



Kusa None and Godzilla Patch

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Developing a business network was an important part of the 1998 National Science Foundation's Summer Institute in Japan program. This summer, I spent one week travelling across the lavender covered slopes of Sapporo and through the volcanic mountains of Morioka meeting with professionals in the turfgrass industry. The trek included stops at two of Japan's most prestigious golf courses and a visit to the site of Godzilla patch.

I wanted to present the Japanese superintendents with gifts (a very important part of Japanese culture) and Monroe Miller was kind enough to give me copies of *The Grass Roots*. I wasn't sure how to present them and turned to my well-used English-Japanese dictionary. Under "grass roots" I found two definitions: *n. 1. Ordinary people - ippan taishuu (ee-ppa-n ta-eesh-ew); 2. Roots of turfgrass - kusa none (coo-sa no-nay).* I penned these two definitions in Japanese kanji on the front cover of *The Grass Roots* journals and presented them to the superintendents. Even though the language barrier slowed down our conversation I sensed a mutual understanding of the double meaning title - ordinary people working with grass roots. It

was an extraordinary day with ordinary Japanese turfies.

My travels took me to Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan's four islands. Hokkaido is a geological wonderland, half-covered in forests, lava-seared mountains and crystal-clear lakes. Sapporo is the largest city with 1.7 million people. It has almost the same latitude as Madison (43 N) so the weather is similar, but with more snow and warmer winter temperatures. One of my first stops was the very

grass roots *n.* (ordinary people)
 i'ppañ taishuu 一般大衆; ku'sa no
 ne 草の根.

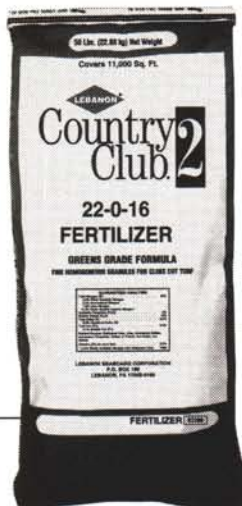
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Godzill patch near Morioka, Japan.



Arnold Palmer's signature #8 hole at the Washington Club.

beautiful Arnold Palmer course, the Washington Club Sapporo Golf Course. This five-year old course, nestled in a rugged region near the Sapporo-dake mountains, has majestic pine trees lining the meticulously groomed fairways. The Palmer signature #8 of the Nishi course is a botanical work of art. A round of golf costs 15,000 yen, approximately \$115 U.S. dollars. Despite its beauty, this course is fighting a case of take-all, fairy ring and black layer. Fortunately the damage wasn't too severe.

Our next stop was the host of the ANA Open: the Wattu course of the Sapporo Golf Club, where a round of golf costs 23,000 yen, (approximately \$175 U. S.). On Wattu, I diagnosed brown patch, take-all and pink patch. Both courses were immaculate and heavily staffed. Their equipment was the same as in the U. S. but with some brand names I've never heard of before. I was expecting the courses to be vastly different than ours, but that wasn't the case. The turfies in Japan, much like the turfies back home, made me feel comfortable and welcome.

The next stop was Morioka, located in the northern part of the main island. Morioka is a bustling center of commerce and industry, surrounded by volcanic mountains. Mt. Iwate, which became active this February, dominates the skyline. The researchers I met were very hospitable. One of the highlights of this stop was witnessing the biggest

snow mold patch I've ever seen. I coined it 'The Godzilla patch.' This patch was discovered in a timothy and ryegrass pasture located in a mountainous dairy region. The patch was over 50 meters in diameter! *Typhula ishikariensis* was the fungus that caused this huge patch. One of the most interesting findings about the "Godzilla patch" was the discovery that it was caused by several different kinds of *T. ishikariensis*. At first we thought the patch was caused by just one clone. Let's hope Wisconsin superintendents never see patches this big!

It was a summer full of amazing experiences. I experienced seven earthquakes, bathed naked in a coed hot spring near an active volcano, and I practiced Za Zen meditation in a Buddhist temple where a monk beat us with bamboo sticks. I ate raw horse soaked in ginger sauce (shinbashi), went kayaking and white water boating and survived Japanese language classes. One of my favorite experiences was playing baseball for the Kanken Dragons in the Institute League (although I fractured my thumb tagging a runner out at third).

I had the honor of working under Dr. Naoyuki Matsumoto, the world's leading *Typhula* researcher. In his lab, I completed genetic compatibility experiments to further the snow mold work I am doing in Wisconsin. I even saw two-thousand year old *Typhula sclerotia*! Dr. Matsumoto obtained the sclerotia from an archeological dig in Hokkaido. It was carbonized in ashes in what appeared to be an ancient fire pit. Ancient enemy, indeed. However, the thing that stood out the most was the time I spent with ordinary people - ippan taishuu. 🙌



Nanida Shigi, the Washington Club superintendent.



Yamamoto Kiumi, the Wattu Club superintendent.

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