



## COMMUNICATING

By Roger Bell



It always amazes me how a preacher can take to his pulpit Sunday after Sunday and deliver some new inspirational message that applies to the real world. Preachers have a decided advantage over golf course superintendents in the inspiration business because they've got a superior reference book. Superintendents, on the other hand, probably spend as much time on their knees as preachers — probably more in late summer.

I never went to college with the intention of becoming a preacher (as many of you guessed a long time ago!) but I find myself writing "inspirational" messages more and more. Obviously, there's the "President's Message" you're reading right now. But besides the temporary challenge of WGCSA

president, there is the continuing challenge of composing a short article for my club's monthly newsletter. There's also a monthly or so written memo to the green chairman detailing grounds maintenance operations. On occasion, there have been formal bid requests for special projects, letters of recommendation, etc. It seems I'm becoming more of a writer than I ever imagined.

We've grown used to the writing talents of WGCSA's own Miller, Johnson, Semler, et. al. But it's becoming apparent that all of us are being drawn into the age of communications. Word processors are becoming as common as automatic irrigation systems in a superintendent's job. English 101 is becoming as necessary

as Soil Science 101.

The benefit to us in this information era is that the better we communicate, the more others outside the profession understand and appreciate the job we do. More often than not, communication via publications like *The Grass Roots* are a part of the link that ties one superintendent to another as a peer group. Communications with club members through memos and newsletters are healthy contributors to job security.

The message of the month simply stated, is: Keep your pencils sharpened, your dictionary handy, or your word processor programmed. Communicate well, go to church on Sunday and enjoy the sermon, secure in the knowledge that I won't be in the pulpit.

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# The Green Of Autumn

By Monroe S. Miller

The colors we all think of when we think of autumn are slowly beginning to show up on the golf course as I write these lines. The sumac has been showing red for a few weeks already. There is a hint of yellow in the ash trees; soon the maples will be ready for their annual color display.

Gold. Red. Yellow and scarlet. Flame. Burgundy, orange, maroon. These colors and all those in between are the ones almost all of us think of when we think of fall. Most golf course superintendents enjoy their golf courses the most when the fall color reaches its peak. The scenes are breathtaking.

The plants that provide this annual display in the north central and the northeast are all-Americans; they are plants that have evolved over the millennia with an ability to withstand our brutal climate, especially the winter months. They are natives to North America. The brilliant fall color display tells us they are hurrying to get into winter condition. The time from first color to leaf fall is really short.

And they aren't fooled by temperatures or frost (or the lack of it). The hardening processes are triggered by daylength. A late October cold wave will never catch these colorful plants unprepared. This autumnal brilliance is pronounced in the plants that are native Americans.

Did you ever wonder why, when so many plants are rushing into winter preparedness, that our golf course grasses are the greenest they've been all year?

I've been hinting at the reason, if you noticed. The key is "native".

Virtually all of the green of autumn that you see east of the Mississippi is European in heritage. The common bluegrasses we sow and maintain are from Europe. When our ancestors came to America there weren't any bluegrasses here. There weren't any creeping bentgrasses. Or ryes. Or fescues. No, there weren't any redtops, either. They all came to us with the ear-

liest settlers. So did clover and timothy and lots of other meadow grasses.

Most of these grasses were not brought here intentionally. Virtually all came as seed in the hay for livestock on the sailing ships, as seed in packing material on those same ships or as mattress stuffing the immigrants brought with them. They came as seeds contaminating food and forage crop seed. As everybody knows, grass seeds are so small that millions of them occupy virtually no room. The grasses we nurture and maintain so lovingly on our golf courses are here by accident — illegal immigrants of sorts!

The reason they are so green when native American plants are retreating from that color goes to their European heritage. Autumns and winters on that continent are very different from ours. Fall comes on very slowly in northern Europe — some say you need to be in England in the fall to fully appreciate that fact. The season crawls and creeps toward Christmas in misty, rainy cool weather. By the time the Christmas season is over, the mild and nearly nonexistent winter is too. Spring flowers begin to bloom. The climate in Europe isn't as violent as ours is here in the U.S. They don't have the hot and violent summers or the clear and cold winters.

