



# SUMMER, WITH VENGEANCE

By Monroe S. Miller

"The summer from hell"—that's what I'll call it. Or how about "three months of misery" or maybe "a hundred days in St. Louis" or "the summer I wished I was an \_\_\_\_\_" (you fill in the blank—accountant, banker, professor, butcher, etc.)

A movie of this summer past in Wisconsin would be titled HOT! HOT! HOT!

What the summer of 1995 was not is fun. Not much fun, anyway. The cool, wet weather of spring collapsed into a season of heat, humidity, plant diseases and a lack of rainfall in many quarters. It was a summer we will talk about for a few years.

Those among us who maintained a cool outlook in the heat came out ahead. Concerns about plant survival outweighed green speed, cutting heights went up, cutting stopped entirely some days, plant growth regulators stayed on the shelf, fertilizer was sparingly used, crews went home early, and that eternal hope for better days was the inspiration to hang in there when the going was difficult.

We had the troubles everybody else had. Pumping stations nowadays depend on electronics. Electronics don't function well in heat, and despite the size of our air handling unit in the pumphouse, it was exchanging 95 degree humid air at midnight in mid-July outside for cooler temperatures inside! It was a disaster.

The massive domes of hot air that invaded our state and hung around three different periods in June and July made this the hottest summer in sixty years. That gives us license to gripe, although it seems hypocritical when we complain six months a year about the snow and cold of winter. "Gripe on," I say. It makes me feel better to gripe—venting and all that. Nevertheless, I will be glad when I am penning complaints about winter.

It seems anyone who liked this oppressive, clinging and inescapably hot weather had probably been in the sun too long, or else they were selling fungicides or were utility executives. Business was really good for them—more than a few college educations were paid for this summer through fungicide sales. Or insecticide sales. The bug crop was exceptional, too.

The first real relief of summer came on August 1st, the day Bob Vavrek made his USGA visit to our golf course and the temperatures were in the 70s for the first time in two months. He may be my good luck omen in more ways than one.

So, fall is here, at last. I am looking forward to leisurely trips to Lambeau Field and some Packer games and some fun Saturday afternoons in Camp Randall with my beloved Badgers. Oh, then there's the vacation I am taking to relax on Martha's Vineyard (off season prices!) and somewhere on the coast of Maine.

Such decadence—and so well deserved!

It was Mark Engman, green committee chairman at our club, who brought an article in the June 19, 1995 issue of TIME magazine to my attention. The piece, titled "Keeping Up Tribal Links", featured Shinnecock Hills Golf Club and the course superintendent, Peter Smith. Shinnecock was the site of the 100th U.S. Open, played earlier this year.

Every golf course superintendent who reads this will feel enormous pride, in Peter Smith and in our profession.

Pete is a 1975 graduate of Dartmouth College and the third generation of Smiths to work at Shinnecock Hills: his father Elmer was the superintendent before him and his grandfather George helped maintain the original golf course. Brian Smith, Peter's 20-year old son, works on the crew.

As Mark pointed out in his note to me, "Nice to get some national attention for the profession."

No amount of money could buy an ad campaign this good! And Pete will be in Milwaukee this fall to speak at our Symposium.

A lousy summer, coupled with the thoughts of a long and cold winter, gives little comfort from a report in the August issue of *Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine*. Wisconsin is the WORST tax hell in America. Last. Dead last. Fifty-first. Last by a country mile.

Something has to be done about our overwhelming tax burden. The first is to ignore the constant, incessant cry of "wolf" from politicians and bureaucrats and the publicly employed sector. There is too much money in government coffers and it isn't, generally speaking, spent wisely enough. The other action is to vote in every single election, to select those with some sense of fiscal responsibility and sensitivity to the stifling tax burden. Change is coming slowly; we just need a lot more of it.

The GCSAA has changed the schedule of events for the conference and show in Orlando next February. It will start on Monday and end on Sunday. These are welcome changes, in my mind. Seminars are on the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th (M,T,W,Th), the opening session is on the 7th, the environmental session is on the 8th, educational sessions occupy the 9th, 10th and 11th. The show runs on the 9th, 10th and 11th. The banquet is Saturday night.

Watch for news about the environmental session—there is a surprise that you'll enjoy.

I received the following note and graphs from Rod Johnson on July 6th. Things only got worse after that. He's right—everything is relative. And relatively speaking, in our town we were in better shape, rainfall speaking, than he was in Sheboygan.

