

(Continued from page 29)

had all the current equipment. There appeared to be more John Deere equipment than other brands. However, it costs a whole lot more to buy a piece of equipment in Australia; in some cases it is almost double what it is here.

Few universities offer turfgrass degrees. A small number offer agricultural degrees, but only one or two in all of Australia offer anything related to turfgrass.

The technical schools offer formal training programs in greenkeeping

for bowling greens, athletic fields/ovals, cricket fields and golf courses. Schooling takes about three to four years, with students attending in a couple of six week intervals every year. After their schooling is completed, they are required to fulfill a two or three year apprenticeship in their specific turfgrass field of interest.

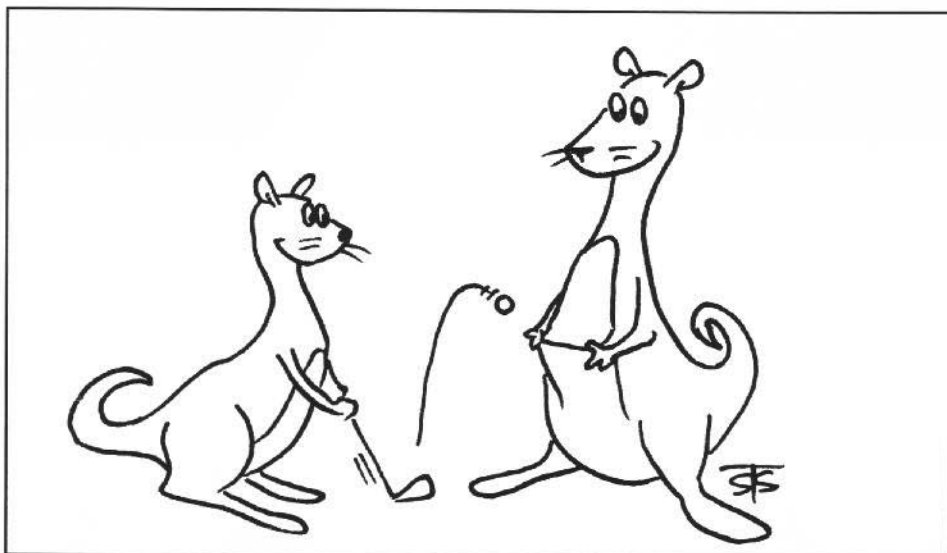
The turfgrass research we take for granted here doesn't exist there. Superintendents don't have the opportunity of attending seminars on turfgrass management. Most of the

information they get is from research done here or from our turfgrass magazines.

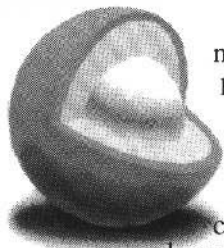
The toughest part in visiting with superintendents was determining how much nitrogen or other nutrients they use during a season. Since they use the metric system, I have to convert everything into our system of measurement. It is like learning a whole new language. One pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet is equal to five grams per meter squared. On fairways, some golf course superintendents use acreages and some use hectares as their measurement. Think about it: if you are playing golf, there isn't a 150 yard marker.

#### Home in a Day

The worst part of traveling to Australia was the trip there and the one returning home. Jetlag was a new experience for me. The twenty-six hours it took to get to Australia was a bit too much to handle. The return trip back didn't take as long, but crossing the International Dateline does take its toll. I saw the sunrise twice on the same day. I departed on a Thursday at 1:00 p.m. and arrived on Thursday again, but at 4:00 p.m.! 🍷



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# THE BOAT RIDE

By Monroe S. Miller

The phone rang. I ignored it for three rings and Dave finally asked “do you want me to get that?”

“Please,” I said. “But I’m not here. I am not in the mood for a protracted conversation with someone who has time on his hands. Take a message for me.”

It hadn’t been a good morning. The sun came up early and bright, portending the kind of midsummer day that can be tough on a golf course in Wisconsin.

The heat was one thing. But a week’s worth of problems over the course of a short three hours is something else. Two of the guys on the crew were late—too much beer and cigar smoking at the Blue Moon for their own good. They probably should have stayed home for all the good they were when they finally arrived.

Then there were mower breakdowns. Walking greensmowers don’t leak hydraulic oil, but they have failures that can drive you crazy—belt failures. We had two hauled back into the shop before they had cut one green between them. Another caught a piece of a twig on the frame and scratched about five passes on the 12th green before I caught it and got it squared away. Some of the damage was bad enough that it had to be hand knitted for repair.