So these lawn and meadow grasses, these European immigrants, stay green because it is in their genes. It's in the genes of beech trees and of myrtle. The green of English oak and Norway maple lasts well into the autumn. So does the green of cultivated apple trees from Europe.

Don't get me wrong — I'm certainly not complaining about the green of autumn. I'm actually extremely grateful for this time of extra green when everything else is taking on autumn hues. The green of our golf courses sets up fantastic color contrasts with all of the bright yellows and reds of fall. For me, it's the green of the golf courses that makes them especially beautiful in the

fall. The green amplifies the color of the trees and shrubs and ground covers and vines.

Drive through the Wisconsin countryside in fall. Find a place that isn't being farmed or cultivated or pastured. What you'll see are all the colors EXCEPT green — our native grasses turn away from green in the fall like the rest of our native plants. Despite the brilliance of a woodland or swamp, I think the scene would be even prettier with more green. Also notice, as you move toward farms or closer to towns and villages, how much more green there is. It widens out in pastures and meadows and lawns. And golf courses. Note the spectacular contrasts.

Nearly every fall while Cheryl and I are leafpeeping in New England we read an article in some newspaper discussing the merits of the fall color in Vermont and New Hampshire. Usually these are arguments over "whose is best?" I always vote for Vermont for one simple reason. That state has more green. She has more active farms, more cultivated and pastured ground that offers up a green reference to the great red and yellow fall color of the mountains.

So I guess I'm really glad that our golf courses are their greenest of the year in fall. For those of us descended from European stock, it seems we owe our ancestors not only for our own heritage, not only for the great game we work with, but also for the green color of this already very colorful season.

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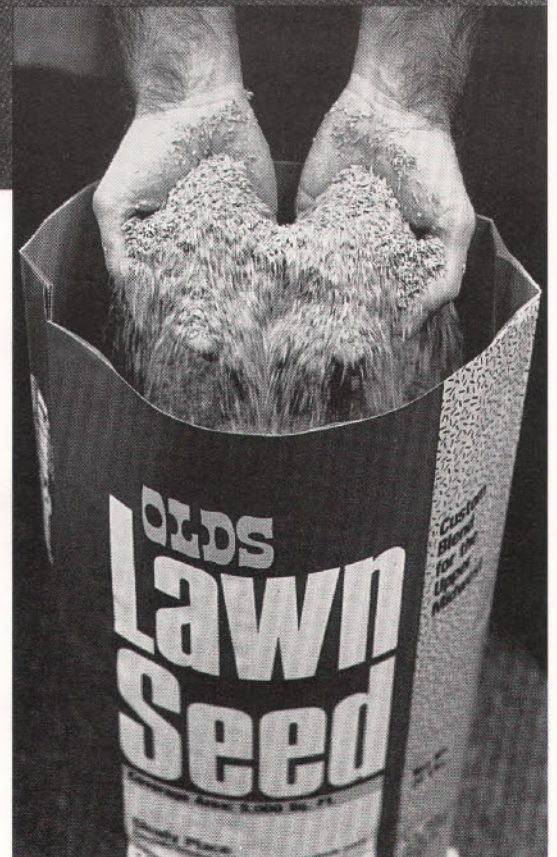
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# Pythium — Our Number One Summer Disease Problem?

By Dr. Gayle L. Worf

I hate Pythium. Probably not for the same reason you do. You dislike it because of its destructive ways, its constant summer threat, and the fact that it takes a special group of chemicals to control it.

My abhorrence comes from its difficulty in the laboratory on some occasions to get a good diagnosis, the easy errors that are made with field diagnosis, and the lack of good information regarding some aspects of its control.

It seems to me that Pythium has become more important to us in the recent years. Part of the reason for that is because dollar spot control is easy to achieve, if you have a budget for it, and you can play "catch up" with it if early infections have gotten ahead of your last fungicide application. Also, I've personally not seen nearly as much dollar spot in the last few years. (I'm writing this on August 4 — watch this month make me wish I hadn't said that!) Ironically, dollar spot has shown up heavily in the variety plots at Yahara Hills this year, and you'll have a chance to see whether there are differences there, including in the bluegrass plots. I've attributed the reduction not only to good fungicide programs, but I've also wondered whether picking up fairway

clippings might also be helping. But even the roughs have not been hit so hard.

Maybe the hotter seasons have reduced dollar spot — and increased Pythium problems.

