

CAN IT GET ANY BETTER?

By Tom Schwab, Superintendent
O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility
University of Wisconsin-Madison

The Wisconsin Turfgrass and Greenscape EXPO may have been the best ever this year. It was the 15th annual winter conference hosted by the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association and the 5th time held at the Marriott Madison West (formerly Holiday Inn). While EXPO is always one of the best educational conferences in the Midwest, many people thought this year was even better. The reasons were that the educational sessions were supreme for all three categories of turf managers: golf; lawn and landscape; and grounds and sports turf. Also, a huge number of exhibitors in the trade show provided plenty of one-on-one attention to attendees. In addition, the scheduling and organization of the whole conference flowed so expertly. Registration was quick and friendly and the EXPO packets were organized and helpful.

The only thing that could have been improved was the weather. Why does the weather always take a turn for the worse during EXPO week! Record cold temperatures for



The trade show was packed.

the season and slick snow covered roads have become the norm. I'm sure the weather kept on-site registration down. There were a record number of attendees despite the weather; 367 attendees came to gather information from the talks and trade show. The number of exhibits in the trade show was a few less than last year though, with 61 booths occupied by 129 helpful exhibitors.

Chris Wendorf, the EXPO planning committee chairman, will work on improving the weather for next year. He did such a good job with everything else as chairman. The planning meetings started right after last year's show and continued throughout the year. Finding all the speakers is the most important element of planning, but scheduling, organizing, and coordinating a 500 person conference also takes quite a bit of work. Audra Anderson, Wisconsin Turfgrass Association's administrative secretary, does much of the planning and almost all the behind-the-scenes work. She really pours her heart into EXPO, and it shows. Planning committee members for this year, other than Chris and Audra, were Dr. John Stier, Jeff Gregos, Paul Huggett, Amy Sausen, and myself. Please complete your post conference questionnaire to help us plan next year's show especially if you have certain speakers that you would like to suggest.

WTA president Bob Erdahl opened the conference summarizing the research projects that the association has supported this year. He also described the progress the association is making to reach a one million dollar endowment, through the UW Foundation, that will support future research projects. We are more than a quarter of the way to reaching that goal since starting the endowment four years ago. Lastly he thanked Greensmix for

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their \$30,000 donation of root zone materials to build a half-acre bentgrass research area that was constructed in 1997.

One of WTA's past presidents, Curt Larson, introduced the 1998 scholarship recipients and turfgrass research donors. The turfgrass research donations make up a large part of the WTA annual budget for projects and growth of the endowment. The summary of scholarships and turf research donations is mentioned here.

Scholarship Donor	Recipient	Amount
AgrEvo	Dave Rappold	\$500
Bayer	Jeff Beauvais	\$500
Spring Valley	Raechal Sager	\$600
WGCSA J.R. Love Scholarship	Trygve Ekern	\$500
Wisconsin Turfgrass Association	Aaron Goninen	\$600
Wisconsin Turfgrass Association	Eric Counselman	\$600
Wisconsin Turfgrass Association	Jamie Johnson	\$600

Turf Research Donor	Recipient	Amount
Aqua Aid	WTA	\$1,000
Bulls Eye Country Club	WTA	\$1,220
Cannon Turf	WTA	\$375
Cole Grower	WTA	\$500
Creekwood Farms	WTA	\$500
Greensmix	WTA	\$30,500
<i>(research and materials donation)</i>		
Horst/ Milorganite	WTA	\$1,350
Milorganite	WTA	\$2,000
Riverview Country Club	WTA	\$1,366
Soil Organic Consulting	WTA	\$1,000
Spring Valley	WTA	\$1,000
Spring Valley/ Milorganite	WTA	\$1,075
Standard Tar Products	WTA	\$500
Stevens Point Country Club	WTA	\$1,148
WI Golf Course Superintendents Assoc	WTA	\$10,000
Wisconsin Sod Producers	WTA	\$875
Wisconsin Turf/Milorganite	WTA	\$1,800
Gary Zwerlein	WI Turfgrass Research and Development Fund (WTRDF)	\$200
Lake Wisconsin Country Club	WTRDF	\$450
Reinders/ Daconil	WTRDF	\$5,560
Westmoor Country Club	WTRDF	\$2,730
WTA	WTRDF	\$45,000

