



## What The Market Will Bear

By Thomas R. Harrison

Often times when I have been in a store considering a purchase I have been amazed when I look at the price of an item and the price is exceptionally high or very low. Most of the time the items are extremely high, but I often wonder what goes on in the final session of product marketing where the decision is made as to what price to charge for a product. I used to think that people sat down in one of these pricing sessions and looked at what their actual costs were for product and then tacked on a "reasonable" sum to cover overhead, R&D, and some seed money for future products. These tacked on costs would all be based on projected future sales to provide a reasonable profit margin and fair price. Obviously I am very naive about all this, but to me this sounds like a good, fair way to price a product. Many companies do price their merchandise in a fair and competitive manner and to most of us when we make a purchase we recognize this fair pricing and continue to do business with these companies.

Unfortunately too many businesses subscribe to the pricing strategy of "what the market will bear." This means, not what is my product worth in a fair sense, but how much can I get away with charging people before they refuse to buy my product. If the market is an open market, with a lot of fair and honest competition, then people who price too high will not be able to sell their wares. If the market is limited or competition is minimal, however, then severe overpricing will occur with the consumer at a decided disadvantage.

The business of golf turf maintenance falls into the category of a limited market. Sales competition for parts, equipment and chemicals used to be somewhat limited. These areas have become more open in recent years as more companies have entered the new equipment business and "will fit" parts businesses have flourished. I have never been a real big supporter of will fit parts, as I felt that

the original equipment manufacturers (OEM) needed to be supported if new and better equipment was to be introduced in the future. I also felt that will fit parts were inferior to OEM parts. Obviously I am wrong. Our equipment manufacturers have just been bleeding us slowly. We have been subjected to "what the market will bear" for too many years. The will fit parts market has flourished because the major turf equipment suppliers have priced themselves too high. General Motors went through this and is fighting hard to gain its market share of the parts business back. GM got greedy on parts prices for many years until some enterprising business people quickly figured out that they could make some of GM's parts and retail them profitably for 60% of what GM was selling the parts for. GM responded too late by claiming the will fit parts were inferior. In some cases the parts were of poor quality and the will fit manufacturer either withdrew from the market or made the part better. But in many cases the will-fit parts were equal to or better than GM's. GM has had to repromote its own OEM parts at lower prices to be competitive.

Our major turf equipment suppliers have been through the same situation. But their efforts to gain back their market share of parts sales has been minimal. Token price breaks on limited parts items have been only mildly effective. The will fit business has thrived and gained ground to the point where one will fit parts business is producing turf equipment thrown together with other manufacturers' parts. At least General Motors doesn't have their will fit competition producing automobiles. I feel sorry for our major turf equipment suppliers. I would rather buy parts from them and have a modest profit returned for new product development. But when you can buy will fit parts at 30% less and receive good quality merchandise, then the OEM's will not gain much of the old business back. This is not a good

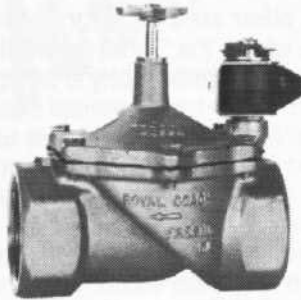
business cycle as the will fit people will wait for the OEM's to produce something new and then copy it for resale. Money the OEM expects or needs for future R&D will be lacking. Until they wake up it will be their business loss.

The other area of turfgrass maintenance, where the "what the market will bear" pricing philosophy is being over-worked, is the turf chemical business. Most of the turf chemicals we use are derived from the agriculture industry. Many products were formulated in Europe originally. Eight years ago if you took a container of flowable Daconil 2787 and stood it alongside a container of flowable Bravo 500 you would notice that the containers contained the same fluid ounces of material, the exact same active ingredients, and if you slipped the plastic sleeve off one container and put it on the other they interchanged identically. I'll bet if someone were to try the Bravo 500 on turf they would find that it would work identically to the Daconil 2787. But when you went to pay for the Daconil 2787, you paid 35% more. Manufacturers say it costs extra money for the additional turf and ornamental label required by the EPA. But if one examines an ag labeled product you will find a label that may list specific uses for up to 50 or more crops. Most of these are food crops. No one will ever convince me that the EPA is more stringent on labeling products for turf and ornamentals than they are for labeling pesticides for use on food crops for human consumption. If you take a look at some turf labels where turf and ornamentals are listed with all the other uses for the product, the turf labeled portion is 1% of the total uses for the product. Yet the price we pay for use on turf is much higher.

