



Wisconsin Owes Milorganite More Support

By Monroe S. Miller

Anyone who has been a program participant in the Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium has at least some idea of all the work and planning and money the Milorganite Division of MMSD puts into this sterling educational program. My opinion is that without their tremendous effort, the Symposium would be a shadow of what it now is, if it existed at all.

The Symposium was, after all, created as a tribute to O.J. Noer, the man who the world respected as its greatest turfgrass scientist. O.J. spent a career with Milorganite and his name was synonymous with it.

Decades ago, you could find Milorganite at nearly every golf course facility here in Wisconsin, and in many, many outside our borders.

When I was a student at the UW working at the Nakoma Golf Club, we would get our year supply of Milorganite from a train car at the West Washington Avenue railroad depot. We shared a freight car load with other courses in town.

Milorganite was then and still is today a superb product. It is an easy to use, free flowing, ecologically sound product that may have even more relevance today than it did almost 30 years ago when I was introduced to it.

O.J. was near the end of his career then, but I was well aware of the great resource Milorganite had in Charlie Wilson, Jim Latham and Bob Welch. In their time, these names were also synonymous with this excellent Wisconsin product.

But something has happened in the last 10 years or so. Somewhere along the line loyalties to the product and the organization faded.

Ask some current turf students at the UW-Madison (or anywhere else, for that matter) about Milorganite and all you get is a blank look. They simply aren't aware of Milorganite or its history or its value as a source of turfgrass nutrition.

There are many reasons that explain how we arrived where we are

today. Aggressive and capable sales representatives from other plant nutrient suppliers have overtaken Wisconsin's golf course market.

Since the retirement of Welch and Wilson, and Latham's move to the USGA, there have been many personnel changes at MMSD. Those critical relationships and associations were lost and haven't yet been completely re-established.

Another problem is the fact that no one is travelling from golf course shop to golf course shop talking about Milorganite. Some golf course superintendents don't even know who to call to place an order for Milorganite.

All these things notwithstanding, it seems to me a fitting time for payback. I'd argue we have a near obligation to support an organization that has done so very much for us. I'd even like to see a minimum of five tons of Milorganite in

every golf course shop in the state.

It should be easy for courses in Milwaukee County. And it should be really easy for all municipalities to help another one.

It makes sense for low budget courses to use Milorganite—it's extremely affordable.

It makes sense for high budget courses to use Milorganite—it's a premium product.

The product makes environmental sense, nutritional sense and common sense.

Don't you think it is time to show our thanks to an organization that has done so much for us? Helping them will ultimately come back and help you, through the Symposium and through research supported by the O.J. Noer Research Foundation.

It's a good deal for everybody. ♣

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