



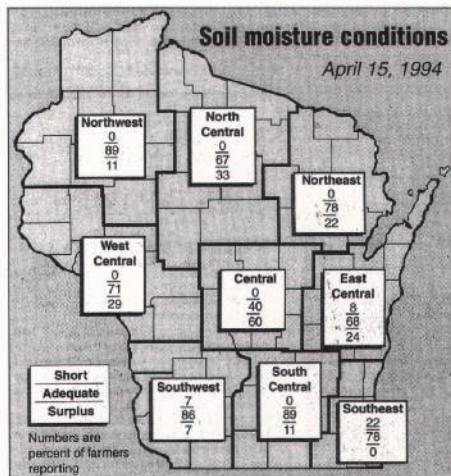
NOW THAT WAS A SPRING!

By Monroe S. Miller

Could it be that, for most of us in Wisconsin, the spring of 1994 will be remembered as one of the kindest and most pleasant early seasons ever for golf courses? I believe it.

I came to that conclusion in the second week of May. Parked under a mature flowering crabapple tree that had blossomed early in spring, I was covered with soft white petals. They were falling like snowflakes; it was an utterly delightful experience.

The whole spring season was wonderful. Except for some shortage of moisture (see graphic below from the Wisconsin Ag Stat Service for status at start of season), it was a great time for golf courses. As I think of it, there were more windy days than I would like, raising cane with those beautiful flowering crab trees, lilacs and mock orange. And, yes, May 1994 in Madison was the sixth driest ever.



Maybe the best part of the spring season of 1994 was that it was actually a season for a change. It started early enough to allow for more traditional opening days, proceeded toward summer with almost no "course closed" conditions and lasted until summer arrived on Memorial Day weekend.

Oh, there were some bumps on the road to summer. Nearly all received snow on April 30th; our town was

buried with eight inches of it! We aerified greens on the afternoon of May 1st, and the snow had melted away by then. Conditions were perfect for that dreaded job.

Here in our town the spring of 1994 will be remembered for an enormous crop of seed from *Poa annua*. And seeding lasted for an inordinate length of time. It was aggravating to players and golf course employees, especially those with allergies. Some trees produced "distress" quantities of seed—silver maple and American elm, in particular—and the oak trees on our course dropped an abundance of flowers. What does it all mean?

We are especially lucky to be in Madison in the springtime. The University of Wisconsin-Madison's arboretum has one of the world's best lilac collections and one of the best flowering crab collections. When these ornamentals are in full bloom, there is no better place in the world to be. The aroma of the lilacs is very nearly intoxicating. Again this spring, the collections were a sight and smell to behold.

What made this a great spring was that it was more than a fleeting moment between winter and summer. It reminded me of a spring I spent in the south while I was in the Army. Spring there lasted and lasted and was such a pleasure that even mean drill sergeants couldn't spoil it!

Summer should be as nice as this spring was.

There is no shortage of good reasons to subscribe to the USGA's Turfgrass Advisory Service. Here is some powerful evidence that even the best golf courses get help from the TAS. From the most recent list published by *Golf Digest*, 40 of the top 50 courses and 73 of the top 100 golf courses subscribe to the USGA service.

The evidence of the value of a visit to your golf course from Jim Latham or Bob Vavrek is overwhelming. If you

aren't a subscriber now, give serious consideration to adding your course to the list of those who are. You'll be in good company.

The Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey publishes a newsletter, and their latest issue seems to say you can put aside your fears of global warming if you live here in Wisconsin or elsewhere in the upper midwest.

Based on their study of weather records and geologic evidence from these areas, geologists predict we are in for some glaciers around here. Sooner than many expected, by the way.

Survey geologist and UW-Madison geographers used evidence gathered from studies of fossil pollen, the shells of ancient marine animals and tree ring data to arrive at their prediction.

The study of pollen in layers of Wisconsin lake or bog sediment shows that from about 12,000 to 10,000 years ago, spruce pollen was dominant in the state. This clue tells researchers climate conditions then were like those found in present-day northern Canada.

Ten thousand years ago, the pollen accumulation changed, and the spruce pollen was replaced by oak pollen and warmer temperatures.

The advance and retreat of glaciers in Wisconsin buried and destroyed evidence of earlier glaciers. However, study from other parts of the world show general global patterns, including glaciers. The chemical composition of marine animal shells in ocean floor sediments shows scientists variations in the size of continental ice sheets over hundreds of thousands of years.

Using such evidence, geologists say there have been patterns of alternating ice ages—each about 90,000 years long—and warm periods in between, each about 10,000 long. This has gone on for about 700,000 years.

It is known from pollen research that the warm period we are now in is about 10,000 years old, which means we are probably at the tail end of it. That could be a bad moon on the rise.

Core samplings from the Greenland ice sheet have shown that larger climate changes happen much more rapidly than previously thought, maybe over just a few years or decades instead of centuries.

Those of us who are "younger" members may see a shorter golf season yet!

We had to call Tom Emmerich for some help with our Toro Network 8000 control system in mid-spring. He solved the problem, and shortly afterward I received evidence that at least one advertiser reads *THE GRASS*

ROOTS. Below is Tom's invoice to me.