Dr. John Stier continued in the opening session by introducing himself as one of the newer members of the UW turfgrass program. He summarized some of his past research from Michigan State University, his present work since arriving this past April, and what his duties will be in the future of the UW turf program. He will be adding a new advanced turfgrass management and physiology course to the turf program in 1998. That will be part of his 30% teaching appointment at the UW. His other appointment is 70% extension — so you may be seeing him as he travels the state doing research and giving turf advice.

Dr. Michael Casler has done work on every UW-Madison Agricultural Research Station except O.J. Noer. since joining the University in 1980. He will now add to his work by doing some breeding work on turfgrass. Casler described the history of turfgrass breeding and the long arduous process of bringing a new grass to market. He will continue focusing mainly on his forage grass



Randy Smith, Dan Williams, and Randy Witt, talk about the good old days.



Dr. Wayne Kussow had some thought-provoking presentations during EXPO.



Dr. Bruce Clark from Rutgers offers the latest information on summer patch control.



Andy McNitt from Penn State had interesting talks about top-dressing greens and athletic field root zone amendments.



Dr. John Stier met a lot of new faces at his first EXPO as a UW-Madison faculty member.



Large attendance at opening session

research but in collaboration with Dr. Stier will work on developing some cultivars that function better for Wisconsin's environment.

Brian Swingle from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection finished the opening session with a discussion of issues governing the green industry. He talked about rules and possible rule changes covering warning signs, advance notice, applicator training, citizen complaints, and record keeping.

After opening session came the large and exciting trade show. Over 60 exhibitors participated this year and the expanded trade show hours allowed time to visit with them all. There was also time for camaraderie to visit with old friends and make new ones in the large accommodating Marriott trade show area.

A wonderful buffet lunch came next, followed by more trade show, and then the best part of EXPO: the educational sessions. The speakers were excellent this year. The talks were divided into the three categories mentioned previously. It's unfortunate that you can't attend all the talks because the categories go on concurrently.

The golf course session was jam packed with information from Drs. Wayne Kussow, Michael Hurdzan, Bruce Clark, and Dave Huff. Bob Vavrek, Jeff Gregos, Andy McNitt, Amy Sausen, and Steve Millett also brought good information to the golf course session. Hurdzan seemed to be the big draw in golf as he had the room packed to the walls for two combined talks. He gave such entertaining and insightful presentations about the past, present, and future of golf in America.

Not to be outdone, the lawn and landscape sessions had excellent talks from Drs. John Stier, John Ball, Nick Christians, and more talks from Drs. Wayne Kussow, Bruce Clark, and Dave Huff. Other turf experts also offered insightful talks for lawn and landscape. One of the best talks had to be Kussow's "Turf and the Environment; The Real Story." He presented a scientist's view of the real impact that turf fertilizer and other management practices have on the environment. He made every point so clear to the audience before presenting the next point. The biggest compliment Kussow may have gotten was when one of his peers, Dr. Nick Christians, told him that his information would make a great publication. Christians then had an informative presentation himself. It simplified the confusion about different sources of nitrogen fertilizers. Next Dr. John Ball gave an enthusiastic presentation about how turf and trees co-exist. He explored issues of pruning, mulching, fertilizing, irrigating, and doctoring of distressed trees.

