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THE GRASS ROOTS

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ABOUT THE COVER

Our cover artist Beverly Bergemann captures the history of New Orleans, host of the 2009 GCSAA Education Conference and Golf Industry Show in this view of the St. Louis Cathedral, the oldest Catholic cathedral in continual use in the United States. The Cathedral, located in The French Quarter is one of New Orleans most recognized buildings and overlooks the Andrew Jackson statue and Jackson Square.

“Look not mournfully into the past, it comes not back again. Wisely improve the present, it is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear and with a manly heart.”

– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
 1807 - March 24, 1882,
 American educator and poet



New Year. Same Challenges

By **Dustin Riley**, Certified Golf Course Superintendent, Oconomowoc Golf Club



The holiday season has past and we are now into the year 2009. I'm guessing that many of us have already broken or forgot about that "New Year's Resolution" made to make 2009 a better year. It may be a new year, but it would be foolish to assume that the challenges that presented themselves last year wouldn't carry over into this year. Our nation's economy is affecting all of us personally and professionally. Although we pride ourselves on being fiscally responsible managers for our facilities, we must continue to develop skills and ideas to maximize our resources. Education and exposure to new ideas will be more valuable now than ever. Yes, education typically comes with a cost. But that minor cost can result in significant savings. Whether your preferred educational choice is the Golf Industry Show or the many WGCSA educational opportunities, please make the effort to continue the development of your skills and re-enforce the value you bring to your operation.

With the start of this new year, I would like to thank David Swift, GCS at Whistling Straits, for his Board of Director service over the last couple of years. Thank you, Dave, for your time, input and efforts to serve the members of the WGCSA. Next, I'd like to welcome Scott Bushman, CGS at Fox Valley GC located in Kaukauna. Scott was elected to serve on the Board of Directors at the Fall Business Meeting. As the Board of Directors evaluates and leads the Association, we are always looking for

assistance and fresh ideas. If you are interested in getting involved, we have several committees that would benefit from some volunteer efforts. Please contact any of the Board members to discuss any interest.

As announced at the 2008 Turf Symposium, the WGCSA has created a new scholarship, the Monroe Miller Literary Award. This scholarship will be presented annually to a student with the best written article to be published within *The Grass Roots*. If you are a student, please consider preparing an article for submission. The criterion for the Monroe Miller Literary Award is being developed and will be presented soon.

Hopefully most of the WGCSA members which attended the GIS were able to attend the Opening Session in New Orleans. Monroe Miller was presented with the 2009 Col. John Morley Distinguished Service Award. Congratulations Monroe. Your efforts and successes have benefited all members of the WGCSA.

The Spring Business Meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 2nd in Fond du Lac. Please consider attending this event for educational opportunity and an update on any Association business.

A wish everyone great weather, a great golf season and a great year. 🌿

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Leadership

By Dr. John Stier, Professor and Chair, Department of Horticulture, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Every now and then we hear heartening examples of good leadership that makes our world a better place. Ben Shumaker, a relatively recent University of Wisconsin graduate, developed the Memory Project after working overseas with a man who'd been shuffled around as a young orphan and had nothing in his life from his childhood, no pictures, mementos, nothing. The Memory Project now connects school children around the world with orphans. These children make mementos for orphans as part of their school curriculum, so when the orphans grow up they'll have some tangible connection to their childhood. Most of us tend to think

of leadership closer to home though, primarily associated with our profession, communities, or even families. When my favorite aunt's husband passed away several years ago, my cousin Anna mentioned to me what a blessing it was my father always stepped up to the plate and took care of whatever needed to be done. Although I'd seen my dad lead community efforts ranging from a youth drug alert program to using his engineering background to describe how bullets travel during a community discussion on a shooting range, it wasn't until then that I realized how others saw my dad. Anna's comments really made me realize how much leadership mattered, and

think about how much I was doing for myself instead of what I could be doing for other people. Leadership in all areas of life is important. The truly successful leaders may start in one area but almost always expand into other areas.

Why Leadership is Important

Leaders are looked to for solutions to both big and little problems. The leaders set the tone for not only how that particular problem is handled but also set the precedence for resolutions. The turf industry is facing some real tough challenges in the next few years. Constant public focus on the use of chemicals, water and even land for golf courses requires every



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superintendent to provide leadership at some level. Need examples? Consider the NR 151 rule that went into effect last year. Superintendents now have to develop a nutrient management plan, even though agriculture uses 95% of the state's fertilizer. Agriculture producers are largely exempt from the rule unless local cost-sharing is available because their leaders had a long-term relationship with regulators. This winter the Wisconsin legislature will consider a bill to ban most phosphorus applications for turf management. Legislative offices indicate stricter regulations on chemicals and fertilizers are forthcoming as golf course opponents have consistently hammered at their legislators. The National Resource Defense Council has petitioned the EPA to cancel all uses of 2,4-D. This petition has happened in spite of EPA's "white paper" on 2,4-D in August 2007 which reviewed over 300 studies and found no evidence of carcinogenicity. The cancellation of 2,4-D would truly set a negative outlook for virtually any synthetic chemical, as over 40 years of data have failed to show any significant adverse human health or environmental impacts from the herbicide. Where will the leadership come from to ensure a fair review?

