

The Last Season of the Millennium

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Blackhawk Country Club

It seems safe to say, as the ink dries on these words in the last days of February, that we have had another very mild winter. In our town, winter started around Christmas and ended, more or less, at the end of January.

The January and February contrast was sharp and clear. Parts of Wisconsin came close to breaking the snowiest January record. And overall, the state finished February with the 3rd lowest snow total since record keeping began. When we returned from the GCSAA conference, putting greens almost

looked ready for cutting!

The lack of winter pleases some, but not me. The past few winters have been brown and drab and uneventful. I am tired of rain and drizzle in the months when precipitation should be adding to the whiteness and beauty of the landscape. The storms of February 11 - heavy, heavy rain accompanied by strong winds and lightning and hail - should be reserved for months outside the November to March period. Rain in the winter turns driving and other travel into roulette, and ice accumulation

makes for sleepless nights in the lives of Wisconsin golf course superintendents. I have enough restless nights during the season; none of us needs that stress in the winter.

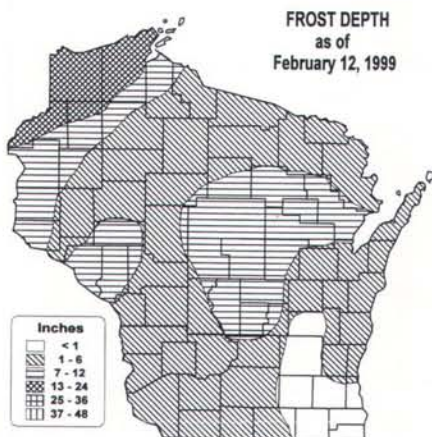
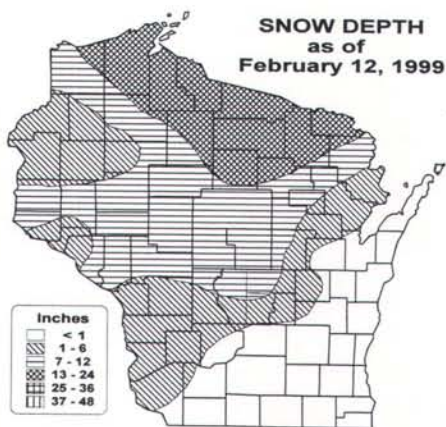
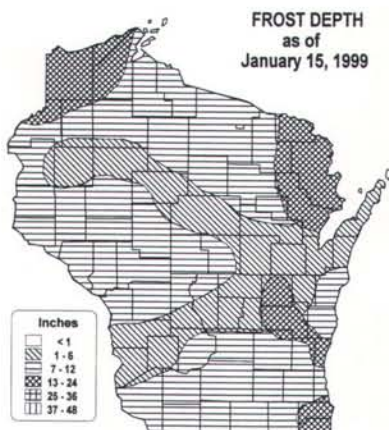
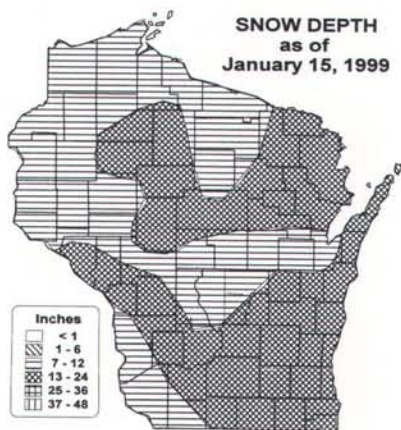
The winters of my youth and early adulthood were the kind I like best. They were snowy and blizzards would last for two or three days. When the sun would finally come out, the Wisconsin landscape was beautiful, breathtaking and gorgeous.

Sledding and skiing and snowmobiling were taken for granted. Not so these past few winters. And if one wasn't a winter sports enthusiast, you could bask in the stillness and quiet, feeling a sense of peace impossible in the busy summer months. Those winters were exhilarating; what we have had of late have been dreadful.

But, as I cross my fingers in hope for snow, I recall that March can be a month of heavy snow and almost always the state boys basketball tournament in Madison brings some solid, white precipitation. Maybe it will this year, too.