The most practical session had to be the grounds and sports turf session. It had three successful sports field managers on the agenda: Rich Riggs from the UW-Stevens Point; Pete Bemis from the UW-La Crosse; and Vince Patterozzi from the Baltimore Ravens. Drs. Stier and Kussow also had useful sports turf information as did Andy McNitt, John Sorchan, and myself. Use of *Poa supina* was explored in a couple of the talks. It is a relatively new specie which has a lot of potential use for sport fields because of its aggressive stoloniferous growth habit.

All I can say is, "So many good talks, so little time!" You just couldn't get to them all so there were good ones that had to be skipped. If I didn't mention some of the good ones it's because I unfortunately couldn't make them all. If you know of some good speakers for next year, please let someone on the planning committee know

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The media cornered Paul Huggett from Long Island Sod Farm to gather information about Wisconsin's sod industry.



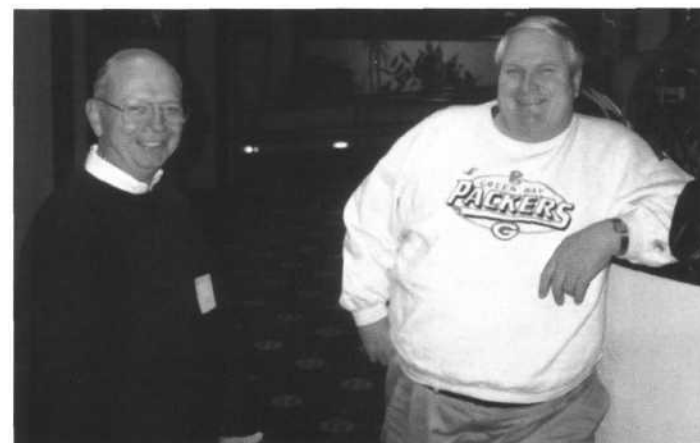
Bill Vogel presents Raechal Sager with the Spring Valley Scholarship.



Jamie Johnson accepts one of the WTA scholarships from Curt Larson.



Vince Johnson and Jim Belfield pose for the camera.



Two of the founders of WTA attended EXPO, Jim Huggett and Tom Harrison.



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about them. We'd like to keep the educational benefits of EXPO at the highest level. I think it is such a good conference every year and I hope you do to.

Thanks go to the registration volunteers, turf student volunteers, and all the session chairpersons that help make the show flow smoothly. Thanks also to the exhibitors that are quite an informative part of EXPO themselves, and also help defray the costs of offering such a superb conference.

A list of EXPO '98 exhibitors follows. They are there throughout the year to inform you about their latest wares, and to give you the most for your money. Your EXPO program gave a summary of each of their businesses along with their telephone numbers. Audra can get you a new copy by calling her at 608-845-6536 if you lost your copy. These exhibitors give so very much to the turf industry in Wisconsin, so I encourage you to pay them back by purchasing their products throughout the year. They have everything you could ever need for your landscapes.

1998 EXPO Exhibitor

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Johnson & Associates Turf Equipment
Kujawa Enterprises (K E I)
Lange-Stegmann Company
Lebanon Turf Products
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Lohmann Golf Designs
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Miller & Associates - Sauk Prairie
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Dr. Mike Hurdzan, noted golf course architect and author, made his first-trip to EXPO.



Dr. Nick Christians presented information about soil testing and nitrogen sources from his Iowa State University research.



Cold Comfort

By Monroe S. Miller

In early January I drove to the edge of town to look at the road sign on the main drag just to make sure I was still in Wisconsin. I was — *Middleton, Wisconsin, Pop. 11560*. The November weather that we had in November, again in December, still in January and on into February had me confused; at times, especially in the first months of the new year, I thought maybe I was in Nashville or St. Louis or (God forbid) Washington, D.C.

Blame it on El Nino or on the natural order of things or whatever, but we have had a very mild winter in Wisconsin. Anyone who received new ice skates or skis or a new snowmobile for Christmas most likely had to drive to Canada to try them out. The phrase "winter sports" was an oxymoron most of the winter.

