



The Earth Cover

By **Pat Norton**, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Country Club

They are giving me a rest now. I can feel the cold penetrating my scalp across the vast area that humans refer to as the Northern Hemisphere. They call this time period **'winter'**...but to me and my natural brethren it is simply a time of rest and partial rejuvenation. Humans aren't as active upon my surface during these cold chunks of time known as 'the winter months'...but it is difficult for all in that the warming radiation is at too great an angle.

As a result, during winter my upper half is always very cold and frozen, while my bottom half is warm, thawed, and full of life. I overhear them explain that the reverse is true during the summer months due to something called 'the Earth's axis' and 'revolving around the Sun.' And so...because some greater force than I decided to spin me upon an angled axis and orbit me around a larger heavenly body...I and the humans who inhabit me will be forever doomed to enduring the extended cold months of 'winter.' Those humans, among other things, have figured all of this out. They know all about the physical sciences that determine my fate. They know all about the natural forces alive in the world and long ago decided to impose on me something called 'the four seasons.' As you might be able to deduce, we are now in the grip of the coldest time for northerners, known as **winter**. I overhear them talking about how winter is actually quite useful. They say that the cold weather and eventual freezing of my scalp is actually good for plant and animal life. So I say...let them shiver and complain. It is good for all life to go through hardship...it will make them stronger, better, and more appreciative. Sometimes I hear them admit to that in what they think are secretive tones.

Oh, yes. I can hear them. I can hear them talking...and I can feel their presence upon my surface. I can also sense that they do not enjoy these cold months, but what do I care? I am somewhat at their mercy...as they use and sometimes abuse me grievously. There are those that I tolerate quite easily...because of their sense of respect both for me and all other natural life dwelling upon my surface. But there are many others who have no natural respect...no sense of their place upon me...no sense of natural connection. They are the ones that I would prefer to eradicate...were it in my power to do so.

Due to my advanced age, I have seen many different races of humans come and go. I have determined that no one race has more respect or connec-

tion to me than any other. It is more a matter of individuals or groups within any of their populations having the proper sense of respect towards me. My favorites have always been the nomads, the naturalists, the agriculturalists, the mariners, the botanists, the zoologists, the limnologists, the aviators, the navigators, and the outdoorsmen. They all understand me...and their place in the grand scheme of living upon my surface. They enjoy the fruits of what I can provide...when cultivated with care...and know that there are certain ways to approach me if they want to live in harmony.

These wise humans seem to be very much in the minority, though. There are too many others who have no regard for their actions and no understanding of this natural world. They consume unwisely...they

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pursue money too mightily...they abuse themselves and nature equally...and do not deserve me. I tolerate them only until I can no longer stand it...and then remind them of the mighty forces that I still possess.

The wise humans are constantly attempting to educate the others...through their 'land grant universities,' for example. Not that I even understand that term...I certainly didn't *grant* them anything...they are simply using my land during their time here. But I suppose that in their quest for educating others...I will gladly permit them use of some of the finest agricultural lands found anywhere.

I do understand that these good 'midwestern' humans have always understood their role and are dedicating their short lives towards preserving and even enhancing the natural world inherited from earlier generations of 'Americans.' They are like countless others across this world...striving to protect me and all that I have to offer. They all speak different languages and have their different customs...but, in common, they understand me and seem to be doing their best to preserve me.

In particular, those known as agriculturalists...of whatever region of the world...seem to appreciate my bounty and understand their role in preserving the humanity that depends on them. It seems a real shame that their fellow citizens fail to understand the absolute basic necessity of food production and agriculture in general. Some of those people have really lost the connection between human, plant, and animal life.

It is not easy to produce food enough to provide for large populations of humans. It is a monumental annual task...which if discontinued or obstructed would cause problems unimaginable for those same humans who object to the methods and materials. How ironic!

I am very forgiving of those who cultivate my surfaces...enriching the soils...and enabling plant growth...and helping to beautify me. I truly understand their part in this world...and only hope that they understand it also.

In a larger and opposite sense, humans now are beginning to understand that their abuse of me could have serious long-term consequences. I can only tolerate so much of their abuse. I have really been taken for granted...and nobody likes that feeling, eh?

Fortunately, it is not too late. Human scientists around the world now know how serious the abuse has been...and have the beginnings of solutions that politicians and governments will have to endorse and support. Even the industrialists and multinational corporations will have to cooperate...as there is really no other choice.

Some humans possess much wisdom...while others

look at only short-term gain. The short-terms have had too much power for far too long...but even they cannot break me. I have too much capacity for patience. The enormity of my system...with the combination of earth and atmosphere...permits me to sustain their abuse until they all come to their senses.

My senses consist only of a faint sense of hearing and a much larger sense of feeling. I feel that there is much change forthcoming from these humans. They seem to understand the gravity of the situation...*no pun intended*.

Then, maybe the natural and human world can return to a time when my scalp really freezes...when the bitter, cold winter winds really blow...when the snows pile up all across the northern areas...and humans learn again how to cope and survive during their winter season.

Only then will they truly appreciate the season that is to follow...what they call *spring!* 🌱

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