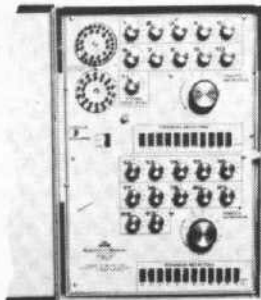
This market has been mildly invaded over the last few years by companies willing to sell turf chemicals at better prices, but the main problem still lies at the manufacturing and marketing level. There are low pricing classes for chemicals, agriculture and turf. Not potatoes, tomatoes, strawberries, ginseng, oats, wheat, barley, corn and turf, but just general agriculture and turf. When Bayleton 50W for ag use and Bayleton 25W for turf use are compared on a cost per 1000 sq. ft. of active ingredient basis, the ag labeled material is 37% cheaper than the turf

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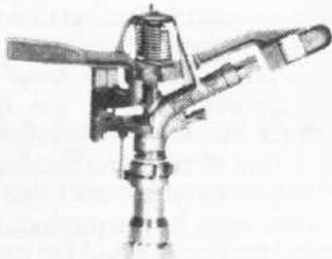
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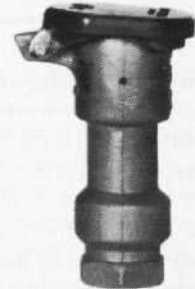
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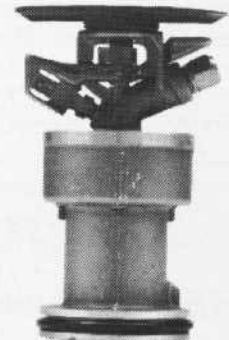
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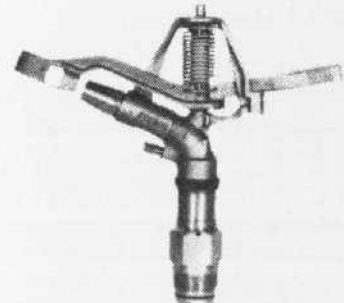
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material. The list of pricing discrepancies goes on and on. Ridomil & Subdue, Rovral & 26019, Benlate & 1991. The newest material which I only have unofficial pricing on is the Banner/Tilt fungicide. Banner is the turf label and Tilt is the ag compound. The price difference is astounding when compared on a per ounce of active ingredients per 1000 sq. ft. basis. Business has found a way to gouge the consumer under the umbrella of federal and state laws which dictate that we may only use a pesticide as it is labeled. This makes it technically illegal to use an ag fungicide on turf. Even though the weight and active ingredients are identical, we are only allowed to use the turf labeled material and consequently pay the higher price. Turf chemicals have to be one of the most blatant cases of "what the market will bear" over pricing.

One other interesting example that readily comes to mind is the pricing on wetting agents/turf surfactants. The buyer must certainly beware with these products. If you compare products across the board, label for label, you

will notice different percentages of active ingredient and water quantity and consequently varying prices. The price variations are inversely proportional to the amount of water shipped with each gallon of wetting agent. The lower the price per gallon the more water per gallon of product. A liquid wetting agent is merely a mild soap, of a certain pH non-injurious to plant materials.

On a per gallon price, lemon scented Joy is 60% cheaper than the leading wetting agent and it will make your turf and sprayer smell "lemony fresh". The problem is the pH and a few other ingredients are indeed injurious to turf. For those that have read this much of this article don't misread this and try Joy next summer. It is **not** recommended for turf use even though it is cheaper than our leading brands of wetting agents. If you consult the National Chemists Handbook and reproduce the leading wetting agent in 55 gallon batches (with no water) and factor in a reasonable profit, it will price out at about \$6.00/gallon. This is 25% of the list price of the national brands labeled for turf. The interesting thing is

a locally produced wetting agent (not lemon scented Joy) with no water and the proper pH works superbly on fine turf. This I can attest to personally. I state this not trying to belittle the national products or put them out of business. I would rather purchase wetting agent from the people who first marketed and developed the product, as it is they who have the original R & D costs. But I refuse to purchase from any business who has one hand in my pocket trying to steal from me. I believe a 400% mark-up is excessive.

Too much is said here about the businesses who overprice their products, whereas the companies who charge a fair price for a well made product should be applauded for being good honest business people. It is they who I would hope are the backbone of our free enterprise system. But the greedy businesses will always flourish in a limited market unless the buyer is constantly aware of just what he is purchasing and what he is paying for a product. The market will bear only what we let it bear.