Meteorologists are, in fact, blaming weird weather all across the country on El Nino, the periodic warming of the surface waters in the Pacific Ocean near the west coast of South America. The warmer water changes the jet streams, and they change our weather. It has happened before, but according to Dr. Josh Young, a UW-Madison professor of atmospheric and oceanic sciences, the effects haven't been this strong ever before. Nor have they previously been as persistent. "Seeing this warmth into January is almost unheard of in the 20th century," Dr. Young said.

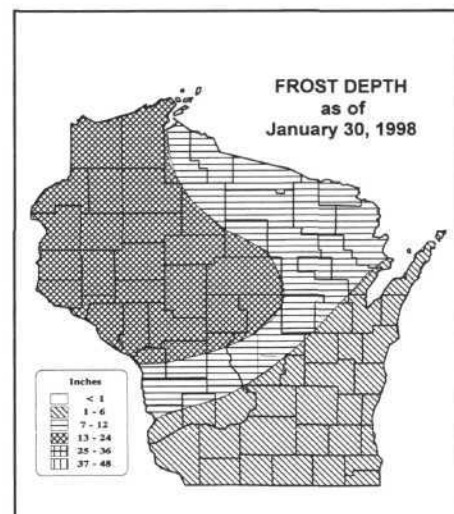
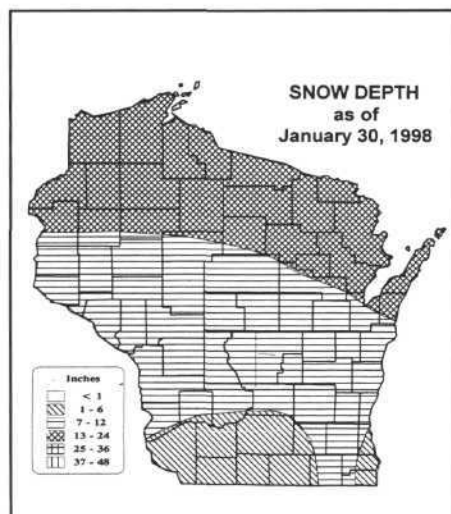
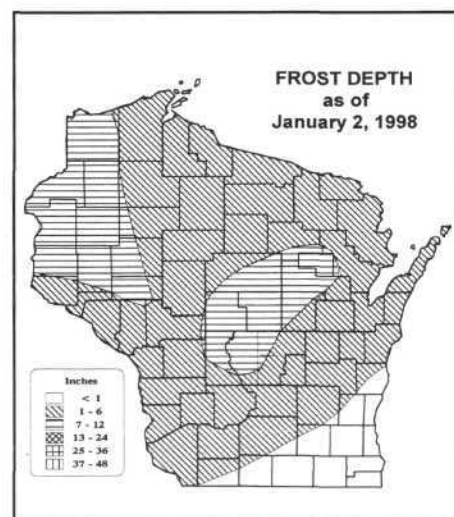
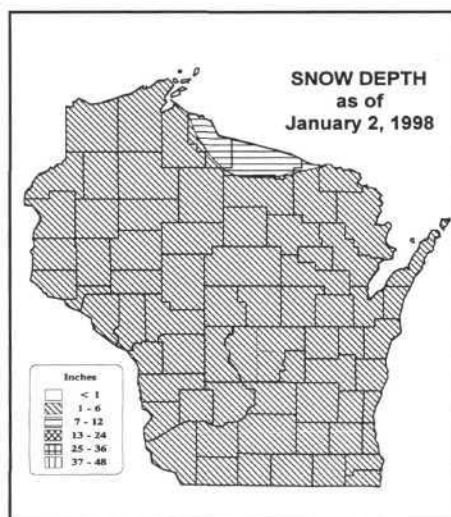
In our town it has been so warm that December and early January temperatures were averaging 35 degrees, fully eight degrees above normal. One of the gauges I use to measure winter temperatures is the freezing of Lake Mendota, the well of our irrigation water and the source of awesome natural beauty. It normally freezes on December 20th, but has iced shut as early as November 23 (in 1880). There have only been 22 times when it stayed open into January. The latest freeze date was January 30 in 1932; the second lat-

est freeze date was on January 14 in 1890. Since it finally closed on January 11, this year was the third latest since records have been kept. It is testimony to how mild the winter has been when compared to normal.