Unlike the agricultural industry, which uses most of the 2,4-D, the turf industry has virtually no leadership in Washington D.C. It doesn't take a psychologist to visualize the probable outcome of the petition.

Superintendents usually do a good job leading at work, ensuring employees have a safe working environment, attending educational events to stay abreast of new developments and technologies, handling budgets responsibly, and communicating with zealous club members. Some of the more adventuresome superintendents volunteer to host the monthly meetings and serve on boards of the WGCSA or WTA. A few will step outside of their normal duties: part of the reason the technical standards for NR 151 are so reasonable and science-based was due to Doug Devries volunteering his time and energy to serve on a DNR committee to develop the guidelines.

Leadership qualities

Honesty, integrity, and hard work are easy identifiers of leaders and something that most people in our industry are innately capable of showing. Professionalism is a given requirement, ranging from how one acts around others to how one dresses. Blue

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jeans may be fine at some courses, but they shouldn't be torn or grease-stained; that's what coveralls are for. The off-color or rascist joke that was so funny at the family gathering may get laughs at work, but will actually erode a leader's standing. The need to avoid even perceived gender bias has assumed a central focus in our society, and this extends to workplaces even if no female employees are present. A reputation is like the proverbial needle-in-the-haystack: easily lost, almost impossible to regain.

Good leaders know how to delegate authority. Delegating the right type and amount of responsibilities to someone requires skill: it does no one any good for designee to be given a task they are not prepared to handle. A good leader will ensure their employees are constantly learning, so they can assume new responsibilities over time. Good leaders, though, aren't afraid to offer help at any level. For example, each semester all college departments are expected to send a faculty member to registration to help new students select their courses. When I emailed a request to our faculty this week for a representative, within minutes I got a response from our associate dean (he holds a 10% faculty appointment in our department) offering to represent Horticulture. Does the dean likely have better things to do? Yes, but I've seen him work late into the evenings too, and have received emails from him at 3 am and 6am of the same day. The point here is that he is not too proud nor does he feel too self-important to do whatever needs to be done.

I see a lot of people who lack basic writing and speaking skills because they didn't think them necessary while they were in high school or college. Historically, bluster and a good sword arm might have been enough to lead a nation, but in our times good written and oral communication skills are critical for leaders. Consensus-building is a must, and for that one needs to be able to convince people of the good points of various ideas and accept compromise. A positive attitude is also appreciated. As a new faculty member several years ago, I saw our office administrator smile while being harangued by a staff person who felt the system was working against them; afterwards, the staff person was in a better state to receive the help she needed. I was inspired; to me our office administrator exhibited good leadership. If you don't like what's being said or shown to you, remember the 3 C's: communicate, cooperate, but don't confront. Discuss views as if they were not necessarily your own but from a vague, omniscient source; get the antagonist to start thinking your views are actually theirs. Recognition is the key to life: recognize opportunities, recognize others' capabilities, recognize when you need to act and when you can let events unfold. Normally, if a problem is starting to occur, it needs to be dealt with immediately.

Leadership Examples

Our Wisconsin golf course industry is fortunate to have had a number of leaders. Monroe Miller, Tom Harrison and the others who started the WTA and developed the O.J. Noer facility are easy examples. Dave Brandenburg's volunteering to edit *The Grass Roots* after Monroe's retirement is another good example. Look how many articles Dave writes in the magazine. The quality hasn't changed a bit, but with over 1000 superintendents and assistant superintendents in Wisconsin, I'll bet there's a few more people who could write articles.

Sometimes leadership comes from the people we don't necessarily expect. My new research technician, Ben Pease, is proving himself to be such a person. I hired him to oversee the maintenance of Horticulture's research plots and herbicide trials. He has quickly shown his leadership by working with others at the Noer to make sure their plots are properly maintained, taken the lead on purchasing a mower when the donor company was no longer going to provide it free of charge, and helping out with general maintenance of the facility. He exemplifies the characteristics of what

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is known as the 360 degree leader—a person who is not necessarily in a leadership position *per se*, but takes care of what is needed without being asked and offers up helpful suggestions with no thought of reward or special recognition for themselves.