Most of us know classical Pythium. Sudden appearance. Greasy, water-soaked look, the grass quickly turning from green to gray, then brown. Accompanying white cob-web mycelium of the fungus active around the expanding margins. But sometimes the fungus isn't evident, and more often, there's fungus growth over the surface of healthy turf that **scares** us into thinking it's Pythium — and we make an expensive chemical application — even when the fungus is a mucor or some other non-pathogen. And after the attack, the symptoms can mimic scalped turf, dry spots, and other disorders, so it can be hard then to diagnose.

In the laboratory, when we try to make a quick diagnosis, we also look for the fungus, which most often has dried up and disappeared by the time we get it. So we look for the presence of oospores or oogonia. Trouble is, we nearly always can find a few scattered about even in healthy turf, if you look hard enough. So it sometimes be-

comes a judgment call. Isolations are a lot better, if it comes out in abundance within 24-48 hours on the right media from freshly affected tissue. But that takes time, which we don't usually want to give when treatment decision time is at hand.

**Diagnostic kits available.** That's why I've become a believer that the Pythium diagnostic kits are probably worth having around most golf courses, just in case. Some of you are acquainted with them, and are probably using them. There's one each for Pythium, Rhizoctonia brown patch, and dollar spots. They're being sold under the trade name "Reveal", six units to a pack, and should have a shelf life of a year. It might be useful in some situations for adjacent golf courses to share the costs of having them around, if cost is considered a problem with them.

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*Continued on page 7*

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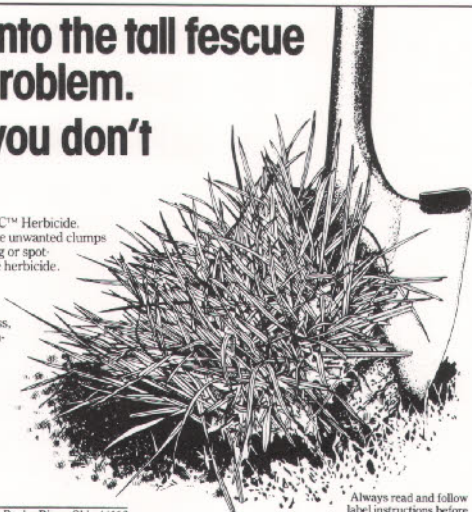
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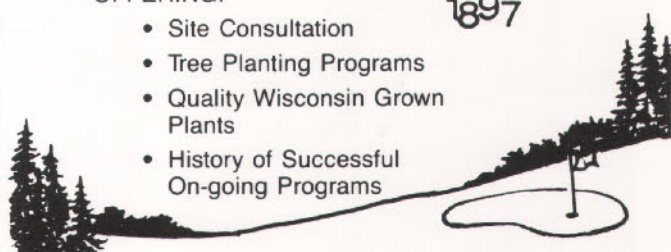
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Continued from page 5

The Ciba-Geigy Company had plans this year to offer some free kits to anyone who bought sufficient quantities of either Banner or Subdue. Their rationale was to insure better customer satisfaction when treating either brown patch or Pythium, to be sure you are treating the right disease! I don't know whether that was followed through, but I'd be anxious to hear from any kit users regarding your experiences this year.

Another reason for my disdain of Pythium is the reported difficulty in stopping damage on some occasions, and the varied explanations that are being offered, without really knowing for sure what's true and false. The pri-

mary chemicals on the market today for Pythium include Aliette, Banol, chloroneb, Koban and metalaxyl (Subdue and ProTurf Pythium Control). Fore is also registered. Some reports concerning the systemics, such as metalaxyl, say that they're poor at stopping existing infections because the chemical must get into the plant first in order to be effective. Could be. But if that is the case, how can we use them in in vitro laboratory tests to detect possible resistant strains? (The chemical is added to agar at different concentrations, upon which the fungus is seeded and growth rates compared.) So if we don't get control, is it misdiagnosis? Is it fungicide resistance? Is it improper fungicide application or timing?

And the questions about "low temperature Pythiums" re-cycle every year. There have been confirmations of certain strains causing foliar attacks in eastern states — I'm unaware of it here but it could occur. Also, there's nervousness at times about lower temperature, root attacking strains such as Dr. Clint Hodges reported out of Iowa on younger greens some years ago.