A sprinkler had stuck most of the night on the eighth green. Fortunately it stopped turning so the green wasn’t flooded. But the bunker on the south side was full of water, and the sand from the greenside face was washed down onto the bunker floor. After we pumped the water out, a crew had to hand shovel the sand into place.

And, of course, we spotted some disease on a couple of tees. Our interval was stretched, but rather than tool up and send equipment out to do all of them, we spot treated the problem areas with a granular product.

It seemed perfectly fitting that last

night a local hoodlum decided to commit some overdue vandalism, pitching several ballwashers and a couple of sticks and flags into the pond. That was the touche of the morning.

Dave picked up the phone and although I wasn’t listening closely, I could tell it was someone familiar and someone he liked. I looked over, saw he was laughing and wondered who it was. Just then he covered the mouthpiece and whispered to me “it’s Tom Morris. He would like to talk to you for a second.”

I unlocked my office door, sat down behind my desk and pick up the receiver. “Yeah,” I said. “What do you want?”

Tom hesitated a second and then said “this could be your lucky call. You sound like you are in a foul mood and I have an offer that will pull you out of it.”

Morris sounded like his day was going as well as mine was going poorly. “Unless you tell me I’ve just won the lottery, I am probably not interested,” I replied.

“Not exactly,” he said, “but it is almost as good. How about a boat ride?”

Silence. An offer for a boat ride with Tom Morris isn’t something I dismissed too quickly, ever.

Several times every season he would call, most often when it was hot, and make the same offer. Not once had I turned him down.

We live in a great town for boating. We had the four lakes—Mendota, Monona, Waubesa and Kegonsa—and the Yahara River that connected them. Lake Wingra was another lake in town, but it was isolated and we didn’t count it. Several of the golf courses in the city were on the shores of one of the four lakes. Tom’s course and mine were among them.

Morris had grown up on the smallest of the four lakes and had been in

love with the water all of his life. I never knew him when he didn’t own a boat.

“You know what, Tom?” I asked. Before he could answer I offered that “a relaxing trip around the lake would do me a lot of good right now.”

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I hadn't caught my breath yet, and I had been going full speed since before sunrise. It was almost noon now.

"Great," he said with a lot of enthusiasm in his voice. It will take me about five minutes to get to the launch, another five minutes to get underway and five minutes to get across the lake. I'll meet you at your marina."

"See you there!" I said. It was a perfect setup. Our pump station was right next to our marina. So I would drive to the pumphouse, park my golf car, walk over to the marina—less than 50 yards—and go out the boardwalk to the last slip where Tom would pick me up. When the boat ride was over, he'd drop me off at the same place. I just had to walk to the pumphouse, get my golf car and go back to work. It was great.

Usually I would tell somebody—Dave most often—where I was and when I would be back. For some reason I was halfway to the pumphouse before I thought about it. Rather than turn back—I never took a radio with me—I figured for once it wouldn't do any harm. Things weren't going good

enough to be gone long anyway.

Just like clockwork, Tom and I arrived at the end of the marina walk at the same time. "Morning, Tom!" I greeted him.

"You sound in better spirits than you did an hour ago," he said as he smiled and pushed his state trooper sunglasses back on his nose. Then he pulled the bill of his sea captain hat down so it almost touched his shades.

"I am," I answered. And I really was. There is something soothing about these rides we take on the lakes. It was quiet and peaceful and, even on really hot days, a whole lot cooler on the water than it was on the golf course.

Once I was safely on board I gave a shove against the pier and we were off. Tom moved slowly to open water. We then turned east and followed the shoreline from a couple hundred yards out.

The tension was melting away, and it felt good to begin to feel relaxed. We were just poking along, looking at the mansions that faced the lake. I was used to seeing them from the street side; this perspective made it clear that the lakeside was the front

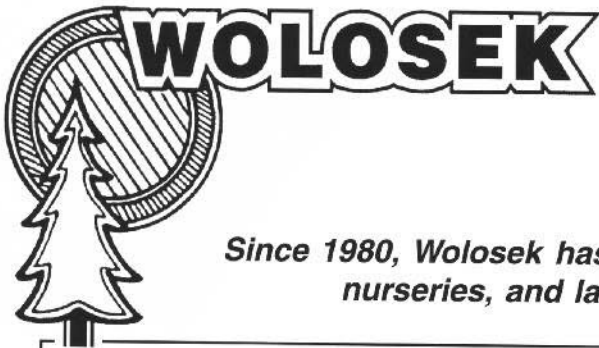
of most and the street side was the back.