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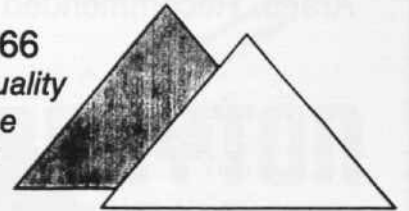
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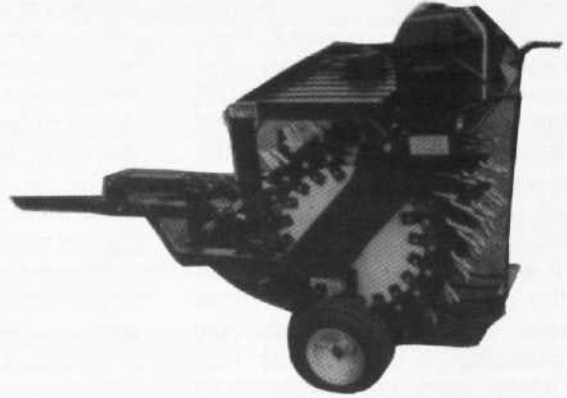
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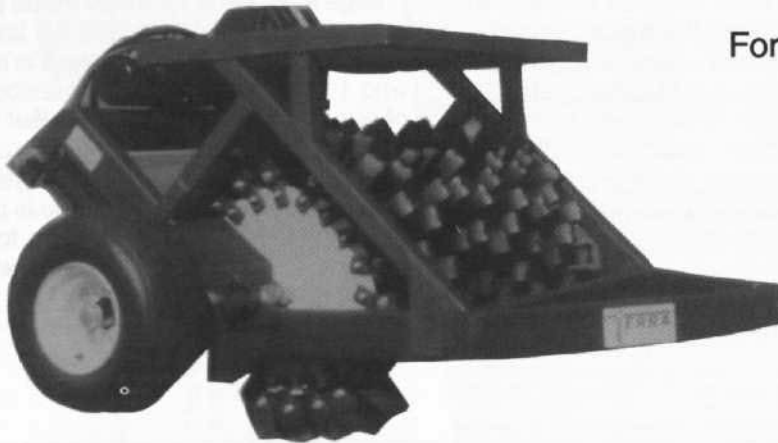
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# BACTERIAL WILT — It's Not Just A Toronto C-15 Disease

By Carl Grassl, Jr.

We were contemplating a good spring—no winterkill or ice damage like we had experienced during the spring of 1986. The turf was healthy. Even the young *Poa annua*, which healed most of the previous winterkill areas, was healthy. We had excellent spring recovery. Greens had wintered well and we started the speed patrol program around May 20th. Greens were aerified (1/2" tines, plugs removed vertically cut, brushed) on May 27th. Sand top dressing program started its fifth year. The turf on the greens had remained healthy through the first four years of the sand topdressing program with only occasional complaints about color. And that was understandable because we were spoon feeding greens every three weeks with about an 1/8# of N just below 1/8" and putting speed was acceptable to excellent, depending on which member you spoke with.

On approximately June 15th the hammer fell, and oddly enough it came almost to the day of the record-setting heat of 101 degrees at Mitchel Field in Milwaukee. It appeared someone spat-

tered mahogany stain on the putting green, but they were very precise about what strain of grass they hit. To our knowledge Seaside bents were heavily seeded into many areas of the course years ago, especially greens. The center of our putting green at Blue Mound has a low swail. How ironic. Obviously this green has had winterkill problems for many years and been overseeded for many of those years with Seaside bentgrass, heartland of the bacteria infection.

Samples were sent to Michigan State University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Both institutions positively identified the bacteria, along with a few other diseases, like take-all patch. A few days later Dr. Gayle Worf and Mike Lee spent time on their hands and knees trying to identify the stain spot on *Poa annua*. No luck. All spots were found on bentgrass plants, with identical characteristics—curved, curled at the tip of the leaves, brown leaves, and tan to white tips. The plants shriveled and died, one at a time. The *Poa annua* stood healthy and green and alone until its offspring

grew its way through, trying to become part of the *Poa annua* "army" filling the voided areas.