For the fourth straight year, new golf course openings have increased in the United States, according to The National Golf Foundation. A 23-year high 358 new courses opened in 1993

Somewhat surprisingly, Wisconsin ranked 9th in the country in 1993 for new openings. The "under construction" category shows Wisconsin ranked fourth in the U.S.! The game in the Badger State appears to be healthy—good news for us.

It sounds like we are going to have to start stocking catalytic converters for greensmowers and fiveplexes in the not too distant future.

The EPA has announced it has set

emission standards for "lawn mowers" and other gasoline-powered tools like chain saws and leaf blowers. Can our other equipment be far behind?

EPA Administrator Carol Browner, who has impressed few I've visited with, said "reducing emissions from those engines will help us assure all Americans have clean, healthy air to breathe."

That is a push and exaggeration, but you will get little argument from me that some refinements to reduce foul exhaust from small engines are necessary and indeed will be helpful.

The EPA claims the 89 million mowers, garden tractors, chain saws and similar outdoor equipment pieces in the country account for 10% of the nation's air pollution. They claim one hour of operation with a lawn mower creates as much pollution as 11 1/2 hours of driving a new car.

EPA said the changes would cost buyers of new lawn mowers roughly \$5 more. By the year 2003, when the new engines are expected to power the bulk of lawn equipment in use, the proposed changes will reduce carbon monoxide in the atmosphere.

We will have company in this EPA small engine effort. Later this summer the agency is going after outboard motorboat engines. Those things really smoke!

There was bad news out of Milwaukee six or so weeks ago. Briggs & Stratton Corporation decided to shift about 2,000 jobs out of Wisconsin.

From a high of nearly 11,000 jobs in the state, the Briggs management had chiseled the number down to around 6,000 before this recent announcement.

Their plan is to move the small gas engine division and some other operations to existing plants in the south and three new plants at unspecified sites. The moves are due to begin in mid-1995 and wrap up in 1997.

One of the reasons given for the move was high wage union jobs. No doubt there were many others.

Many pieces of golf turf equipment are powered by Briggs engines.

Around the 4th of July, the National Weather Service intends to supply several cities around the country with experimental guidance forecasts called the "Ultraviolet Potential Index." The daily ultraviolet index will serve as a warning in the still unselected lo-

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cales when high amounts of ultraviolet light pierce the atmosphere's protective but thinning ozone shield.

The index comes in answer to the epidemic rise in skin cancer, caused by ultraviolet exposure, in Americans in recent years. Clearly, golf course superintendents and golf course employees are especially susceptible to skin cancer. Actually, other health problems are related to ultraviolet exposure, too, such as cataracts and the weakening of human immune responses.

The hope is that Americans will heed such forecasts and be more careful when they venture into the summer sun. It could be that long pants, long-sleeved shirts and wide brimmed hats will become more acceptable summer fashion.

The initial trials with the index, if successful, will become a standard feature in all local weather bureaus in the country in the spring of 1995.

The index will assign ultraviolet risk factors on a scale of 1 to 15, with 15 being the most dangerous. The forecasts will be geared to people at most risk—light-complected, blue-eyed people with blond and red hair.

The National Weather Service said the categories will be:

Minimal Risk (0 to 2): safe to be

unprotected in sunlight on a cloudless day for one hour or more; minimal risk of ultraviolet radiation.

Low Risk (2 to 4): safe 30 minutes to an hour.

Moderate Risk (4 to 6): safe 20 to 30 minutes.

High Risk (6 to 10): skin damage occurs after 13 minutes.

Very High Risk (11 to 15): skin damage occurs in less than 13 minutes.

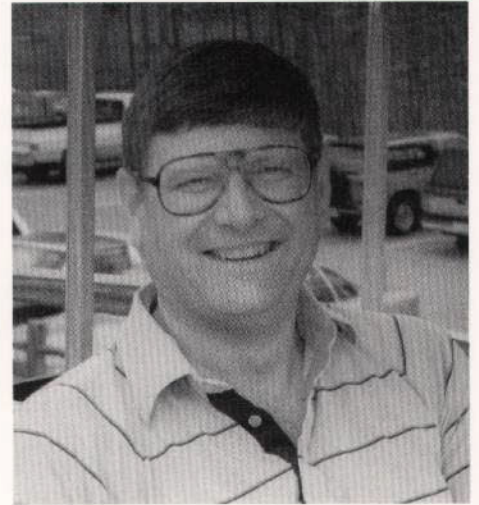
The intensity of ultraviolet exposure varies with geographic location and atmospheric conditions. The closer you are to the polar extremes, the less the risk of exposure. The most intense is, obviously, at the equator. Cloudless days are the most dangerous.

A NWS researcher said that during the height of summer in Chicago, on a cloudless day, the risk would be in the range of 8 or 9 on the UV scale.

Here's a frightening statistic—about one in six Americans will contract skin cancer in their lifetime. Malignant melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, grew at a rate of 321% between 1950 and 1989, with about 32,000 new cases reported each year. More than a million cases of non-malignant skin cancers are now treated annually.

Since so much of the work of a golf course superintendent takes place in the outdoors, we need to be especially vigilant of this increasingly serious disease.

Finally, a photo for your enjoyment. I took Don Steinmetz's picture at the Abbey Springs meeting. He doesn't look as though he is old enough to be a new 25-year member of our state association. He wears the years and miles very well. Congratulations to a great guy! 🙌



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