

acquaintances who want to know about the cause of a dead spot of unknown origin somewhere on their lawn. Regardless of my efforts, I always end up looking like a dolt, because I can't diagnose what I can't see. "Yeah, uh thanks Rusty, I think we're just going to go over and listen to your brother tell that story about the time he was in Tokyo and..."

Do I sound frustrated, rejected, or in need of attention? Sorry 'bout that but it's just that I spent four years getting a great education and I can't answer seemingly simple questions I get from my relatives about their grass. Maybe I need a refresher course! Sensitive you say! Nope, I could bring up a hundred other examples from social gatherings that would reinforce my point. Those casual exchanges that normally start with, "You do what?" or "You can get a degree in that?" Most of the time they end with "Guess there's more to it than I thought," but sometimes they finish with shaking heads or laughter. After all I have wasted most of my life working with grass. It's enough to make a guy feel like Charlie Brown.

Beyond my family and friends there is another group of people who think I am a schmuck. Many of these

people would classify themselves as environmentalists or ecologists. Now that's not necessarily how I would classify them, but that's how they might classify themselves. Most are patently against the idea of turfgrass because it is not native (except for a few species) and it requires fertilizer, pesticides and water. These people often see a manicured lawn as an opulent possession and golf as a game for the elite. If you are a French aristocrat, please don't take it personally; that's just the way it is. These same people may also have tall prairie grass in their yards, an old windmill, or maybe a few bison roaming around their front lawn. They are proud to fight any city or village ordinance that says you have to mow your lawn. But I'll tell you this, these people do not know what I know, and they don't believe what I believe. Having gone through my few minutes of emotional therapy by writing this article, I thought I would now share a few thoughts with you in hopes that it might prove beneficial. If you need the citations, sources, research data, verifications, scientific journals, or back issues of Mad magazine that support the information that is to follow, let me know, give me a call, send me an e-mail, whatever, and I will get the information to you.

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What do I know?

- Almost every great experience I can remember in my life has a link to turfgrass.
- The turfgrass industry is doing all it can to make sure that the benefits of grass are amplified and that the drawbacks are eliminated through extensive research.
- A healthy lawn is a boon to the environment, cleaning up air and noise pollution.
- A pesticide is anything that kills a pest. Antibacterial soap is a pesticide! Ask the neighbor complaining about your spray rig about the pesticides within their homes.
- Water in streams, rivers, and creeks often leaves a golf course property cleaner than on its way in.
- You can't play golf, baseball, football, or soccer effectively in a tall grass prairie (I usually throw in disc golf for this group because they understand that).
- A turfgrass lawn is a better sequester of carbon than a forest environment; this could reduce global warming.
- Turfgrass controls soil erosion better than any other living ground cover.

- Turfgrass cools the atmosphere and decreases the urban heat-island effect.
- Turfgrass produces pure oxygen for us to breathe.
- A water retention swale or "rain garden" with established turf will retain more water and have less soil erosion than one with established prairie plants.
- Turfgrass is softer than artificial turf and better for the participants. And it won't go in the land-fill when its life is over.
- Having a healthy green surrounding enhances physical well-being.
- A properly cared for lawn enhances property values.
- A new study shows that having a nice lawn could improve your social life!
- I cannot imagine a world without turfgrass.
- I like the way the grass feels between my toes.
- Sod is the quickest and easiest way to get all of these benefits.
- I will continue working to ensure that turfgrass is used in every area that benefits our environment and our lives.
- I am proud to be a turfgrass management professional.

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What I believe.

- Fewer turfgrass lawns = more fat children.
- If environmentalists would educate themselves they would be in favor of turfgrass and of educating homeowners about its care.
- No child should be expected to play sports on an artificial turf field.
- Mowing the lawn is a rite of passage for young men and women (my dad claims it is one of the reasons he had kids).
- Becoming involved with a local school will make every superintendent a better person and every student a more informed citizen.
- High phosphorus levels in some waters are not caused by educated fertilizer applicators.
- The turf pesticides that we use today are extremely safe when used in the proper manner. Homeowners do not know the proper manner, and it is our responsibility to share knowledge with them.
- Every superintendent should be working to make sure that their piece of earth has a positive environmental impact on the rest of the world.
- A world without turfgrass would not be the kind of place where I would like to live.
- All of you should be proud to be turfgrass professionals.

The truth is, Guru or Schmuck, it really doesn't matter. When confronted by people who have a differing opinion from mine, I state the facts as I know them and express what I believe. Another truth: I really am happy with my career path, and I feel that the world is a better place because of the work that I do and continually try to do. I have been blessed to spend most of my life working with grass. Yeah, that's it?

Grass... think about it. ♣



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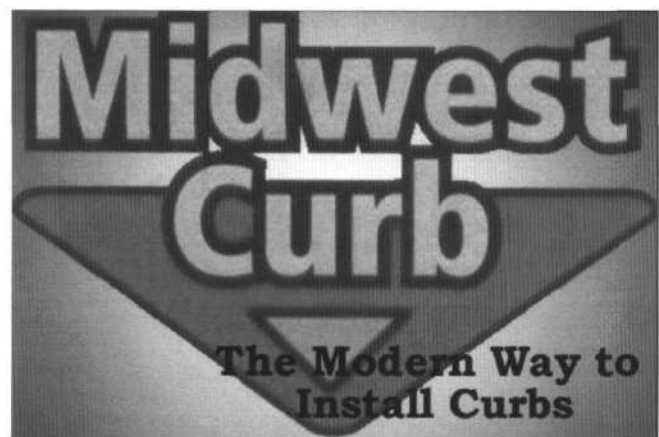
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Northern Bay Golf Resort and Marina Host the 2006 Couples Outing

By **Mike Lyons**, Golf Course Superintendent, Old Hickory Golf Club

This year's event was held at the beautiful Northern Bay Golf Resort and Marina in Adams County. If you have a chance, this place is well worth the trip. The golf course is great and the accommodations were, to say the least, spacious and beautiful. Everyone there is very gracious and thoughtful.

This year's vendor sponsor was Rienders. The team of Bruce Schwieger, Scott Thompson and Fred Anderson were great hosts and the gifts and prizes were awfully nice. Thank you guys. Also, a big thank you to all our vendor sponsors who contributed and made this very relaxing and fun weekend possible. From all of us who were able to

attend - thank you so much.

Host superintendent Scott Anthes had the place looking and playing great. Fourteen couples took part in the golf and fifteen couples gathered for the dinner / dance and costume party. First time attendees Alan and Susan Nees won the annual Mr. and Mrs. Mow Tournament. Second place went to host Scott and Jessica Anthes. Everyone had a great time and the weather could not have been better.

On to the dinner/dance and costume party. All I can say is it was a shame more people were unable to see a certain someone's costume. There were a lot of great costumes but the winner of the costume con-

test hands down was Rod Johnson. For all of you who know Rod, seeing him dressed as Miss Piggy was well worth the price of admission. It was hilarious. Second and third place went to Sister Mary Worzella as a pregnant nun and Al and Sue Nees as laundry basket and static cling. Like I said, everyone had great costumes, and the laughs went on long into the night. Heck, even the DJ thought he was Roy Orbison.

Once again, thank you to everyone who helped make this weekend possible. I hope next year we can get more people to attend and if it is another costume party, trust me — you'll want to see what Rod comes up with next time. ♣



