



## ANSWERS

December 7, 1993

Monroe S. Miller  
Blackhawk Country Club  
P.O. Box 5129  
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Dear Monroe,

This is my first response to requests you have made for such in *THE GRASS ROOTS*. I am submitting to you my answers and thoughts to your latest editorial "Further Questions I'd Like Answers To..." from the Nov/Dec 1993 issue. I do not profess to have all the answers, but I am somewhat opinionated nonetheless.

So, in the words of the forever trendsetting New Orleans Saints football fans: "whoompf...there it is!"

Sincerely,  
David C. Van Auken

1. "Affordable" in our industry is pretty much out of the question. Next.

2. Just because technological advances continue at a tremendous pace does not mean that current devices are obsolete. The initial design was at the time compatible with what was needed then. If it still works, don't fix it. The only thing that I can imagine outdating an irrigation system is expansion, or the need for more stringent conservation measures which is indeed a reality of the very near future.

3. Much is indeed lost after the sale is completed.

4. It's true that much could be learned from the automobile industry.

5. It depends upon the scope of the project. The larger scale endeavors are more efficiently handled by someone equipped to do so. On the other hand, attention to detail is unsurpassed when done in-house. I find a combination to work best. The contractor easily progresses through the "rough" stuff and we save dollars by "tuning" it in.

6. The majority must call in advance. Many do as a matter of courtesy. It's those that I welcome unannounced.

7. For years.

8. Tough call here. I think the rollers came out a little early last year, before the "trend" had established itself. I look for increased marketing of the same products here. The fully enclosed spray rigs were to me the beginning of something BIG. Safer pesticide use and handling will always be at the forefront of our industry, and rightly so. I think injection units will soon come of age.

9. We have. As with any type of aerification, the results tend to be long term. The surface disruption is everything they promote it to be—non-existent. In conjunction with a strong topdressing program, our core aerifying of greens (sand-based) may become a thing of the past. We'll have to

wait and see. I've had good results combating hydrophobic areas with the hydrojet on both sand and soil based turf-grass, as well as a little bit of preventative medicine for our high traffic areas.

10. SLOW PLAY.

11. The word "biggest" usually lends itself to a singular event or thing. For that reason I'm having a hard time with this one. Our biggest challenge of the year was combating the extremely wet spring because of our low proximity to the county's largest river. The flooding and silt deposits were abhorable.

12. Politics and ego. (Just a thought)

13. Yes, along with some take-all patch and, of course, dollar spot.

14. Yes. Yes, quality is always at the mercy of quantity.

15. I think we'd have to start with a faucet that never drips, light bulbs that never burn out and employees who are happy to work forever without a raise. Does that put it in perspective?

16. Perhaps as a means by which our organization can further support the industry for which we stand. If the club is floundering, we may have kept it afloat for at least a little while longer, which in turn has kept one of our own employed. If the money is clearly going into someone else's pocket, good question!

17. No, I did not, thankfully.

18. Yes, I had the opportunity to speak with Bruce at this year's Turf Symposium, shortly after he passed the gavel on. It was meant sincerely and I believe received the same. As a side note, congratulating Mr. Rod Johnson on his achievements and subsequent recognition was also a pleasure for me.

19. No. If this is in fact a reality, then those who fit this category should be embarrassed, deeply ashamed and willing to look inside themselves to bring about change.

20. Boy! Where do I start? The introduction of that pricey new grass, a.k.a. *Poa supina*, will I hope provide for some interesting research and hopefully support its reputation. I like the work going on with the organic amendments, PRGs are always interesting and controlling disease organically is fascinating. How about something on organic-based machine fluids that would not severely injure turf? (This would alleviate the need for question 15)

21. How can something that never ends be renewed?

22. No. The signage has had little impact on our operation.

23. Sales is a very competitive business and precipitates change.

24. When we speak out about it. It's the same concerning our involvement in government. No one hears when you complain in your living room.