Through that stress period the bacteria became evident on two other greens in small areas. The disease then subsided for about three weeks or so, even to the point of some recovery. However, temperatures remained hot and with our mid-summer Men's Invitational approaching about mid-July, prep work began for speeding the greens for the tournament. One day prior to the event, an all day rain occurred, followed by 90 degree temperatures. We counted two days and again the mahogany stain appeared on the putting green, only to a much greater extent. Bacterial wilt had struck again, only this time with a pattern—two days after a rain. This pattern held true for the remainder of summer; each time it rained 1/10" or more, the rainfall was followed by considerable infection two days later. This did not appear true after irrigation. My practice had been to irrigate greens every four to six days depending on need. However, identifying the presence of additional bacteria two days after irrigating was not evident.

Through the remainder of the season a few more greens were infected in very minor areas. This continued through the fall period. Speed



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of infection and the complete decay of the infected plant seemed to be slower in cooler temperatures, but was very evident until the off color of cold temperatures made identification very difficult. Highly stressed areas from play and heavy traffic seemed to be the pattern the bacteria followed, but did not remain so. Areas completely away from traffic on the edge of a green became infected. Again, it depended on the strain of grass, which appeared to be the Seaside bent of a lighter colored strain.

A much heavier feeding program has improved the quality of the infected greens. Applications of ¼ pound of N and K every two weeks, along with ample ounces of fungicides brought color and vigor back into the greens this past fall. The bacteria remained identifiable until cool temperatures tinted the grass in general. "Out of sight, out of mind," as the saying goes. It looks like it will be spring before the sight of the bacteria will eat away the enthusiasm one has entering into another golf season.

The infected greens were overseeded three times this fall, beginning the third week in August and at three pounds per M. Seed germinated best

in the deteriorated spots under considerable sand topdressing, which was a bit of a surprise. I did not presume seed would germinate and grow so well in a sand only environment. Dead plant material provided an acceptable seedbed and stands of seedling Penn-cross flourished in the void spots, along with minor *Poa annua* found in clumps. Polyethylene covers were placed over the three seeded greens the third week of November with the intention of hopefully protecting the new seedling growth as much as possible.

As I look forward to next season, the frustration of working with a disorder of this nature is amplified by the fact that there is no easy cure, only one which involves side effects that could harm considerable amounts of healthy turf. Working with Mycoshield (oxytetracycline) is a prime example and depending on when such preventions are tried, under what weather conditions or club schedules, a corrective decision may or may not promote your popularity.

Let's talk about member reaction toward such a disease. I compliment Blue Mound members for their understanding the facts as they were presented. The history of the bacterial

wilt at other clubs was discussed and their resolutions were considered. We looked at immediate action, meaning a regrass of all twenty greens, along with a long term resolution which definitely made more sense because the highly susceptible strain Toronto C-15 was not in the picture. It was decided to monitor next season, hoping we'd get lucky. This is a format which a superintendent surely doesn't feel comfortable with, but, I guess that's our business—"take it one day at a time".

A somewhat comical aspect to this bacterial wilt dilemma comes from adjacent clubs concerned about the spread of the bacteria from club to club. Any member of a club where greens are infected must have their golf shoes thoroughly sterilized before playing another club! Now, the fact that disease can be spread by golf shoes is somewhat valid. However, let's be sensible. I feel more grass would be killed by the sterilent used to clean the shoes, than to ever worry about the increased severity of the disease being transmitted by golf shoes. But this goes to show how worrisome bacterial wilt is to golf players. And believe me, they have good reasons for concern.

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# GYPSY MOTH REPORT — 1987



State of Wisconsin

Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection  
Howard C. Richards  
Secretary

801 West Badger Road  
P.O. Box 8911  
Madison, WI 53708  
608 266-1721

December 28, 1987

Dear WGCSA Gypsy Moth Cooperators:

Thank you for your cooperation in gypsy moth trapping this year. Mr. Bob Edmonds, Mr. Harold Line and I appreciate your help in the program.

This year approximately 7,728 delta traps were set in 64 Wisconsin counties (Figure 1), and 58 of those traps caught male gypsy moths (Figure 2). The traps were set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture/APHIS/PPQ, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, municipal and county Forestry Departments, and some private cooperators. Also included in this number were traps placed by the U.S. Forest Service in Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests.

Seventy three male moths were captured in the state, an increase from the 33 moths caught in 1986. There were multiple finds in several locations. Two moths in 1 trap were found in Brookfield (Waukesha County), Germantown (Washington County) and Madison (Dane County). There were 3 moths in 1 trap in Mequon (Ozaukee County), and 5 moths in 1 trap in Pewaukee.