As an aside, it is interesting to note that so many statistics have been kept on Lake Mendota, due no doubt to the location of the UW-Madison on its shoreline. Mendota is one of only 27 lakes worldwide with records that date back over a century.

Winter weather data is included here from the Wisconsin Ag Stat Service.

Golf course superintendents in Wisconsin are interested in and affected by how winter weather affects plant life, insects and wildlife. Dr. Jiwan Palta, UW-Madison Horticulture prof and the resident expert on winter hardiness, believes that native Wisconsin plants will survive the oddball winter weather for the most part. Problems will come with imports like magnolias and flowering shrubs. Non-native plants aren't able to ignore false signs of spring and sometimes break dormancy and



send buds out too early. Cold weather returns and damage results.

Phil Pellitteri, UW-Madison Extension Entomologist, thinks that the mild weather could possibly help overwintering of insects like the gypsy moth, Jap beetles and saw flies.

Even birds were confused by the warm weather. When Dane County held its annual bird count on December 20th, 95 species were identified, the highest number in the 79 years this event has been held. A Northern Water Thrush was seen in Madison on that day when in reality it should have been in South America.

The world did indeed set a temperature record in 1997; land and ocean readings averaged 0.75 degrees F. above normal, exceeding the previous record set in 1990 by 0.15 degrees F. The "normal" temperature for Earth is 61.7 degrees. This made 1997 the warmest year of the 20th century. Nine of the past 11 years have been among the warmest on record, or at least since record keeping started in 1880.

This data renews, or at least invigorates, the discussion about greenhouse effects, global warming and increases that are not a product of natural variations in the climate. In other words, some feel the warmer temperatures are due to the human effect. It is worth study and maybe even some worry. In the past 100 years the average temperature has gone up 1 degree F. If the rise keeps up and temperatures rise two to six degrees by the year 2100, there will be big problems — heat waves, droughts, floods and other natural disasters and catastrophes.

On the other hand, claims of milder winters aren't new. In 1853, an article appeared in a Canadian journal called *Colonial Magazine* that said: "It appears that Canada has

already relaxed some of its famous rigors, and is in a state of continual mitigation. Since a portion of its forests have been cleared, its swamps drained, its villages and settlements established, the Indians inform us that the snows fall in smaller quantities and dissolve sooner."

And the fact is that the coldest winter in the United States in the 20th century was in 1978-1979; and it was cold — several degrees colder than any other winter in the 1900s and more than five degrees colder than the century winter average of 32.5 degrees F.

Whatever the reality of global warming is, a greater reality for us at the moment is that the EXPO is done, GCSAA conference is over, the days are longer and the winter blues are almost history. The birds will return soon, patches of golf course turf will push through the snow on south exposures and hearts will leap at the thought of spring and golf. Hoo-ray!

One final tidbit about the winter scene. For years I have casually thought about wind chill data and wondered how those numbers were arrived at. I finally got the gumption together to look it up. Here is what I found.

To figure the wind chill factor, take the wind speed and multiply it by 1.5. Then subtract it from the air temperature. As an example, if the wind is blowing at 30 mph and the air temperature is 20 degrees F, the wind chill factor is 20 degrees F. minus (30 mph X 1.5) = 20 degrees F. - 45 degrees F. = -25 degrees F. wind chill.

If you didn't know, now you do!

It is too bad Dr. Neal Jorgensen cannot remain dean of CALS at the UW-Madison for another ten years. He would, most assuredly, be recorded by history as one of the best to ever hold that position at Wisconsin or anywhere else for that matter.