25. This question is an excellent lead for how I wanted to end this little editorial. I wish to take you up on your offer to forward a copy—color won't be necessary. You see, it seems as though we have run out of paper in the ShopKat's litter box! 🐾



## MORE ANSWERS

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Mr. David E. Smith  
Abbey Springs Golf Course  
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Dear Monroe,

For some time now I have wanted to write and comment on the enjoyable hours spent reading *THE GRASS ROOTS*. My motivation to finally write is in response to your request for answers to your questions. Please don't quit asking questions. I find them thought provoking and a way to examine current issues that relate to our industry. I will try to answer those questions that I feel relate to my situation.

*GRASS ROOTS*, Nov/Dec 1993, pg. 47:

2. I had an irrigation control system retrofit installed this spring. It was finished and paid for by April 30 (\$14,500.00). On May 16 I received a letter offering me the most recent software update that I could install in my controller for a mere \$150.00. The cost was not much, but the absurdity of the timing was beyond belief.

3. There is not a promise that will not be made in an attempt to sell a piece of equipment or system to a golf course. I am amazed at the number of warranty repairs our mechanic makes just because it is more expedient to repair equipment ourselves and get it back on the course than sending it to the dealer. Installing new Toro LTC controllers and the problems associated with moisture and corrosion were also a headache this season past. Am I wrong in feeling that manufacturers would be pleased if no communication among superintendents resulted in less knowledge about manufacturer responsibilities in replacing and repairing defects?

5. We have for years done most of our projects in-house using contractors for that portion of the project we cannot do ourselves. We are still subject to contractor delay but control the quality of the project by doing the finish work in-house.

6. I do not require salesmen to make appointments. When they drop in to see me unannounced, they take the chance that I will have no time for their visit. I am finding that the handful of salesmen that I care to see are calling to leave a message that they will be stopping on a particular day. I give none of my time to salesmen who are selling items that do not pertain to the golf industry. The longer you are on the job the easier it is to send them on their way.

10. Our biggest complaint was the "cart path only" requirement that seemed to be in force most of the season. It is difficult to hold golfers on the path week after week when the delayed effects of compaction have no meaning to their round of golf that day. The fact that I have the support

of all the staff at Abbey Springs made this period a lot easier for me.

11. My biggest problem was wet areas on the course that had never appeared previously. We have already installed drain tile to 80% of the wet areas this fall.

12. I agree.

13. No pythium, but plenty of brown patch. There were many times Madison had heavy rain this summer that we were spared.

14. Universities are in the business of putting students in the seats regardless of the need for graduates in certain majors. There is a time lag before the poor market for graduates stops the production for graduates. Let's hope that a glut of turf students does not ruin the possibility for higher wages in this industry. Are we eventually going to create enough competition that employment at a lower rate of pay is what we face should we be forced to seek new employment?

I am in this business because I love every minute that I spend tending to this golf course of mine. If a person gets into this business because they like to play golf, they will be surprised at the time it takes to balance the job with your family obligations. If you can then find time to play golf, enjoy it because those days are limited, at least in my case.

16. This issue will come to a head very early this year. Abbey Springs is hosting the April meeting. My boss would love to have green fees paid by everyone. This past season we paid meeting fees of \$45 to \$60 more than once. I will go to bat to waive green fees and hold costs as low as possible to allow everyone to participate without cost being an issue. I hope that future meeting costs will not make me look like I was a soft touch. The outrage of the year was paying close to \$50 at the last meeting this year. My assistant's brother clipped a coupon and played the same course two weeks prior to our meeting for \$35 for two players and a cart. This showed total lack of respect for our profession and I purposely skipped this meeting.

22. I had no requests for information this year and I must say that I am not disappointed.

23. And it continues.

I would like to make some general comments about the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility and the Field Day. Wisconsin golf course superintendents should be extremely pleased at having access to a world class operation. Everything that has been done there the people involved are first class.

I have received six pieces of literature on EXPO-94. If the coverage is as good to everyone else in the state, I predict a new level of participation. With the quality of the program, it cannot help but be a success.

Keep asking questions. I promise to answer.

GO BADGERS!

Sincerely, David E. Smith