In Porterfield Township (Marinette County), 6 moths were caught in 1 trap, 2 moths in another, and 1 moth in each of 4 traps. These traps were located in a wooded area of approximately ¼ square mile, on the southwest bank of the Menominee River. It is across from the location in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan where 2 moths were captured in 1 trap this year. The location of the finds on both sides of the river indicate the possible presence of an infestation close to the river, either on the Wisconsin or the Michigan side. A higher density delimitation trapping is planned for 1988 at this site.

No other infestations were identified in the state. Egg mass surveys were carried out in Porterfield Township, Pewaukee, and Madison, with negative results.

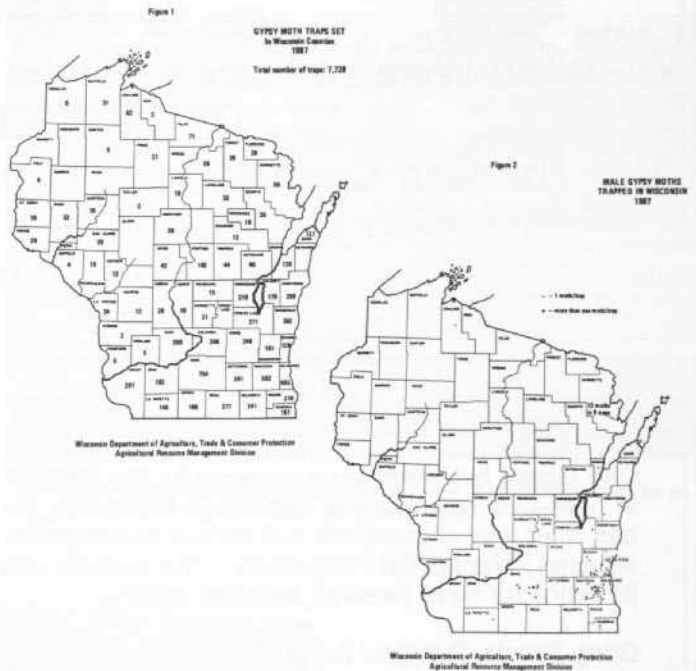
The following table summarizes the 1987 gypsy moth finds in Wisconsin.

I hope you will continue to cooperate with us next year. Your help has been invaluable in achieving a good coverage of the state with gypsy moth traps.

Sincerely,

*Julie Nara*

Julie Nara  
Plant Industry Specialist  
Agricultural Resource Management Division



## Gypsy Moth Trapping Results

COUNTY	LOCATION	# OF MOTHS
ASHLAND	Mellen	1
BROWN	Green Bay	1
DANE	Madison	4
	McFarland	1
	Middleton	1
	Pleasant Springs Twp.	1
DOOR	Sturgeon Bay	3
FOND du LAC	Marshfield Twp.	1
KENOSHA	Brighton Twp.	1
	Salem Twp.	1
LAFAYETTE	Argyle Twp.	1
MANITOWOC	Eaton Twp.	1
	Manitowoc	1
	Manitowoc Rapids Twp.	1
	Maple Grove Twp.	1
MARINETTE	Porterfield Twp.	12
MILWAUKEE	Brown Deer	1
	Hales Corners	1
	Milwaukee	3
	Wauwatosa	1
	West Allis	1
OZAUKEE	Cedarburg	2
	Fredonia Twp.	1
	Mequon	4
	Pt. Washington Twp.	2
SAUK	Spring Green	1
WASHINGTON	Barton Twp.	1
	Germantown	4
	West Bend Twp.	1
WAUKESHA	Brookfield	5
	Lisbon Twp.	1
	New Berlin	3
	Pewaukee	5
	Summit Twp.	2
	Waukesha	1
WINNEBAGO	Oshkosh	1
<b>STATE TOTAL</b>		<b>73</b>

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Carl Grassl has made arrangements for the WGCSA to host a GCSAA regional seminar in Milwaukee. He has, after a lot of questions and serious investigation, selected "Managerial Productivity". This seminar and its instructor have received excellent reports.

Gerry Sweda, Regional Sales Manager for O.M. Scott and Sons, and a former golf course superintendent, focuses on the development of techniques to identify and decrease the productivity gap—the difference between what you WANT from your personnel and what you GET from them. In this two-day seminar managers will participate in action planning exercises designed to encourage higher worker productivity. Mr. Sweda provides creative insights into coping with managerial responsibilities on a day-to-day basis. He is a powerful, enthusiastic speaker and relates the basic principles of managing people to the golf course environment.

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