



THERE'S CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM

By Monroe S. Miller

Like lots of other golf course superintendents, I invested a fair amount of off season time in education this winter. The investment is essential in this day and age, just like it has been in every other.

It was time well spent. There's a lot of activity in this dynamic business and the smart manager listens a lot and reads even more.

I am coming out of the education season with a great deal more optimism than I have in recent years. I am convinced that there really is a chance for our business not only to survive but to prosper in the upcoming years.

The reasons for such an upbeat attitude breaks out into fairly obvious categories.

The first is the emphasis on and emerging possibilities presented to us by biocontrols. Endophytes, bacterial control of grubs, non-parasitic nematode control of diseases, compost teas and any number of organic byproducts offer potential for reducing "chemical" inputs in golf turf management. That's exciting.

Secondly, you'd have to be deaf and blind not to recognize the good research being done to determine the actual fate of pesticides and fertilizers we use in turfgrass management. Some very encouraging and positive results are turning up. Mostly we are

finding out that ground water supplies and surface water resources aren't being contaminated by golf turf inputs. In fact, some studies indicate that turf is highly beneficial, something we've always known. It's good that the benefits are being quantified.

Attitudes among golf course superintendents have really changed for the better. The reluctance to embrace an "environmentalist" approach to management is fading fast. Only idiots will continue to resist; their fate, unfortunately, will likely be unemployment.

Many of the regulations we now operate under have had a positive influence. Underground tanks rightfully had to go. Recycling of resources helps all in our society, including us and our families. Better packaging—minibulks, for example—makes sense and will continue to improve as a result of new laws.

Regulations that will affect mixing/loading operations in all of agriculture, including us, probably are necessary.

The WGCSA and the GCSAA have used an intelligent strategy in dealing with regulators, environmentalists and politicians—establishment of dialogue. Both of our groups have given good lessons in "building bridges instead of walls." It really works.

Irrigation equipment improvements continue to be more efficient in our use. Also, effluent

water is becoming a significant source of water for golf courses. Pumping stations advances are leading to energy efficiency.

More diesel power, longer lasting fungicides, lightweight equipment, improved grass varieties and a hundred other things will help us continue to keep golf courses an environmental asset. That is cause maybe not only for optimism but celebration.

It may be that the most formidable task lies ahead. When we are able to convince the golfer of the value of compromise, we will have arrived. Slightly higher heights of cut, acceptance of a few weeds, "slower" grass and a few other tolerances will be the capstone to an effort to position golf positively as we move into the next century.

When it's done, the cause for celebration will be overwhelming. 🌿



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