Some had broad expanses of lawn down to the shore; others were wooded lots. Every so often we'd see a very rustic small structure set dead center in a property, an obvious remnant of the past when it was an out-of-town summer cabin.

We made the bend around Picnic Point into University Bay, moved closer to shore as we cruised by the great University of Wisconsin campus. It was as beautiful from the water as it was when on land or even when viewed from the air. Three generations of our family had lived near Lake Mendota while we were students at the UW, enjoying the shoreline landmarks—the crew house, the Union Terrace, the cinder path from Willow Drive to Langdon Street, and the old Red Gym.

"Boy, Tom, this is great," I gushed to my long time colleague. "I needed to get away for awhile. You are a lifesaver."

"If you need a Coke, there are some in the cooler," Tom said as he reached for one for himself. He never  
*(Continued on page 34)*



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(Continued from page 33)

went anywhere without some refreshments close at hand.

"It is amazing how quickly your problems dissolve when you get away from them for a little bit," I observed while leaning back and popping open a soda.

"That's why I'm here," Tom replied.

"I remember the first time you took this boat onto the water, Tom."

He smiled. "So do I."

In one of his rare goofs, he had pulled a boner worthy of a complete idiot. When the boat was new I was with him on the other side of the lake, helping with its virgin launch. We got it in the water, I pulled his Explorer and boat trailer up the ramp and found a parking place close by. In the meantime he had the big Mercury boat motor running and had maneuvered to the pier to get me. I hopped in, strapped on a life preserver and sat back to enjoy the maiden voyage. Tom thought he was pretty smart as we slowly moved out of the harbor toward open water.

Suddenly other boaters were yelling at us, waving their arms and laughing. Tom looked around with an innocent look on his face before glancing down and realizing they were laughing at us. He hadn't put a drain plug in and we were taking on water like crazy!

I looked over the side and the rear of the boat was only six inches above the water level. We were sinking! Morris was flat on his belly, half covered with water and fumbling to put the plug in. He got it, stood up and the world saw a very embarrassed man.

"If you tell anybody about this, Miller, I'll kill you." He sounded serious.

"Don't worry, Tom," I replied. "My lips are sealed. I won't tell a soul."

Of course by the end of the next day I'd called at least twenty people and told them about the great sea captain, Tom Morris.

About three days after that humiliating incident, Tom called and said "let's try it again."

"Great," I said. "Same place, same time?"

"Yup," he said.

Everything went smoothly. He had the drain in, the launch was easy and quick, and the lake was calm. We rode Mendota for quite a time and decided to pull into the Middleton harbor. No pier. "No problem," Tom

assessed. "We'll float into shallow water, drop anchor and wade onto shore.

He waited until he thought the boat's momentum would carry us in, cut the engine and looked at me smugly as we drifted toward the beach.

"This looks good," he said. With that he reached down, picked up the anchor and with a mighty heave, let it go.

My last vision was of a 1/2 inch, 30-foot length of bright yellow rope flashing through the sky.

Morris screamed. "Damnit." Then he looked over at me. I had collapsed into the seat and was holding my side as I doubled with laughter.

Captain Tom had forgotten to tie the anchor to the boat! It now had a watery grave in Lake Mendota.

"Aren't you going to dive and look for it?" I asked between guffaws.

"Screw it," he said. The man was mad.

Far be it from me to rub a little salt into a wounded ego. "You know, Morris, they should hire you to pilot the QEII on ocean voyages—sort of a 'surprise tour package'. With you at the helm, there'd be some surprises!"

"Keep it up and I am going to take you to the middle of the lake, throw you overboard and let you swim home."

"I can't swim," I reminded him.

"Exactly," came the reply from Tom.

So far today, however, the day had been perfect. He swung the boat a little to the north and we had a full view of our beautiful state capitol building, the isthmus, and James Madison park. We followed the shore until the Governor's Mansion came into full view.

"I'll be damned," Tom said with genuine surprise in his voice. "Isn't that the Governor on the pier?"

I looked and was certain it was. We both waved to the man who is probably the best governor in the entire history of the state of Wisconsin. Tommy Thompson waved back to us.

