JUST WHAT DO YOU DO DURING THE WINTER?

By Michael Semler

Now that fall is behind us and winter is quickly approaching most golf course superintendents will finally be able to relax and get a normal schedule back into their lives. But wait, there is just one more question that needs to be answered. Somebody asked me it again the other day.

We have all heard it. It is probably one of the most ridiculous questions ever asked (never mind what your teachers told you). In fact, there is such a thing as a dumb question, and it is usually directed at the golf course superintendent. It goes something like this: "just what do you do during the winter?"

As usual, I smiled and gave a kind description of what it really takes to operate a golf course in both the summer and the winter. My response gave the usual listing of items that need to be accomplished during the winter in order to make a golf course operate as professionally and effectively as it does during the summer. We have all made out the lists before and we all have presented them to people at some time or another and we all have received the same response at the end of the presentation. It sounds something like, "Ohhhhh".

This type of question really bothers me. It is one of those things that can really get to me. I just don't know what they think. These people must believe that accountants work only during tax time and then do nothing the remaining part of the year. They must believe that football players only work during the game and have nothing else to do with the rest of their time. Or, more than likely, they just don't think!
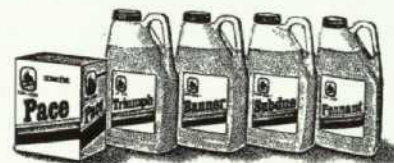
In most instances, our profession is being elevated beyond the stereotypical "Carl" from the movie Caddy Shack. We are no longer thought of as the "head grasscutter", at least not in thoughtful and knowledgeable circles.

I must admit, however, that I know of a few bastions of resistance to this thinking that still exist. Some of them are so close to home that they actually reside in our own clubs. In fact, it was only a few years ago at the GCSAA annual banquet that the president of the CMAA addressed the golf course superintendents present as "head greenskeepers". I guess that is not as bad as "head grasscutter", is it?

We have, in fact, come a long way in the past 20 years. Our profession is being elevated to one that does include upper management. We are being recognized as professional, well-educated, loyal, hard working individuals. Our profession is being recognized as well educated and influential in the golf community. In fact, many golf course superinten-dents are being elevated to the position of General Manager, above the clubhouse managers and the golf professionals. The reason? We are good managers in all necessary departments — personnel, accounting, motivation, leadership, master planning ...).

However, we still have a long way to go. I offer as evidence the question that was recently posed to me, "what do you do during the winter?" Many people do not entirely understand what we do. And as I have mentioned in previous articles, it is up to each and every one of us to make certain that these people begin to understand. If we don't tell them, nobody will! ♛