



Remaining Teachable

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I had hoped to fill this month's "gazing space" with a scientific article, loaded with facts for you to sink your teeth into. The traveling pace has been frantic; you know when you see Wayne Otto four out of five days in one week you are traveling too much! Yet, as this month's title suggests, there are always new experiences around each corner from which to learn, if I choose to remain teachable.

Golf course superintendents in Wisconsin are a virtual wealth of practical experience when it comes to what works and doesn't work when growing grass. Still, we struggle with lingering concerns regarding winter injury, disease management, and maintaining environmental quality. I have been impressed with many of the innovative strategies employed by many of you and your willingness to consider alternative management options.

However, many remain ignorant of today's concerns and closed minded towards tomorrow's solutions. This is the group I worry for. They're not interested in continuing education, will pay lip service to research, but do not support it. And unless it impacts their track of land, it doesn't concern them. I read the other day in the *NY Times* about a retired civil engineer in Canada who was a member of an environmental group trying to block the development of a sensitive area. He said, "The problem is man's life span. If we lived to be 600 years old, everyone would be an environmentalist".

As a scientist, I am charged with investigating certain topics in my discipline. This requires a full understanding of the scientific literature on which you base the hypothesis that you design your experiment to address. Sounds fairly straight forward, until I traveled around the state with scientists like Julie and Wayne, who have not been indoctrinated into the turf industry. I realized how much of what I have carried with me over the years as a golf course manager was either based on work from 40 years ago or was hearsay from some conference proceedings which was never held up for scientific scrutiny. In looking back through the turf literature, it was apparent that there are many gaps in our understanding of basic turfgrass biological principles.

We are a profession which has been driven by practically-minded individuals to address management concerns and, in my opinion, we have not always been asking the right questions. So, I come to you today a scientist who must re-think much of the dogma, and as Joe Vargas would say, "folklore," that our management practices are based on. If you want an example of what I mean read Wayne Kussow's 'cultivation' article this month. I welcome the opportunity to approach my discipline from a new perspective, but first I have to go back and re-evaluate those "scientific" facts I learned during my development as a golf course manager.

Do you? I hope you all and I can remain teachable! 🌿

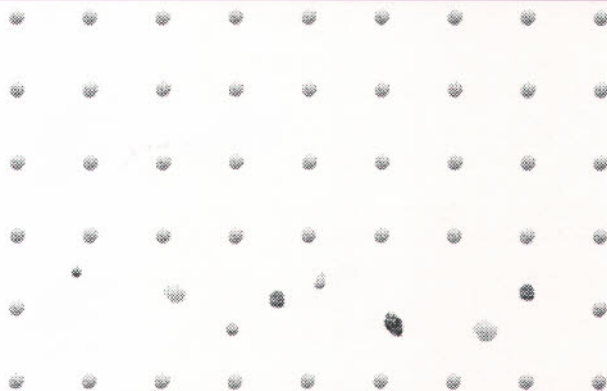
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