So there are lots of reasons for not liking Pythium! Even so, we've been making a few collections of Pythium isolates this summer, maybe to look at them a little more closely this winter, when the weather's not right for disease! Our thanks to those of you who have been providing us with sampling materials.

# THE GENTLE GIANTS

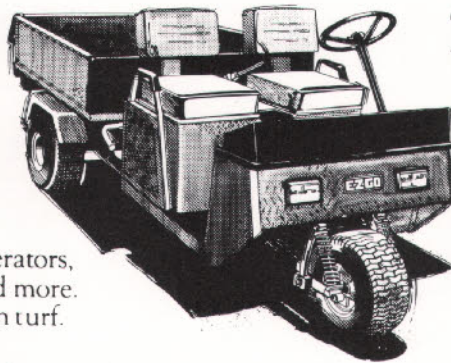
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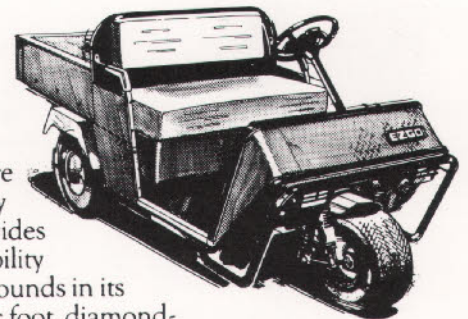
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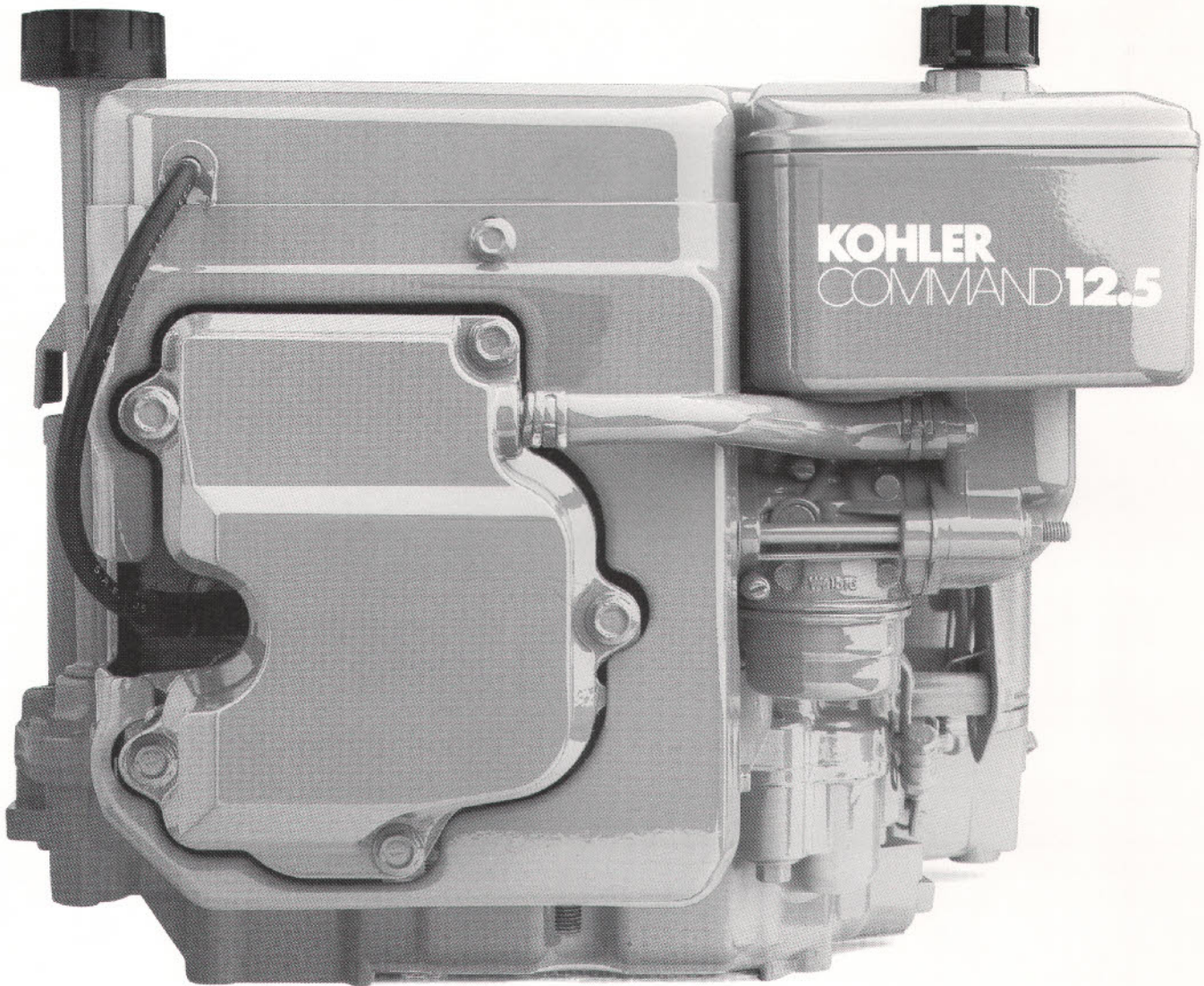


