



A Short Guide for Miniature Golf Course Management

By Dr. Robert Gray

Editor's Note: We are going to have to put this author on our payroll! This is the third or fourth time that Bob Gray has granted permission to reprint one of his pieces in this feature. These musings are proof that PhDs (and agronomists!) do have a sense of humor. Dr. Gray writes for THE GREENERSIDE, official publication of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New Jersey and this short guide appeared on p. 18, Vol. 18, No. 1 issue for January/February 1995. The award winning journal is edited by his spouse of 25 years, Ilona. They make quite a team. You will have the chance to meet them since they are both attending the GCSAA conference in San Francisco. Ilona will attend the Chapter Editors Seminar and report on the conference proceedings that take place after the seminar. Bob is tagging along for the pleasure of some warm California weather. Thanks to both for permission to reprint.

This past summer I had to opportunity to play on one of the more prestigious miniature golf courses on the Jersey shore. I introduced myself as a frequent contributor to "The Greenerside" in the hope of getting a complimentary game or at least a better tee time. The manager, who had not heard of "The Greenerside" or of the GCSANJ, made me wait my turn in line, and pay the full greens fee. Fortunately there was no caddie necessary or golf cart requirement and no club membership fees.

The entire situation struck me as one large opportunity! Hundreds of miniature courses up and down the shore and none of them practicing scientific management. Think of the training grants, registration fees, and new business opportunities if miniature golf were held to some environmental standard. I am on the cutting edge of this sort of thing and have already begun working on my manual for the miniature golf course. Once it's completed, I plan to apply for an EPA grant to pilot a regulatory program next summer. Don't laugh. I'll be on the beach with federal money behind me.

Every grant needs a buzzword and mine will be "IMP" (Integrated Management Practices for the miniature course). A heavily trafficked par-36 course cries out for this type of attention. Don't snicker! Just because it's less than a quarter acre does not mean that it is not subjected to some sort of insect, weed, and fungus pressure. I have scouted dozens of courses and concluded that these problems are real. Hmm. I wonder if my investment in this scouting can be recouped in my EPA grant?

Polyturf Management:

This is simple. Keep it glued down and keep it green. Replace when wear is evident. All of the cultivars of polyturf used in New Jersey are low lying perennial types. They have compact crowns and shallow roots, often appearing more woven to the mat than as a true root. The actual manual will have detailed drawings and fancy Latin names for all the parts.

Weeds:

There are two basic weeds that are found on miniature golf courses. The first is *Nicotiana tobaccum* which occurs either as the filterum subspecies or the regular subspecies by taxonomists and has been classified as a cultivar. IMP scouts should inspect the course and physically remove these. No herbicide required. During evening play hours, a second weed species, *Cannabis sativa*, can be found on certain courses. The handbook recommends that the management immediately contact the DEP, or is it DEA, hotline for this weed.

Fungus:

Fungus is a continuous bother on these courses. Although it does not attack the "polyturf" directly, it leaves a slimy and often slippery playing surface. I sent several samples to the Rutgers Plant Diagnostic Laboratory and obtained the following recommendation. Use of prescription or over-the-counter foot treatments will provide temporary relief from itching and can be helpful adjuncts to an overall treatment problem. Reduction of moisture and avoidance of contact with feet will also be required.

Insects:

Termites on the wood supporting the polyturf can be a problem. For this, contact any professional with a category 7B certification. The real problems are treating the woolly polyester crown borer and the short shrifted root weevil. These are species endemic to New Jersey and are considered so rare that they are endangered. No treatment is permitted since, like my miniature golf course management manual, they only inhabit summer fantasies.

Waiting for the warm sunshine . . . Dr. Bob. 🍷



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