

Time to Slow Down

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

December — the first month of the winter. Wasn't it just yesterday when the air was heavy with humidity, the trees loaded with large leaves and the grass as green as it could be? Now, the air is crisp and clean and the trees are dark and clear against the white snow that covers the ground in some places.

I like the old rhyme that says "Chill December brings the sleet, blazing fire and Christmas Treat." It is a pause for us, a happy and stress free (mostly) time to be spent with family and friends. If we cannot enjoy this interlude, there won't be any time to be savored.

In our town we had summer in September. It was way above normal and little rain fell. It was perfect weather for golf and gave golf courses at least a chance to catch up on rounds lost in spring and summer due to weekend rains.

October brought the first hard frost of the season, but overall there were few frosty mornings. Eastern Wisconsin was especially dry.

Reports from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service tell the soil moisture story around the state.

On the subject of weather, did you see that the Farmers' Almanac is predicting a snowy winter for the northern Plains and the Great Lakes regions? The weather formula used by the 188-year old Farmers' Almanac is a closely guarded secret. It is prepared two years in advance and is based on sunspots, the position of the planets and tidal action of the moon.

The National Weather Service questions the accuracy of forecasts made so far in advance, but as the almanac points out, it is right 80 percent of the time. It would be a pretty good way to schedule aerifying for next year!

Their forecast last winter was largely on the mark. It also forecast a wet and cool summer, which was true for much of Wisconsin.

How many noticed Blaise Winters on the sideline during the Wisconsin/Central Florida game early in the season in Camp Randall? He is a member of their coaching staff and was in Madison early in the year as a speaker at the WTA Expo. Winters is also a former Green Bay Packer.

Here's some sensational news: Dr. Steve Millett has been appointed by Southeast Missouri State University and the Missouri Winery Association to head up the new grape research station in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

The program is funded by a 24 cents tax on every bottle of wine purchased in Missouri. Steve will serve the needs of the state's 50-plus wineries.

Steve will have a staff of 12 and together they are creating a grape research station that will be similar to the O.J. Noer Facility. They have started building diagnostic and research labs and planting five varieties of grapes.

SEMO has a Black Angus research station contiguous with the grape research facility. Eventually there will be a restaurant that serves Angus steaks and Red Hawk Red wine from the grape facility!

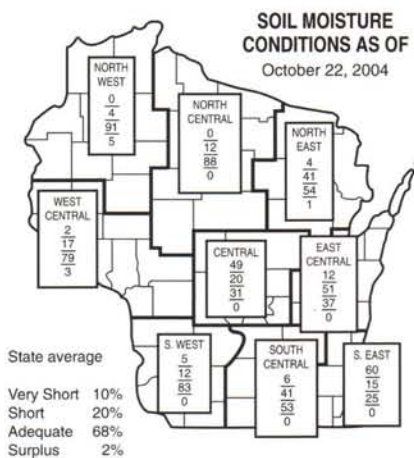
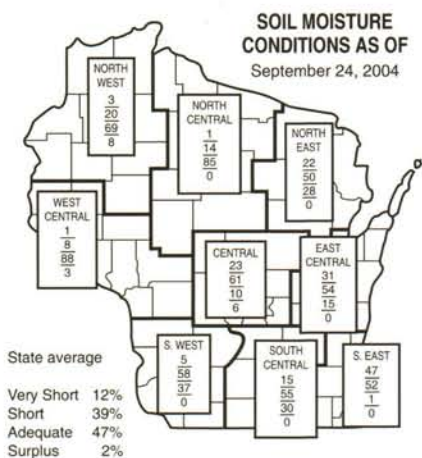
And if that wasn't spectacular enough, Debbie and Steve are going to China in the spring to pick up their adopted baby girl!

There aren't many people as bright, sincere and gracious as Steve Millett. We were lucky to have him among us for as long as we did. He earned all the good things coming his way.

October was a sad month. We lost Mike Kilpatrick and Wayne Otto. Frank Rossi reminisces about Wayne elsewhere in the *Grass Roots*.

Mike was a regular presence in the Wisconsin GCSA, attending monthly meetings, educational offerings and the annual GCSAA conference.

