



## Will We Ever See Spring Again?

By Monroe S. Miller

If I haven't learned anything else in two-plus decades on golf courses and a rural upbringing, I at least now know that nothing is predictable on either a golf course or a farm.

That is especially true in the winter and in the spring in Wisconsin. *Que sera sera* — if something happens, it happens. And it is frustrating because in the wintertime there is little we can do to change it. Neither can we in a spring like this one.

The winter of 1992-1993 was one of the ugliest and most miserable winter seasons in my memory. And one of the longest.

The worst of the weather came after January 1st and didn't let up through the dark, foggy, wet, snowy days of late March and early April. In fact, on March 31st a record breaking 1.5 inches of rain fell in Madison, followed by a blizzard we won't soon forget on April Fool's Day. Easter Sunday brought lots of snow in the northern half of the state.

On some courses in our area, there were six and more inches of ice on putting greens from the radical temperature drop on January 5th.

A number of course managers modified coring machines, broke through some of the ice and pushed it off the greens. There were subsequent snow plowings of putting surfaces — there's a photograph to look at on August 1st — and topdressing to help remove ice.

Unfortunately, in my opinion, much of the damage was done on January 5th. Turf submerged in several inches of ice for several days and then subjected to such rapid and severe temperature change has little chance.

And we cannot do much about circumstances like those. But if there was ever a winter when I've seen golf course superintendents do more things to help the turf, I don't recall it.

Many have turned damage into opportunity and extensively overseeded in hope of introducing more tolerant and winter hardy species into those damaged areas.

Before any of that could happen, we all had to wait, in April, until the moun-

tains of snow melted and the never-seen-before golf course ponds slowly receded.

The going has been slow and sloppy this spring. I've noticed, however, that springtime problems are easier to deal with because of the longing most of us have had to get out of doors.

Despite problems, there is something refreshing about this plain, no nonsense time. It reintroduces us to a condition many others do not face very often — reality.

It is good to have one's life punctuated by seasons, to know that things do change and that we cannot always influence the outcome. And it is important to see our life's routine bear some relationship to the elements.

Golf course superintendents have to learn, at an early career age, to live with the weather and accept it. Good or bad.

But I'll always enjoy a good spring much more than one like this one of 1993.

I have a question for Randy Nichols, new president of GCSAA: when do you write your president's message, anyway? Your observation, Randy, about the "huge" crowd at the Environmental Session held at the conference in Anaheim goes way past simple exaggeration.

It just plain wasn't so. In fact, everyone I know who was there characterized the audience size with adjectives and phrases like small, puny, poorly attended, disappointing and embarrassing.

I didn't actually do a head count, but I'd be surprised if 300 were there. GCSAA will boast about an attendance of 16,000 at the conference. That makes the turnout at the environmental session even worse.

Senator Metzenbaum was also openly disappointed, to the point of appearing disgusted.

Saying the crowd was huge will not make it so. That is why I have to believe, Randy, that you expected it to be like the session from the previous

year. THAT was a huge crowd. And as an editor, I know about deadlines.

But meeting a deadline should not be done at the risk of credibility. And if the GCSAA needs anything right now, it needs credibility.

Give it to us straight, please. We can take it. Silly overstatements like this one are insulting. We simply are smarter than that.

An article in the March issue of "Farm Futures" magazine was less of a news feature and more of an affirmation.

The article reported on a survey of deans of the nation's agricultural schools. The survey listed the University of Wisconsin-Madison as one of the top ten in the country. No surprise there.

The survey also gave credit to the faculty and administration for joining the agricultural sciences and the life sciences, affording the College the chance to do more applied research in the area of biotechnology and animal science. In most universities, the two are separate.

In fact, I've even heard discussions about including botany and zoology into CALS from L&S.

The article said, "Wisconsin is a leader in biotechnology, biochemistry, molecular biology and dairy science."

It also pointed out that the tuition for attending CALS at the UW-Madison was lower than all but three of the other top ten schools.

It is always nice to see this kind of recognition from elsewhere in the U.S.

Speaking of CALS, through the courtesy of Dr. Roger Wyse I have some very interesting figures to share with you.

Legislators like to attack faculty over the issue of teaching. They claim too many college professors are interested in research at the expense of classroom teaching.

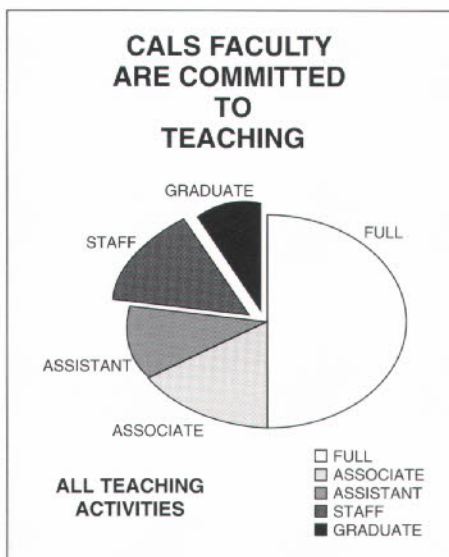
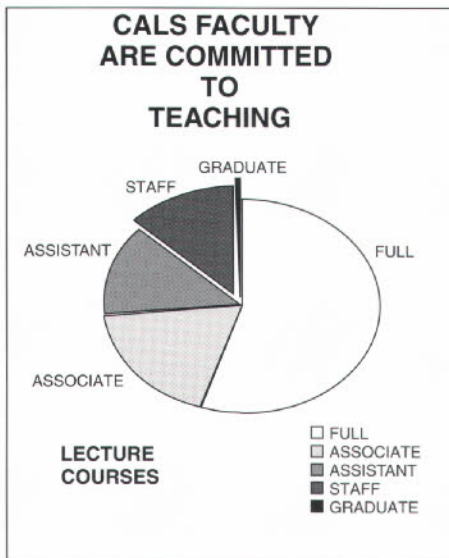
Any graduate of the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences knows that isn't true. So does Dr. Wyse. But he also knows the value of documentation.