How to Become a Leader

Good leaders pay attention and exhibit humility. Complaining is not an option. Problems and difficulties are seen as opportunities to grow and change for the better. Solving problems is like taking a multiple choice exam: several solutions may exist, but good leaders will listen to others then develop or select the best option. Consequently, good leaders surround themselves with good people. It starts with making good choices for friends—are you friends with someone because they are fun to go to the bars with or because you respect how they conduct their life? I've relied on an advisory committee of other faculty since I became department chair. We meet about once monthly to discuss issues and identify solutions. I know they've helped me avoid some mistakes and are helping me be a better chairperson.

True leaders try their best every day. When something needs doing (e.g., picking up a rake that was left away from the bunker), they do it rather than thinking “that’s

not my job”. People with leadership potential are on time and seek out work, including that which no one else wants to do (e.g., clean the shop, adjust heads that need it when you’re going back to the shop for lunch). Leaders encourage others — a good indication of a leader is when that person’s peers begin to seek their opinion, especially about how the seeker should go about doing something. Good leaders seek out facts before acting on something, especially if the situation is based on what someone said happened. Events and overheard discussions are easily misperceived. As a potential leader, make sure you look people in the eye when speaking with them, and don’t take yourself too seriously.

Volunteering for extracurricular activities will help build leadership skills. Our WGCSA board is all volunteers, and we’ve had some excellent leaders develop their skills by working on the board. There should be competition for each board position every year—how would you like it if only one candidate announced themselves for office of the President of the U.S.? No one needs to feel slighted if they are not elected; if a person is truly interested in serving on the board they can try again. If you don’t feel you can commit to a full board position, see if there’s another way to help, for example,

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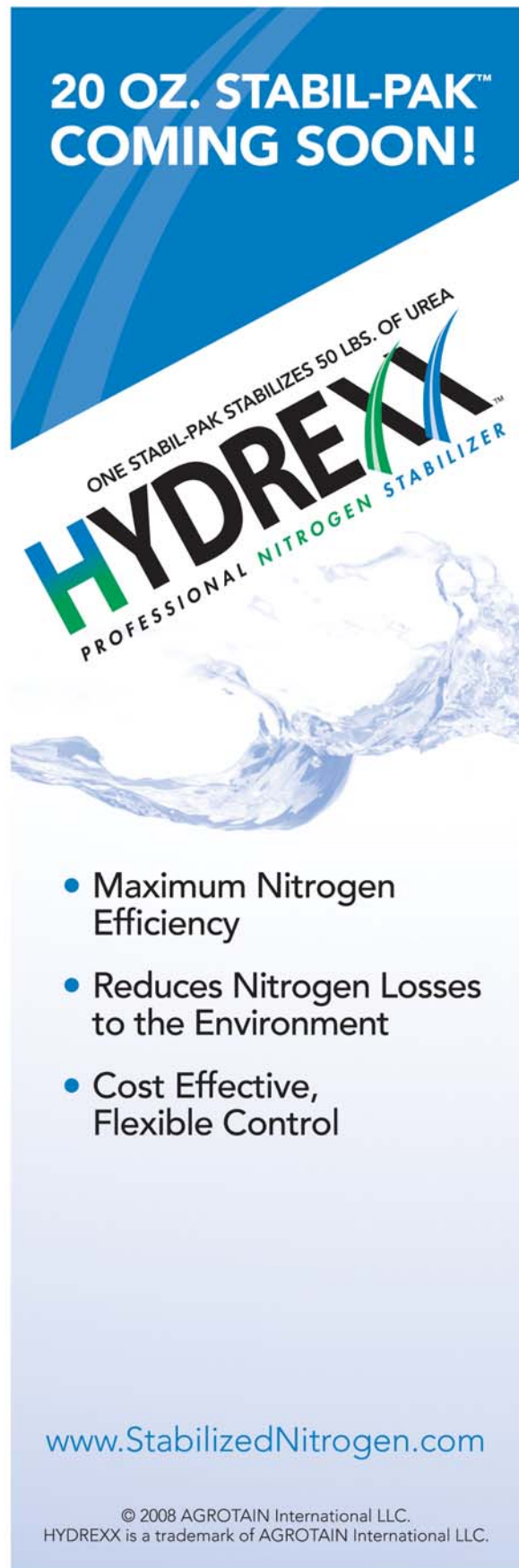
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could you show up an hour early and conduct the registration for the spring business meeting in March, freeing up one of the board member's time? Leadership skills and recognition can be gained by being active in the community. Some of the WGCSA members have served on school boards and volunteer fire departments. Joining the local Kiwanis or Rotary club is a great way to gain leadership skills while enhancing your reputation in the community. When an issue arises that needs your professional attention, such as a proposed ban on synthetic chemical use for turf management in the village, your standing with the local community group will ensure your input carries more weight than if no one had previously heard your name.