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# What Would You Have Done?

By Monroe S. Miller

We hosted the WSGA State Match Play Tournament at our Club early in the summer. Our members have always been highly supportive of amateur golf and they were pleased to be able to have some of the state's best golf players here for a few days.

For myself, tournaments like this one are challenging and give opportunities to really manage resources to provide the best product possible.

This wasn't the best time for us. We put in a new irrigation system last fall. Finishing touches were required this spring. We also built a new green, 13 new tees, 10 new bunkers, laid down 4,000 feet of an 8' wide asphalt cart path, dug a new pond, etc., ad nauseum, all after August 1, 1988. We could have used more grow-in and healing time.

We worked our tails off this spring with the tournament in mind. Plans were made around the dates of the event.

During the tournament, which had two 18-hole rounds of golf on three of the four days, my crew worked the daylight until 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. until dark schedule.

Pride, excitement, teamwork, camaraderie, satisfaction and all those similar emotions were what we were feeling. Players were happy with the conditions; so were the WSGA officials and committee people. Although the weather was cool and cloudy, it was comfortable enough for everyone.

I should have been suspicious — things were going almost **too** well. Then it happened.

One of the papers came out with a quote from one of the players. He'd lost his match on the second playoff hole and blamed it on a "maintenance snafu". He claimed he lost because of a lip on the hole, caused of course by one of my employees.

The kid who cut the cup was sick. He was certain it couldn't have happened because we **always** (every day) use a steel plate to level the ground

around the hole. That made it essentially impossible to leave a high lip on one side of the hole. He is also an excellent golfer, formerly a collegiate player and now a student in the UW-Madison Turf and Grounds Management program. He was even going to play in the tournament. I mention these things to point out that there wasn't negligence on our part, in my mind, anyway.

I was absolutely furious. Usually, even when conditions are good on the golf course, little is said in the press about the course. That is how it should be. The focus should be on the game and the players. But I resent, with all the emotion I can muster, public whining like that, even if something is wrong.

So I confronted this player and gave him holy hell. Phrases like "poor sportsmanship" and "sour grapes from a sore loser" were loosed on him. I expressed my belief that he did not understand the special character about golf — it is a gentleman's game. A gentleman wouldn't complain in the papers and assail the work of a lot of people.

He knew of my disbelief how someone who was a guest at a private club and given the kind of service and attention our crew had given could possibly gripe publicly about anything. "No class," I said.

There was more that doesn't need repeating here. The player felt badly. Of course, his first defense was "I was misquoted." I seriously doubt it. Reporters cannot dream such things up and then print them as news — it is too risky and violates their code of ethical conduct.

The offending player personally apologized to each and every person on my staff. He expressed regrets to me, which I accepted after giving him a verbal lashing. He wrote a note to the young man who had cut the cup. And he left a couple of cases of refreshments in the shop.

I don't mind constructive criticism. In fact, I welcome it if it is legitimate. But even now, as I look back wondering if I should have been so forceful, I still say golf players don't need to make their dissatisfactions public. Come see me in my office.

Overreaction? Howitzer on a gnat? Frankly, I'd do what I did all over again, given similar circumstances. A good boss sometimes has to be a little like a good coach — stand up for your team when one of the players has been wronged.

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