We made a big left handed hook past the village of Maple Bluff back to the middle of the lake and drew a bead on the locks at Tenney Park. Tom wanted to do a quick cruise of Lake Monona before we went back to work.

It was a beautiful day. The lake was perfectly calm, the sky was blue

and the breeze was light. Old Henry Thoreau hit the mark when he said "a lake is the landscapes most beautiful and expressive feature. It is the earth's eye." No doubt that sentiment explained why water features on golf courses were so important.

"What a day, Tom. This is great!"

Then the engine quit. I looked at Tom; he looked at me and turned the key to off. He tried to restart the Merc but no luck.

"What's going on?" I wasn't in a panic, but I was uneasy.

"I don't know," came the reply. He sounded like he really didn't know. He turned the engine over two or three more times. It didn't start. Like any normal male, we both started wiggling wires, tapping the carb and electronic package and anything else the might be a candidate. It still didn't start.

My face flushed red as I thought the unthinkable. "You aren't out of gas are you?"

Tom looked at me and I knew instantly that was it. "I forgot to fuel up after I called you." He twisted the gas cap off, looked into the tank and said "nothing but fumes."

I was mad. "You chump. How in bloody hell could you forget to fuel this thing?" I asked incredulously. "I've seen your act when a MLCC crew member forgets to fuel a mower. You ought to practice what you preach. You don't happen to have a gas can with a little fuel in it on board, do you?"

"No."

There we sat, barely moving, now cooking in the hot sun. It was a lot cooler when the boat was moving.

"How could you forget to fuel up?"

"Would you shut up," Tom said. "Your whining and bellyaching won't change the circumstances. All you'll do is grind on my nerves. Keep it up and you are going overboard."

"This is really super, Tom. My wife knows I didn't sleep good last night, my crew knows I have been stressed out. They all know it was a bumpy road this morning. My golf car is parked by the pump station, by the lakeshore. Everybody knows I cannot swim. I can hear the six o'clock news headline: *Local golf course superintendent finds peace in the depths of Lake Mendota. Dane County officials are dragging the lake for the body. Details at 10.*"

"You're a sick puppy," Tom said. "Calm down. Somebody will come by, we'll flag them down and get help."

"Look around, Tom. Nobody's on the lake. Who do you plan on flagging?"

"Boaters will be here, trust me. Stay cool."

I wasn't cool; I was hot. I was worried. The crew will wonder where I am. Irrigation has to be set up. Plans have to be made for tomorrow. My family has no idea where I am. I don't normally "disappear" with long stays at the tavern or anywhere else. Mr. Dependable, that's me. A creature of habit. A worrier par excellence. This episode will not end well; I could feel it.

Tom had settled back into his high back seat and popped open another Coke. He didn't seem concerned.

"You know," he started, "this isn't so bad after all. It is sort of a forced respite from the summer's hassles. I kind of like it. Have a soda."

I slouched back into my seat slowly accepting the circumstances I obviously couldn't change. Time passed. Tom Morris and I had been friends since we were teenagers and had worked together summers at area courses. Nearly 30 years later, we were still best of friends. If I had to be stranded with somebody, Tom was better than almost anybody else I could think of.

We visited about everything, from our kids to our careers, from the past times to the future times. We even talked about Bogey Calhoun's golf course olympics. "I still think he should have a 1000 yard dash for the 68 inch National Mowers," Tom laughed, adding, "with cutting units down!"

We smeared our faces with sun screen, argued over which radio station to listen to, and I continued to fret as the sun dropped lower and lower in the western sky.

"For the last time, quit complaining," Tom barked at me. "Have another Coke."

"I can't," I replied. "My bladder is ready to burst now."

Tom laughed. "You are dumb. Go ahead and relieve yourself."

"Where? How?"

"Over the edge of the boat," he replied simply.

"Oh, there'd be a sight."

"It's up to you. I don't much care if you are miserable or not. It isn't as if you'll have an audience."

It took five minutes for me to get desperate enough to find the courage to stand up and take a leak over the side of Tom's boat. When I finally did, the relief was overwhelming.

And with that, out of nowhere, the sheriff's lake patrol boat roared up. There was nothing I could do. Except finish my job.

"Do you think this lake is your private latrine?" The deputy sounded gruff, until I saw the smirk on his face. "Do you boys have a problem?"

"We're out of gas," Tom answered. "Have been for hours."

The deputy stepped to the back of his patrol boat, picked up a gallon can and handed it to Tom with "this should get you back to shore."