But he is going to retire and the University has selected four finalists for his job.

Foremost among them is Dr. Larry Binning, chairman of the Department of Horticulture and a familiar face at WTA Field Day and the EXPO meeting. We have worked with him and know he is an excellent administrator and enthusiastic supporter of the turf-grass industry in Wisconsin.

Also on the list are Elton Aberle of the University of Nebraska, Alan Bennett from UCAL- Davis, and Dan Hess of the Novartis Company. They were chosen from a group of 70 applicants.

I exchange chapter publications with some other chapters around the country. One of those is Minnesota.

The December/January issue of the *Hole Notes* features a president's message. The piece was written by Jim Nichol, the new MGCSA president, and it contained an idea he is going to try in Minnesota that long ago I floated (more or less unsuccessfully) in Wisconsin. Jim is going to propose they have only three golf outings in 1999 — the championship, the scholarship scramble and the research scramble. "The rest of our regular monthly meetings will be education-oriented, held in the late afternoon and not necessarily on Monday.

"My thinking in this matter is as follows: Mondays in the past were generally a day off when the course was closed. Now many courses utilize Monday for outside events to generate much needed revenues. The mornings are generally set aside for us to complete tasks that cannot be done around golfers. I have been told by some of our affiliate members that they do not need to take a day off to play golf with their competition, and after all, we can all benefit from more education. So a typical monthly meeting may look like this: 4:00 p.m. Registration (before rush hour), 4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Speaker, 5:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Social, 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Dinner and Social."

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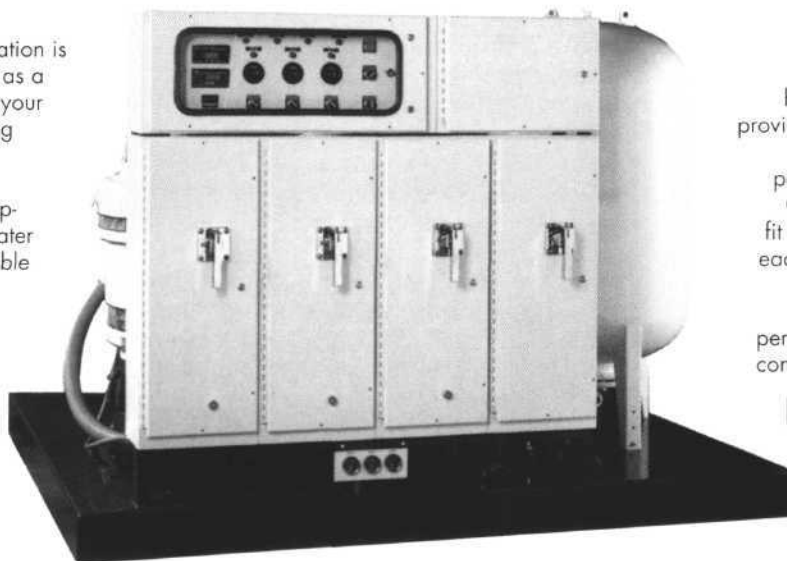
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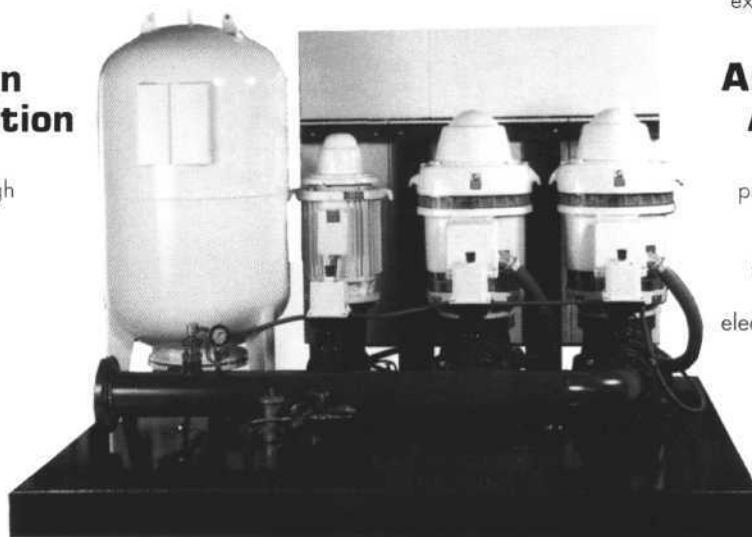
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(Continued from page 17)