Not everyone will have the self-confidence and communication skills to feel comfortable at trying to lead, but these skills can be gained at any age or career stage. Community colleges can be a great help for improving basic writing and accounting skills. A Dale Carnegie® Training course, available since 1912, helps people develop self-improvement skills (www.dalecarnegie.com). Toastmasters® is an international organization that has helped people to develop their public speaking and leadership skills since 1924. The skills they teach are designed to help people in many situations, including those in positions that the employer is likely to or has already cut. There are over 90 meeting locations in Wisconsin alone (www.toastmasters.org).

What You'll Get Out of Leadership

A small set of people become leaders because they think it will lead to financial success or because they like power. These types of leaders rarely become good leaders, unless their mindset changes towards developing a social good. Many people become leaders out of necessity, a problem develops which threatens their well-being. Some people become leaders because they feel an obligation. George Washington likely became the leader he was for all these reasons. As a young man he wanted to rise above his older brother's legacy; the desire for power and recognition led to his involvement in the French and Indian War. His bravery during the annihilation of Braddock's army in the forests of Pennsylvania enhanced his standing with the colonies. His subsequently high reputation allowed him to present himself as a viable commander of the Revolutionary forces in 1775. His involvement in the Revolution was likely precipitated by Great Britain's tax system and other regulations which was hurting the income of he and other aristocratic planters. Along the way, though, he appears to have continually developed a sense of leading for the common good. I think that ultimately, all good leaders realize that they have become good leaders because it gives a sense of satisfaction. Do you have what it takes to be a leader? 



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The Science (and Art) of Diagnosing Root Diseases

By **Paul Koch**, Turfgrass Diagnostic Lab, University of Wisconsin - Madison And **Dr. Jim Kerns**, Department of Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin - Madison

Anyone who has dropped into the lab and put us on the spot to diagnose a sample has probably heard us say something along the lines of either “there is some fungal activity on the roots, but nothing we’re too concerned about” or “there is quite a bit of colonization on the roots.” In both cases, whether we suspect a root disease or not, fungal hyphae are usually present on the roots. In fact, on nearly every turfgrass sample that gets submitted to the lab some amount of fungal hyphae can be observed colonizing the roots. So how do we determine which symptoms are caused by a root pathogen and which are not? Well the answer probably doesn’t come as too much of a surprise to many of you, but a combination of science and experience (art?) usually lead us to a confident and correct diagnosis.

To simulate the process of diagnosing a possible root-infecting disease let me walk you through a “typical” sample that might come in from a Midwestern golf course. With any sample that comes in, the first thing we look at is the sample submission form. This is critical as it acts like a map describing where the sample has been; from when the symptoms first appeared, to how fast they have progressed, to any pesticides applied. The next step would be to observe the foliar symptoms under a dissecting microscope, which has a lower magnification than a compound microscope and is useful for observing lesions or larger fungal structures.

If nothing of interest is observed on the leaves, we can often rule out a foliar disease and begin to think about root diseases. The most common root-infecting diseases in the Midwest are necrotic ring spot (*Ophiospharella korrae*), summer patch (*Magnaporthe poae*) and take-all patch (*Gaeumannomyces graminis* var *avenae*). Pythium root diseases, most notably Pythium root dysfunction (*Pythium volutum*), have become more common in the last several years and cause the majority of their damage on younger golf course putting greens (Kerns and Tredway, 2008). Complicating matters is the non-pathogenic fungus *Phialophora graminicola* that can appear identical to the other root pathogens under the microscope but does not infect the root’s vascular system (Landschoot, 1993).

Infected roots are washed and observed first under the dissecting microscope, which often gives a good idea of the amount of fungal hyphae present on the



Figure 1: Using the dissecting microscope can give us a general idea of the severity of fungal colonization of the root, as observed on this Kentucky bluegrass root exhibiting symptoms of necrotic ring spot.



Figure 2: Once the take-all patch fungus has colonized the root surface it will penetrate into the vascular system and disrupt the flow of water and nutrients in the plant, which will slightly discolor the inner portion of the root.

root surface (Figure 1). More important to correctly diagnosing root diseases than the amount of hyphae present on the surface is the appearance of the vascular cylinder (stele) of the root, or the inner portion that transports water and nutrients up to the plant. A stele that appears discolored likely signals infection by