So he searched the College's enormous data bank and found that 88% of all CALS faculty members teach, regardless of their salary source. The term "faculty" means professor—full, associate or assistant.

How lucky CALS students are — lecture classes are predominately taught by full professors. And as is well known, many of these are world class scientists, members of the National Academy of Science and other prestigious organizations.

I can't speak about other colleges and schools within the UW-Madison. But accusations about teaching loads and work schedules are NOT born out by the facts when it comes to the college that houses the departments our golf turf industry depends on.

For that we can be grateful. The following graphics tell the story.



Dr. Gordon Harvey, weed science professor at the UW-Madison Department of Agronomy, has noticed a significant increase of herbicide resistant weeds in Wisconsin. This trend of increased resistance is coming at a time when development of new herbicides is dramatically dropping off.

Although the resistance is greatest with herbicides we don't use, it is nevertheless a development worth watching. It also puts more emphasis on the need for more sophisticated alternatives.

He never seems to miss a chance to make some money. So it shouldn't be a surprise that Arnold Palmer is involved in a new radio station that will offer 24 hours of golf broadcasting.

It will cover more than just tournaments. Most interesting to me was the plan to offer extensive interviews with the tour players and the great players of the past.

The best interview they'll ever have will be with Arnie himself.

I had to chuckle at the contradiction. We were visited in our shop by one of our favorite people who represents one of our turf equipment distributors. Travelling with him was a manufacturer's representative, also a fine person.

What was funny is the manufacturer's rep was introducing a plant growth regulator, presumably to reduce the amount of mowing one might have to do on the golf course.

You guessed it — the distributor's rep was selling...mowers!

And fertilizer!

What a business we're in.

A golf course, in many ways, reflects the experiences of the superintendent who is managing it at any given time. Some reflections are subtle; others are a little more obvious.

Take trees, for example. I've tended, over the years, to plant a preponderance of trees native to this part of Wisconsin. My interest has been especially strong in oak varieties. But you also will find trees like sugar maple, shagbark hickory, walnut and butternut. The numbers of them aren't great, but we have some.

One of the wild crops we used to harvest on our farm in southwestern Wisconsin in the autumn was nuts — hickory nuts, walnuts and butternuts.

The hickory tree, in my opinion, is a very good golf course tree — good form and shape, spring interest and fall color.

Butternut and walnut are less that way, but do add to the interest of landscape with the nuts and pretty decent fall color. Members and others, by the way, harvest almost all the crop these trees produce each fall.

So I am distressed to learn of how serious the canker problem has become with the butternut trees of our state.

I have lots of company, too. Wisconsin has more butternut trees than any other state, about 58% of all such trees in the country.

The fungus that is attacking butternuts was first detected in the 1960s. A recent WDNR survey revealed that 91% of the Wisconsin butternuts are infested. The few I have planted are still OK.

Some fear that if something isn't done soon, there will be no more butternuts in the future.

Once again, our land grant university has led the way with understanding this disease. It was first discovered by Dr. Jim Kuntz, who was a colleague of Professor Gayle Worf in the UW-Madison's Department of Plant Pathology.

Professor Kuntz is especially worried about the butternut canker. He, too, likes the tree, calling it "one of the superior, aesthetically valuable woods — on a par with Eastern black walnut. But the grain is much more evident."

He is also worried because the butternut canker is killing trees. Many trees get cankers, but few die from the disease. Dr. Kuntz started a research program studying disease-free butternuts before he retired in 1984. The USDA Forest Service picked up the work some time after that.

In its recently published "Forest Health Report", the Forest Service called the butternut a "decreasing component" of northern hardwood and oak-hickory forests. It seems to think the butternut is a "threatened" species.

The report concluded "severe losses throughout the range of butternut are threatening the survival of the species, as the disease continues to spread."

We have to hope that, somewhere, there is a resistant tree that will protect us from losing the butternut from our landscape.

Finally, on a lighter note, one had to enjoy a quote from the Wisconsin Revenue Secretary, Mark Bugher.

Playing on Clinton's unwillingness to call a spade a spade (or a tax a tax, like the ones that will soon be foisted on the middle class), Mr. Bugher recently told the Dane County Republican caucus that his Revenue Department title should more appropriately be "secretary of contributions, sacrifice and investment!" 🍷