



The Wisconsin Seasons Merge

By Monroe S. Miller, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

Winter and spring, for a period in March, seemed to have reversed themselves. It happened again in mid-April, only spring and summer traded places at times. Many parts of the state experienced mid-80s to over 90 degrees F. With the ample soil moisture many of us had, plant life exploded. Suddenly, the greens were slow, the roughs were long, and yardage markers on irrigation heads in fairways were difficult to find. But the storms rolled through and the temperatures dropped 45 degrees F and we were right back where we should have been. By the weekend of April 20/21 (UW spring football weekend in our town) there was significant snow in most areas of Wisconsin!

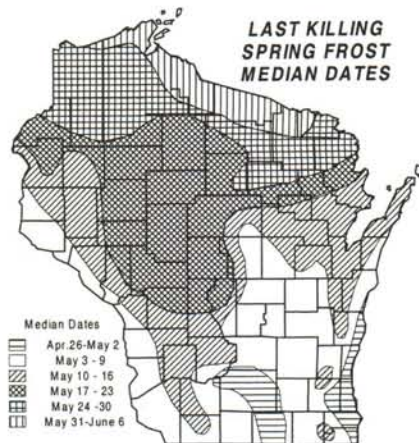
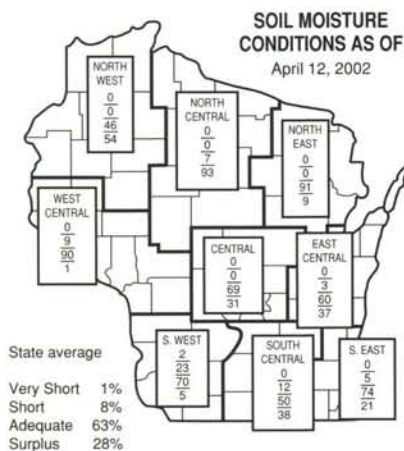
But mostly, it was a glorious spring. The winter was in no way harsh, although we could have used more snow in the south. On the other hand there isn't much snow mold damage if there isn't much snow and courses were nearly perfect for opening day.

Bluebirds returned to our course in early April along with a mating pair of hawks. The daffodils and crocuses and forsythia have never appeared healthier. Soon after came the tulips and bluebells and dogwood, and the fat buds on the lilacs forecast an abundant crop for that beloved plant.

Spring is so often a day-by-day thing in Wisconsin. You can be in the middle of a frost or cold rain or snow flurries and dream of an evening by the hearth and a big fire. Two days later you are in short sleeves because of warm mornings, hot and humid afternoons and balmy nights. The variability adds to our impatience to get the golf courses going.

But by now, we are close. After a few outings and member events we will be face to face with the summer solstice and the days will actually begin to shorten. Nature is forever on the move, the changes day by day are endless and we are constantly reminded that there is no end to the cycle of seasons. Maybe that is why so many of us have enjoyed this profession for so long.

Graphics from the Wisconsin Ag Stats Service and the U.S. National Climatic Data Center are here for your information and records.



She's headed for fame and glory and riches! Jackie Zurawski has joined an elite group as a published book author. Titled "The Adventures of Lily and Daisy," Jackie's story can be found in the Fisher Price Ready Readers Stage Two book.

Jackie, whose husband Pat is the golf course superintendent at Camelot Country Club in Lomira, submitted a number of stories to editors over the years before being selected by Fisher Price. I have no doubt her creative writing will result in many more children's stories.

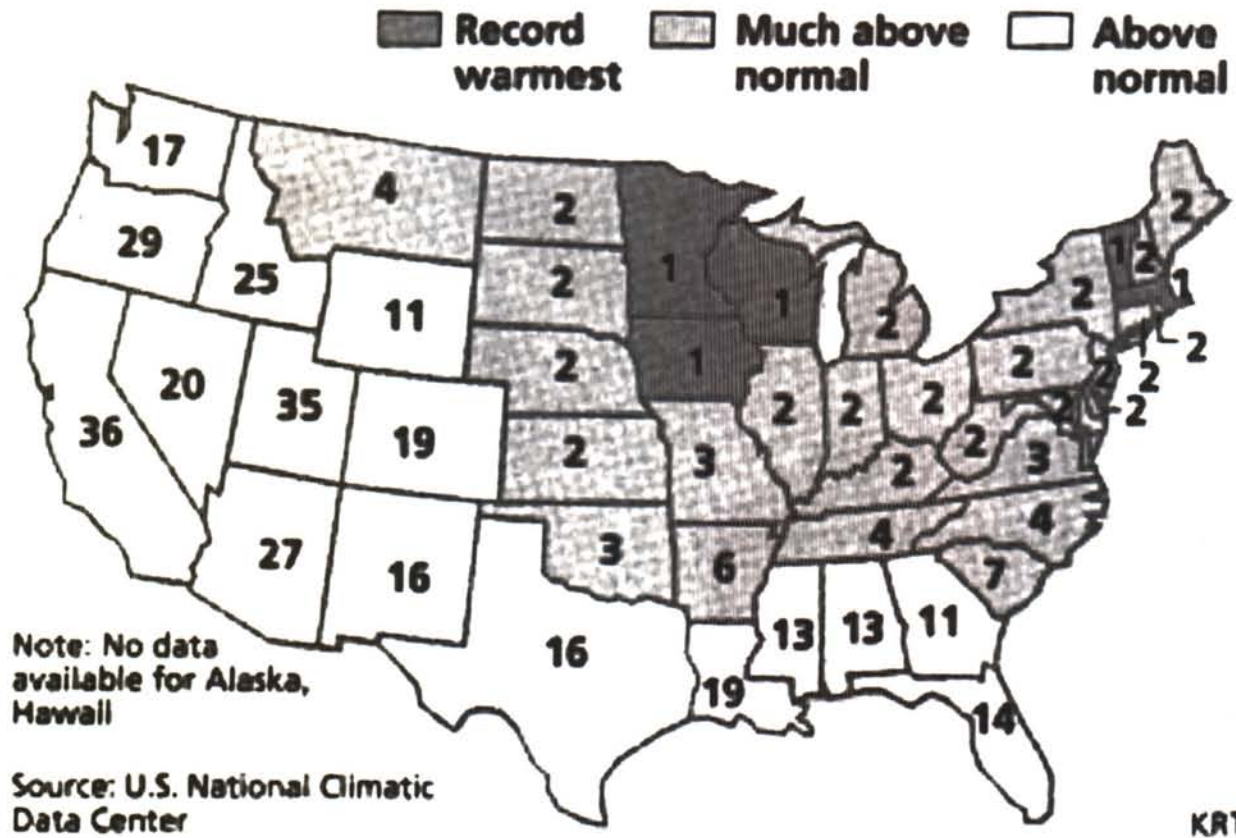
Congratulations!

