee that will give Dean Roger Wyse four candidates to fill Sledge's position.

None will replace him.

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How about that University of Wisconsin-Madison golf team? All they did was win the Big 10 Conference's men's golf tournament at the end of the second week of May.

The tourney was hosted by Indiana and played in Bloomington.

What a great team this is for all of Wisconsin! Unlike football and basketball and hockey (and how many other sports), all five of the golfers who played for the UW grew up in Wisconsin.

Their victory is even greater when considered in the context of an absolutely lousy spring which limited the amount of time they could practice.

As this is being reported, the UW team is NOT in the NCAA tournament, a gross injustice considering that Ohio State, Minnesota and Michigan State are. It seems even more unfair when you realize that the UW team beat three other teams at tournaments during the season that have also been invited—Kent State, Kentucky and Marshall.

Anyway, the Big 10 trophy in men's golf is in Madison for the first time since 1957. That should make us all proud.

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What a relief—tree ring data from a 3,613 year old tree in South America shows no sign of global warming caused by human activity.

A couple of researchers reported that annual growing rings in an alerce tree, the second longest-living tree species known, show that the climate near the west coast of South America has warmed and cooled many times over

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thousands of years but that there has been no increase in temperatures during the industrial age.

They said their study does not contradict studies that have suggested warming trends in parts of the Northern Hemisphere. But the results indicate that any global warming isn't really global—at least not yet.

The pros who conducted the research—one from Colorado and one from Arizona—measured the width of rings in 96 trunk wedges or corings from standing alerce trees or from stumps of harvested trees in Chile and Argentina.

Temperatures experienced by trees directly affect the amount of growth each year and that is reflected in the width of the annual rings. As a result, it is possible to use the tree rings to reconstruct climatic conditions for the life of the tree.

Of course, any Wisconsin golf course superintendent, shivering in the cold of a late spring this year or in the cool summer of last year, could offer that evidence of "warming" is in short shrift.

It is rewarding to have our reservations confirmed independently.

From the April 1993 *Hortideas* comes the report that Tewksbury Gardens in Lebanon, New Jersey is selling a line of "self-fertilizing" figurines and planters called "PooPets".

They are made from "natural, organic, biodegradable" manure—sanitized cow manure, to be exact—handcrafted into animal figurines and pots. Among their offerings are 'dung bunnies, stool toads, T-burds and turdles.'

We've used Milorganite and Sustane and bone meal and blood meal and other organic products for some time now. Are we ready for this?

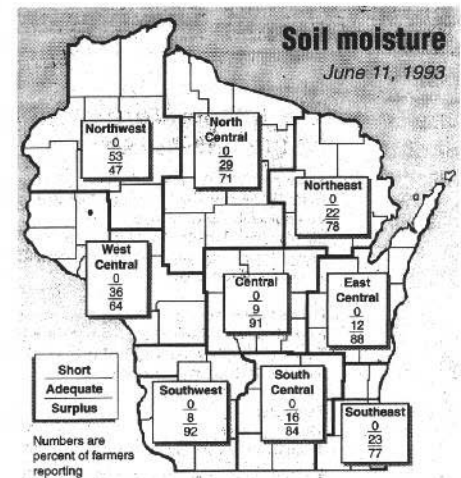
Designed to last more than a year outdoors, it makes you wonder if they have potential as tee blocks?

"I don't think so, Tim."

Have you had enough rain this season? My best guess would be 'yes', judging from the graphic presented by the Wisconsin Agriculture Statistics Service.

By mid-June, no area of Wisconsin was in short supply of moisture, while most places were in a surplus status.

It can be both a blessing and a curse, depending on whether you are trying to get a new irrigation system up



and running or a new course built. Your view depends on if you are trying to aerify or to get some fertilizer working.

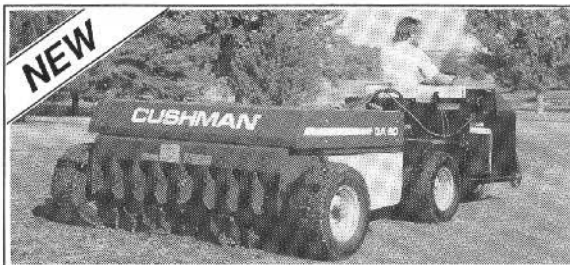
It also proves it is impossible to please all of us at once.

The shortened season moves on. As this issue goes to press I am already thinking about the next one. And the next one is for September/ October.

Before you know it, the snow will fly again. Scary.

But until then, enjoy. See ya. 🍷

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