Mike was promoted to the position of golf course superintendent at



Moor Downs Golf Course in 1973. He was reassigned to Wanaki Golf Course in 1989 and then to Naga-Waukee Golf Course in 1999. He retired on January 2, 2004.

The Waukesha: Lake County Freeman wrote the following about Mike on October 9, 2004:

Mike Kilpatrick dedicated his entire life to serving others. Kilpatrick retired in January after working for more than 30 years on county golf courses, retiring as the superintendent at the Naga-Waukee golf course. He served with the U.S. Air Force from 1966 to 1970, and later brought his expertise and leadership to the North Lake Volunteer Fire Department. Kilpatrick served the department for 34 years, 23 of them as assistant chief.

Kilpatrick, 58, died unexpectedly Thursday, October 7, as he was at the Stone Bank Fire Department on standby when that department was dispatched to the Mission Lakes fire in Okauchee.

Bob Fleming, Kilpatrick's brother-in-law, said Kilpatrick retired from the county on January 2, and spent the intervening months with his family, gardening, and with the department. He was also an avid hunter and a member of the North Lake Nomads Snowmobile Club.

"His family and the department, those were the passions that balanced his life," Fleming said.

Kilpatrick was talking to North Lake fire Chief Terry Stapleton when he was stricken.

"He was just standing next to me, and he started to bend over," Stapleton said. "I asked him if he was all right, and he said, 'yeah.' He walked behind the truck, and three Lisbon EMTs were there to help him sit down. It wasn't even five minutes later

and he was in the ambulance to the hospital (Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital)."

Bill McBroom, a training officer with the North Lake Fire Department, said the three EMTs worked on resuscitating Kilpatrick all the way to the hospital, but he did not regain consciousness.

"Yesterday, it was just . . . everybody was just in shock," McBroom said.

Kilpatrick underwent knee surgery last November and made a surprisingly quick recovery, McBroom said. Last Friday, Kilpatrick was his usual jovial self as he guided grade school children through the fire station," he said.

"It's tough. It's very tough, Fleming said. "There were no signs of any problems. It's kind of hard to understand at this point."

McBroom said Kilpatrick was a very outgoing person, a good leader and a very good firefighter. He had a hand in training new volunteers at the department, he said.

"He was a perfect guy as assistant fire chief," Stapleton said. "He would take an order and make sure everyone else followed it. He was very strict when it came to fighting fires."

"There's not a guy in the department who could say anything bad about Mike," Stapleton continued. "Even when he was mad he was happy. He was just a lovable guy."

Kilpatrick is survived by his wife, Marge; daughters Chris and Trisha; son Charles; three grandchildren and other relatives and friends.

"He was a good guy. He was truly a nice man. Nobody ever had a bad word to say about him," Fleming said.

When I think about turfgrass research I obviously think about CALS and Soil Science or Plant Path or Horticulture or Entomology. But every once in a while we learn of discoveries from L&S that we can apply directly to our golf course programs.

From Birge Hall and the Botany Department comes the news that in the third week of October Professor Tony Bleecker was honored with the 2004 Distinguished Researcher Award from the International Plant Growth Substances Association. The award was primarily based from his discovery of the hormone mechanism responsible for everything from seed emergence from the soil to leaves separating from their branches in the fall.

Bleecker's lab studies the ripening of fruit and the effects of ethylene. They found the gene (in arabidopsis plants) with which ethylene binds to trigger the ripening process. This work opens the way to manipulate the genes of plants and fruits to delay ripening. It is the same process that causes left drop.

For an industry that has found so much use for products like Proxy and Primo, discoveries like this one at Wisconsin's land grant university will find its way into our golf course management programs.

By the time this issue of The Grass Roots hits the newsstands all across Wisconsin, irrigation systems will have been cleared and snow mold protection applied. Leaves will have been mulched and travel plans made for Thanksgiving, deer hunting, Packer games, and Badger games. These are the things we love in Wisconsin this time of year. And Christmas is coming! Soak it all in; next season will be here in the blink of an eye. ♣