Stats from the past couple of months in Wisconsin are shown here in graphics, thanks to the good work of the Wisconsin Ag Statistics Service.

This past Christmas, as in many Christmases gone by, we locals had a lunch with the four emeritus faculty who did so much for the turfgrass program at the UW - Madison and solved untold numbers of field problems for superintendents from border to border in all directions. Profs. Love, Worf, Newman and Koval all looked great, were in



great spirits, and can still talk at considerable lengths. The photo here shows them at our lunch. Drs. Love and Koval are facing; Drs. Newman and Worf had their side to the camera.



Golf course superintendents are, in a general way, interested in the outdoors and natural phenomenon that take place. Did you notice that there were two full moons this past January - January 1 and January 31? The second full moon in a month is called a "blue" moon and happens only once every 2.7 years. That might explain the phrase "once in a blue moon."

What is really weird for 1999 is that we will have two blue moons during the year - March 2 and March 31 will both have a full moon. That occurrence will happen again in 2018, and it last happened in 1915.

The full moons are variously named; most familiar is the September full moon (harvest moon) and the October full moon (hunter's moon). I like the name of the April full moon - the grass moon!

Like most golf course superintendents this time of year, I am spending some time filling our staff for the last season of the millennium. That is probably why an article about a Brookfield firm's statistics on resumes caught my eye.

Jude M. Werra & Associates has compiled a "liar's index" for the last four years, identifying resumes and credentials that are "puffed up." They specialize in reviewing executive job applications for businesses, so they know of what they speak. Their semi annual survey usually indicates 13 to 15 percent of applicants misrepresent their educational credentials.

Here's what caught my eye; in the first half of 1998, the figure for lying jumped to 21.65 percent of 300 executives and managers

nationwide. In the second half of 1998, however, the index dropped to 7.8 percent. The theory is the nation's fixation with lying during the miserable Clinton affair contributed to more truth-telling. If the theory is correct, it is the only good thing to come from events caused by the irresponsible person living at the end of Pennsylvania Avenue in D.C.

Also, if the theory is true, one has to wonder if Clinton's brazen and unashamed immoral behavior might, in turn, inspire through citizen disgust with him, more moral behavior.

What a legacy . . . What a loser.

Congratulations to James Krutilla and Gordy Waddington; they were honored at the GCSAA conference in Orlando with environmental steward awards. Gordy was a chapter winner in the public category and James was a merit winner in the public category.

During the tournament, the team of Randy DuPont and Mark Hjortness won their net division of the two-man competition. Mark Kienert won the eighth flight gross title.

Congratulations to all of them for representing us so well.

And congratulations to the authors and advertisers who make the *Grass Roots* what it is. What it

was in 1998 was the winning entry in Category 2 of the GCSAA chapter publication contest. I am feeling great indebtedness to them - the writers write for free and the advertisers pay the bills.

It is this spirit that impresses me - the work is given for the right reasons. In the end, we all hope to educate ourselves, tell the world who we are, and preserve our history for the generations of WGCSA members to come.

Hurrah for all who work to get each issue onto the newsstands!

It is getting more familiar, and more scary each year. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is gearing up in its war against gypsy moths. My suspicion is that in the end we will never win the war against the moths, but hopefully we can keep this horrible pest somewhat in check.

The plans this year are to spray 83,400 acres at 80 sites in 20 counties in Wisconsin. Infected areas will be sprayed with *Bacillus thuringiensis v. kurstaki*, harmless to humans and animals but effective enough to help control the spread of the moths.

Btk is not the long term answer, but may allow us time until research gives us better and more effective weapons. One of those being tested is the fungus

Entomophaga maimaiga. It has been effective in killing the caterpillars. When the caterpillars die their corpses contain millions of spores which, when ground up and diluted, can be spread around trees in infected areas and used to fight the next hatch of caterpillars. Two insect pests are being tested; one is a parasitic wasp most of us have read about.