Jim's got something there and I hope he succeeds. A look at the history of our chapter will show that from its start in 1930 through the years I was in college, that was pretty much the format. It merits consideration by the WGCSA, too.

It is always sad to report the passing of one of the veterans of our chapter. On January 15, John E. Crewe passed away in Racine at the Lincoln Lutheran Care Center. John was 97 years old.

John lived in Racine all his life. He was a well-known golfer in Racine as well as the golf course superintendent at Racine CC for 22 years. John was a long time member of the WGCSA and an Army veteran of WWII.

While I was a student and during my early years as a golf course superintendent, John was a familiar presence at WGCSA meetings. I remember him as a good guy.

Thanks to Ric Lange for sharing the news.

The spread of the destructive gypsy moth across eastern and central Wisconsin has necessitated wider spraying and tougher eradication measures this year by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection.

These miserable insects feed on 300 different types of trees and each year, despite efforts to the contrary, they have caused more damage. Although most of the moth problem is limited to the eastern part of Wisconsin, some have been found in the western counties. In fact, all 72 counties have reported their presence.

Last year, four counties were under gypsy moth quarantine; that number could grow to 17 this summer.

Our mild winter won't help any; the warm days could reduce winter kill and dramatically increase their numbers this summer.

Sixty-five sites covering 38,000 acres will be sprayed with B.t. bacteria. Residents affected will be notified, and there will be public meetings to answer question. The best we can hope for, unfortunately, is to slow the spread of gypsy moth injury. No state so far has completely stopped their onslaught.

Cubby O'Brien wants to thank the Wisconsin vendors who helped with the expenses of hosting the fall dinner dance at Drugan's Castle Mound Golf Club. They are:

Cannot Turf Supply, Wisconsin Turf, Natural Athletic Turf, Turf Supply Company, J.W. Turf, Terra, Bayer Corp., Rhone Poulanc, Scotts, Pursell Industries, UHS, Milorganite, Spring Valley, Pendelton Turf, Watertonics, Novartis, Horst, Olds Seed and T.J. Emmerich.

Thanks from all of us.

Shortly after returning from the GCSAA conference, I received a note from Clay Loyd. Most remember this man well — long time editor of *Golf Course Management* magazine. He is retired now, but working on a huge project. He's writing a book, one that will detail the history of the GCSAA and the golf course superintendent's profession.

His note explained he was working on the development of a section of the book about father-son golf course superintendents, or even more than

two generations. He wanted my help in that regard for Wisconsin.

I quickly made a list of those that came to mind and then called Wayne Otto. Below is the list we developed, in no particular order.

- Hans Schaller, sons Tom and Francis, and Francis' son Scott (now president of WGCSA)
- Frank Musbach, son Robert, his sons Dean and Jeff.
- Bill Sell and his son Greg.
- Lester VerHalen and his son Ron.
- Fred Wenzel, son Jerry, and his son Jerry, Jr. Also, Fred's nephew Tom is a Wisconsin golf course superintendent.

Have we omitted any? If so, please call me.

Will this be the earliest golf season ever in Wisconsin? Maybe. Maybe not. It is too early to tell. But in case it does turn out to be early, spend plenty of time these next few weeks with the home crowd and rest up.

It might be a long summer. 🌞





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