Tom dumped the fuel into the tank and I passed the can back to the cop, adding "wait a second until we see if it starts."

Tom turned the key, the boat motor roared to life, and we waved to the patrol boat.

When we were near the marina I could see that my crew had taken my golf car back to the shop. I'd have to walk there, across the golf course. I didn't care, not at this point. Land would feel good beneath my feet.

Tom maneuvered the boat close to the pier and I jumped out. We looked at each other and I slowly smiled.

"Thanks for the boat ride, Tom. I'll never forget it." ♣



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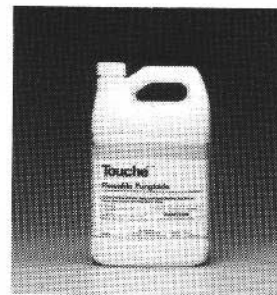
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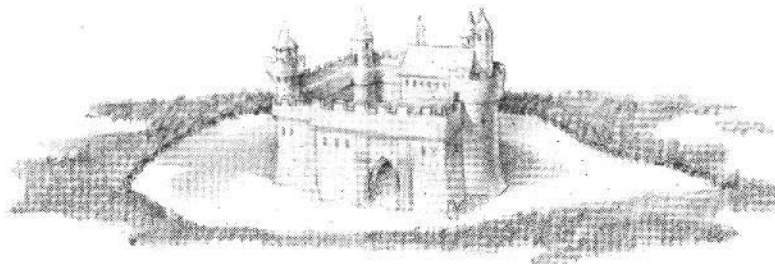


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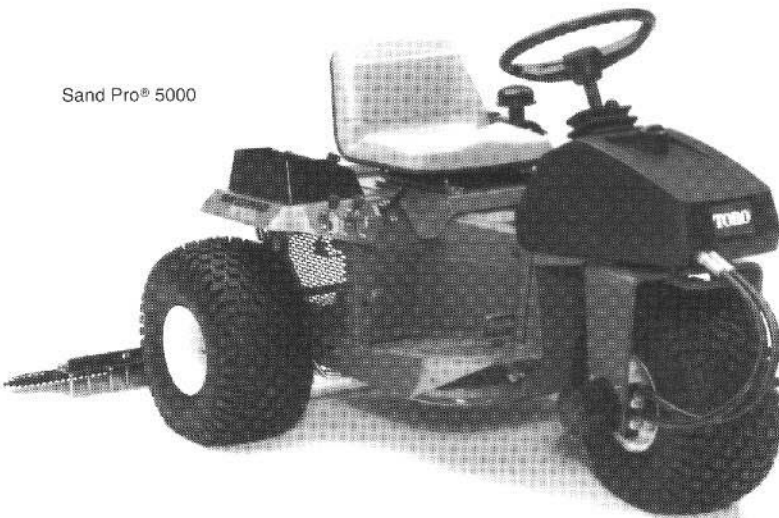
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# You're *NOT* a professional if...

By Monroe S. Miller

The word *professional* is used a lot these days and bandied around pretty loosely. Some argue it is grossly misused; they could be right.

I've asked about it quite a bit and nobody will give me a straight answer to what this code word *professional* means. Some reading and research at the library revealed little in the definition department.

This much I did learn—it is used a lot by women in personal ads! You know—expensive dating services that say they are *professionals!* Again, there is no definition of the term.

Years ago *professional* referred to a self-regulated occupation like a lawyer or doctor. Today it has broader application and includes jobs like engineers and architects. And then there are groups that overuse it a lot—my personal favorite is PGA professional. Spelled out—professional golfers association professional—it leads one to think of words like overkill and redundancy, I'm afraid. Is there such a thing as a PGA Amateur? Or a PGA Unprofessional?

In our business, one of the earliest uses (and one of the clearest) of the word *professional* is found in the minutes book of the Royal and Ancient for May 4, 1864: "Major Boothy moved, that Tom Morris of Prestwick, formerly of St. Andrews, be brought here as a professional Golfer, at a salary of Fifty pounds a year, on the understanding that he shall have entire charge of the Golf Course under the Green Committee." Let's face it—we use the word a lot in our careers. We're professionals. Or at least some of us are.

It does get confusing, though. How do you judge the ads for professional welders? Professional plumbers? Are garbage truck drivers professionals? Another one I like is on a fertilizers bag which says "For use by professional turf managers only." What, for the sake of green grass, does that

mean? It seems in some instances that if you do a job full time, you are a professional. That is dumb.