Another potential control involves the use of pheromone flakes. The flakes are spread about in an infested area and the scent so totally confuses the males they are unable to find mates and reproduce.

Gypchek, a virus, is specific to gypsy moths and it is being tested in some areas. A low tech approach involves wrapping burlap bags around the base of the tree trunk. The burlap traps the caterpillars as they crawl down

and the egg sacs are deposited.

I absolutely fear the potential damage gypsy moths could cause on Wisconsin's golf courses. But I also find comfort in the research being conducted by the UW - Madison and WDATCP, in cooperation with other states. One has to believe they will eventually find an effective and safe solution that will bail us out.

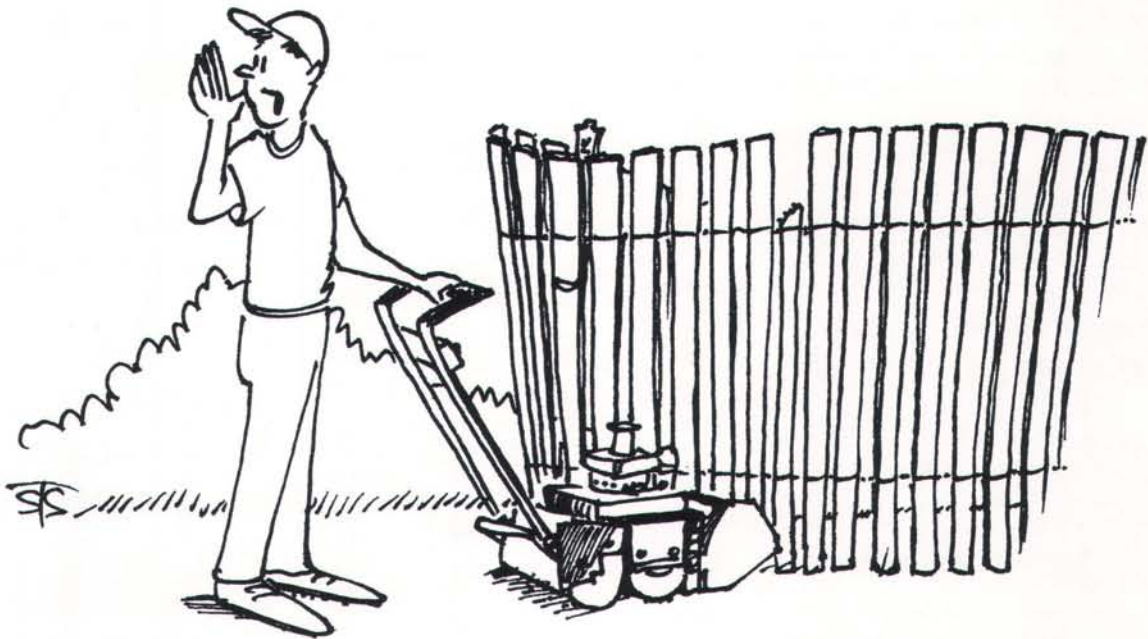
In the arena of bigger pests, the UW - Madison CALS and Cornell University have cooperated on the publication of a guide called *Managing Canada Geese in Urban Environments* that details legal and effective ways to get geese to go elsewhere. One of those ways is the use of dogs trained to patrol for geese.

You can get a copy for \$10 (order # 1471B243) from Cornell

University Media and Technology Services Resource Center, 7 Cornell Business and Technology Park, Ithaca, NY 14850. Phone 607-255-2090.

When you see him, give Dr. Chris Williamson a warm Wisconsin welcome. He is the new UW - Madison turf and ornamental entomologist and has already joined the *Grass Roots* staff. You are going to like him! He is at 246 Russell Labs, 1630 Linden Drive, UW - Madison, Madison 53706. Call him at 608-262-4608 or fax him at 608-262-3322 or e-mail him at rcwillie@entomology.wisc.edu.

That's all the news that's news from the editor's desk. Have a great spring; don't let it pass without pausing long enough to enjoy it.



"HEY MARK! AMY! HELP ME TAKE DOWN THE SNOW FENCE... I NEED TO MOW!"