There has been a lot of concern in recent years about the water level of the Great Lakes. Some of our beautiful Wisconsin golf courses are on the shores of Lake Michigan.

Water levels were at their lowest in 35 years. They have fallen three feet since 1997. In some places you can walk out 60 or 70 meters on dry land that is normally well under water. But a new assessment shows that the level of Lake Michigan should rise about eight inches from last year. The higher level is due to a rainy autumn and a normal snow pack around the Lake Superior basin.

Sadly, there is another passing to report. Dr. Eugene B. Smalley, emeritus professor of plant pathology and forestry at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, died on March 25th. He was 75 years old.

Dr. Smalley was a well-known expert on Dutch Elm Disease and for those superintendents who lived



The winter past was the warmest since records began in 1895. State temperatures from November 2001 to January 2002 ranked with previous winters (2=2nd warmest).

through that awful epidemic, he and Dr. Gayle Worf offered treatment programs for infected American Elms.

Smalley was a world-renowned expert on the disease. He collected elm seed from all over the world and developed resistant strains of elm trees from them. They were patented by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) and the most famous (to my observation) is the Autumn Sapporo Gold Elm. Like many other Wisconsin golf courses, we planted one of the Autumn Sapporo Gold trees. We also have an American Liberty Elm that we planted behind the 15th green. This was purchased from the Elm Research Institute in Harrisville, New Hampshire during a visit I made there in the mid-1980s. Dr. Smalley inspired that organization

as I witnessed personally when I mentioned his name to staff people at the ERI.

Dr. Smalley assembled a substantial collection of trees from his breeding program. You can still see them, growing on the UW – Madison’s Arlington Agricultural Experiment Station, just off U.S. Highway 51, north of Madison.

World known for his work with elms, Dr. Smalley traveled to England in 1980 where he and Prince Phillip planted a disease-resistant elm on the Windsor Castle lawn.

The Wisconsin Sod Producers Association recently announced a change in the way sod is sold. Starting with this 2002 season, the industry will be selling sod by the

square foot, rather than the traditional square yard that we have all known.

All residential and commercial real estate lots are sold by the square foot; many of our golf course projects are designed by the square foot. Conversion to sodding these areas is direct when the sod is sold by the square foot.

Actually, the Midwest is one of the last areas to convert sold sales to the square foot. The Midwest Sod Council (WI, IL and IN sod farms) is leading the way in letting the public know about this sizing change.

If you have any questions, call you Wisconsin sod supplier; he will help you out.

Mid-May each year, regardless of how busy I am, I make the trip back

to my home county in southwest Wisconsin and, with my dad, decorate graves of our family for Memorial Day with flowers.

Too many Americans, I fear, have forgotten what Memorial Day means. It is not only a three-day weekend, the first summer holiday, or a commercial and recreational and pleasure time. For most of us, it is tournaments, tourney flags, work early an late all three days, and a group of events that will help judge the success of our year.

Before WWI, it was called Decoration Day. Started in 1866, in Waterloo, New York and formalized in 1868. May 30th was designated "for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during

the late rebellion."

Boy, have things changed. Renamed Memorial Day, it no longer is only on May 30th. Convenience made the official day the last Monday in May. Whenever it is held, if we can return to its designed purpose and spend some time remembering those who went before us, good feelings will be the reward. Most communities have meaningful events on Memorial Day – last year we attended Madison's at the Capitol. It ended with a quiet, friendly and personal conversation with Governor McCallum.

It is difficult for golf course superintendents to participate fully like many of us would like to because of the job requirements. But whatever level of participation

is possible, it most assuredly will be fulfilling.

Spring moves north at the rate of 15 miles each day, which means that even Dan Barrett's golf course at Trout Lake should be free of snow by now. I spoke to him on a hot day in our town in mid-April and he was still watching the last ten inches of snow melt so he could think about opening the course!

The shortening of shadows, the bird songs, and bright green grass tell us summer is about here. One season merges with the next, gradually, in an unending transition few are more familiar with than a golf course superintendent in Wisconsin.