The word in today's lexicon is not only broader and more amorphous, it has become pretentious, self-serving and even mean spirited. In the end, the definition best suited for me is this: tell me what you do and I'll tell you if you are a professional.

A couple of other things have become obvious to me. Mostly, if you have to ask "am I a professional?", you aren't. And the definition may best be given by what a professional is not.

So, to help clarify this pressing midsummer issue in the world of golf turf management, here's my list of what a professional golf course superintendent is not.

You AREN'T a professional:

- if you have mice in your office.
- if you use the word "dirt" instead of soil.
- if you have a tattoo on either of your arms.
- if the upholstery of your truck is patched with duct tape.
- if baling wire figures prominently in any equipment repairs you make.
- if you put up with being called the "greenskeeper".
- if you wear blue jeans to a board of directors' meeting in the clubhouse, and consider creased jeans to be dress pants.
- if you openly, unapologetically and frequently violate our code of ethics. Or, if you don't even know that we have a code of ethical conduct.
- just because you play golf occasionally. Or well.
- if you drop the "g" on -ing words (like mowin', cuttin', waterin', trimmin', fertilizin', fixin', sprayin', etc.)
- if you use the word "ain't".
- if you belch outloud (unless it's on purpose).

- if you are arrogant.
- if you wear a "Miller Lite" or "Harley Davidson" tee shirt to work.
- if you spit a lot in public.
- if you wear cowboy boots with a coat and tie.
- if you dropped out of high school.
- if you refer to your wife as "the old lady".
- if you consider a gourmet meal to be fried chicken, over-cooked string beans and mashed potatoes, with green jello for dessert.
- if your castle is a double-wide house trailer!
- if your shop yard looks like a junk yard.
- if you have your ear(s) pierced.
- if your favorite place for lunch is Hooters.
- if you've got crud under your fingernails most of the time.
- just because you attended one of the "name" schools for two years (or more).
- if you think the job can be done in an eight-hour day.
- if you are always blaming someone else (or the weather or the environment) for your problems on the course.
- if you gossip about a colleague or criticize a peer behind his back.
- if you try to hire individuals from another superintendent's staff without his knowledge.
- if you think the primary purpose of the WGCSA is to set up monthly golf outings around the state for free and you always bring "guests".
- if you refer to women on your staff as "broads".
- if your idea of leadership, activism and problem solving is whining. Whiners are non-constructive, inefficient, weak and insecure.
- if your idea of IPM is spraying greens every week, regardless of the weather.
- just because you can spell "professional", without looking it up. ♣



# Questions From The Floor

By Dr. Wayne R. Kussow  
Department of Soil Science  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Q:** I'm getting underway at a new golf course and I need to establish a lot of baseline information. What method(s) would you recommend for determining the area of irregular shapes like golf greens?—FOND DU LAC COUNTY

**A:** You could go hi-tech with aerial photographs, geographic positioning, etc., but I prefer a long-standing technique that can be used in-house with nothing more than a piece of plywood and a tape measure. Start with a good tape. Nylon tapes stretch and become inaccurate over time. For under \$100 you can get a 100-foot plastic-coated steel tape. I prefer one marked in feet and tenths of an inch rather than feet and inches it's easier to work with.

Start by drilling a small hole in the center of about a 3 ft x 3 ft piece of plywood. Using a protractor, carefully draw lines out from the hole every 10 degrees. You should end up with 36 lines. Place the plywood in the approximate center of the green and secure it in place with a large spike pushed through the hole in the middle, leaving enough of the spike extending out so that the end of the tape can be placed over the spike. It is at this point that some forethought can be very helpful in the future. As we all know, golf greens have a nasty habit of shrinking over time. If you place the plywood in a position to which you can accurately return to some years later and you keep a record of that position and all your measurements, you can accurately determine the original boundaries of the greens. To locate a point to which you can return at a later date, I suggest use of irrigation heads as reference points. Pick out two heads on approximately opposite sides of the green. Run the tape between them and record the distance between them. Center the plywood over the mid-point between the sprinkler heads. Clearly, there is information here that needs to go into a permanent record. Which irrigation heads? The distance between them?

The next step is for two people to measure the 36 distances from the spike to the edge of the green. It takes two because one must properly position the tape along each line drawn on the plywood. Once all the numbers are recorded, the area of the green is calculated. Sum all of the distances and divide by 36 to get the average radius of the green. The area = (average radius)<sup>2</sup>(3.14). In other words, multiply the average radius by itself and that number by 3.14. The answer is the area in square feet.