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July 2, 1995

Dear Monroe,

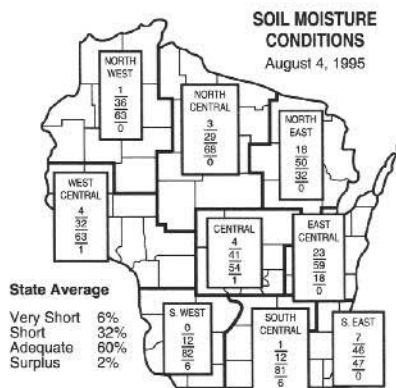
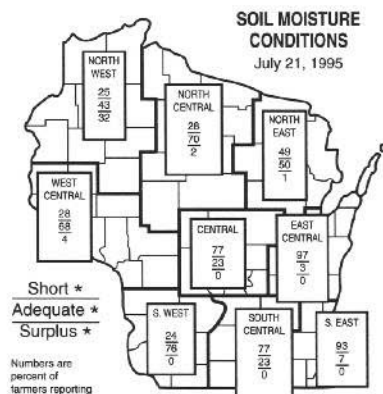
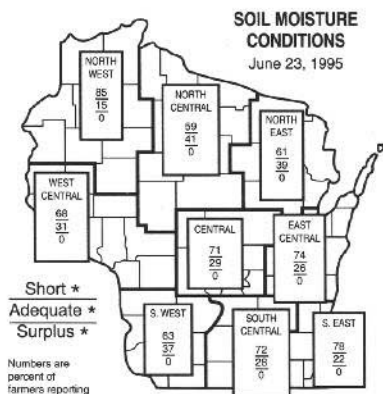
Wayne Horman said you were complaining about being dry. Let me show you what dry is! Check out my rainfall since last September 1. We've had 5.2 inches since April 1, 1995. My last inch rain event was April 18, 1995. Largest rain event since then was 0.37 inches on April 27. So far this year, we have used 11.2 million gallons of irrigation water.

It's enough to make a man lose his sense of humor!

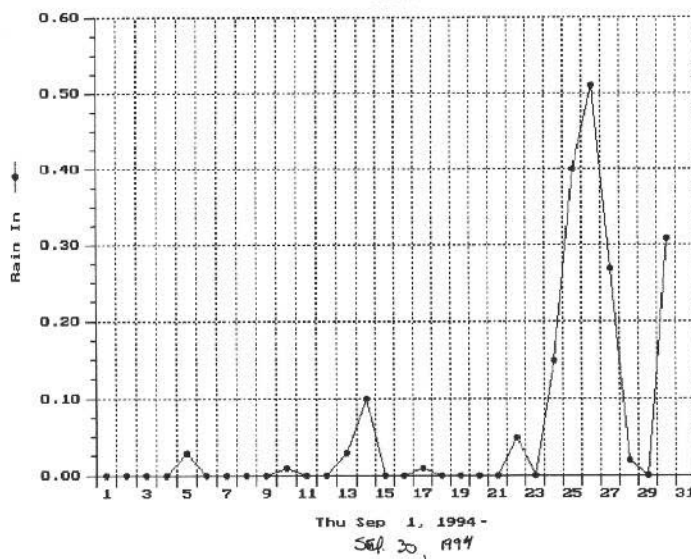
Regards, with a tear in my beer,

Rod

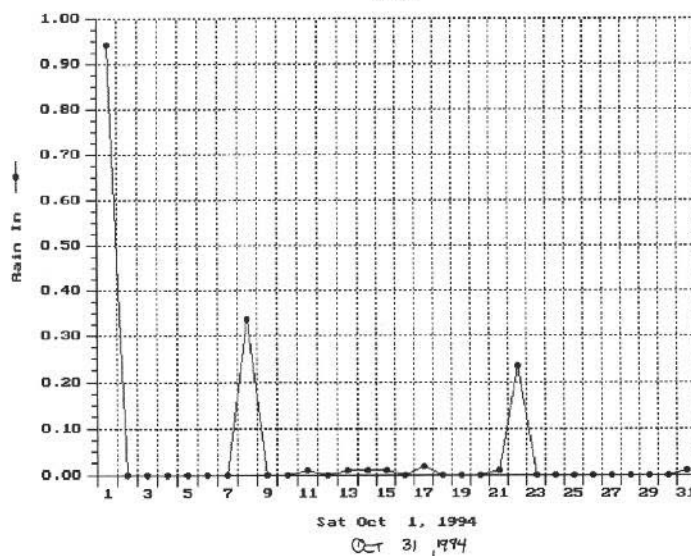
Per usual, I am including the soil moisture status reports from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service. They will confirm your misery. 🍷



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Rain



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