**Q:** It appears the green committee at our club is going to insist that I begin rolling greens-keeping up with the Jones and all that. I'm worried about compaction; has experience with this procedure shown that I have nothing to worry about?—MILWAUKEE COUNTY

**A:** There is no pat answer to this question. It depends on the type of root zone mix, how wet you keep the greens, what you're mowing with, and so on. The real issue seems to be what the committee understands to be the virtues of rolling and how often they expect you to roll the greens. Rolling will increase green speed by 8 inches or so for 2 to 4 hours, depending on the status of the turf and weather. The problem one encounters with rolling is generally not that of compaction per se, but wear and tear on the turfgrass. Research has shown that thinning may occur if you roll more than 3 times a week. With this thinning comes algae and all sorts of ancillary problems. Thus, if you must roll, have the committee decide what the key times are (e.g., men's day, weekends) and only roll at those times.

Is rolling here to stay? I've talked with some superintendents in those parts of the country where rolling first became the thing to do. What I've heard is that more and more rollers are being relegated to the rear of the storage building.

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Q: The pH of our greens, tees and fairways seems to be rising a little over the years. Two questions:

A. How much error is there in pH meter readings from year to year?

B. Could irrigation water from an adjacent lake—the source of our water—possibly be adding enough CaCO<sub>3</sub>/MgCO<sub>3</sub> to increase soil pH?—GRANT COUNTY

A: If you're seeing a long-term trend in rising pH, the reason is not likely to be the readings themselves. Soil pH is affected by the amount of soluble salts present. The more soluble salt, the lower the pH reading. Thus, if you took your soil samples within a week or so after fertilization one year and 3 to 4 weeks after fertilization the next year, chances are the pH readings would be somewhat higher the second year. This does not, however, account for a long-term trend in rising pH.

The pH of Wisconsin lakes ranges from about 4.5 for northern bog lakes to 8.5 for so-called marl lakes that occur in regions with limestone bedrock. Have the pH of your lake water checked. If it's above 7.0, this is the most likely reason why your soil pH is gradually rising.

Q: My USGA greens are now 3 years old and isolated dry spots are epidemic. We buy wetting agent by the 55-gallon drum, literally. Will this condition ever improve or go away? I can't take it much longer. Any advice? —DODGE COUNTY

A: Welcome to the world of sand-based putting greens! I'm being a bit facetious in making this statement, but have you ever seen localized dry spot in a 3-year old push up green? I haven't. Localized dry spot is a widespread problem that perplexes researchers as well as superintendents. The problem seems to arise when humic acids coat sand grains, causing them to become hydrophobic—that is, they resist wetting. Exactly why sand-based greens are so prone to development of this condition is not known. I can tell you from our own experience that there is a definite relationship between the moisture retention capacity of the root zone mix and its tendency to develop localized dry spot. We're seeing the problem whenever the mix retains less than about 13% water at 40-cm tension. Where we've used organic amendments that result in the root zone mix retaining more than about 13% moisture, these greens are free from localized dry spot after 4 years.

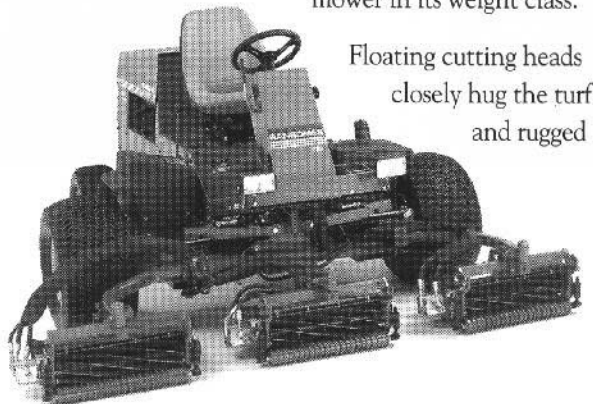
I have some unconfirmed suspicions about what favors localized dry spot. One, as I've already alluded to, is the use of root zone mixes that do not retain adequate amounts of water. This can be easily remedied, but probably not by staying within current USGA specs. As we've done, you can improve moisture retention by using peats that contain less than the 85% organic matter called for by the USGA. Another approach is to increase the peat content of the root zone mix above that recommended

*(Continued on page 41)*

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