

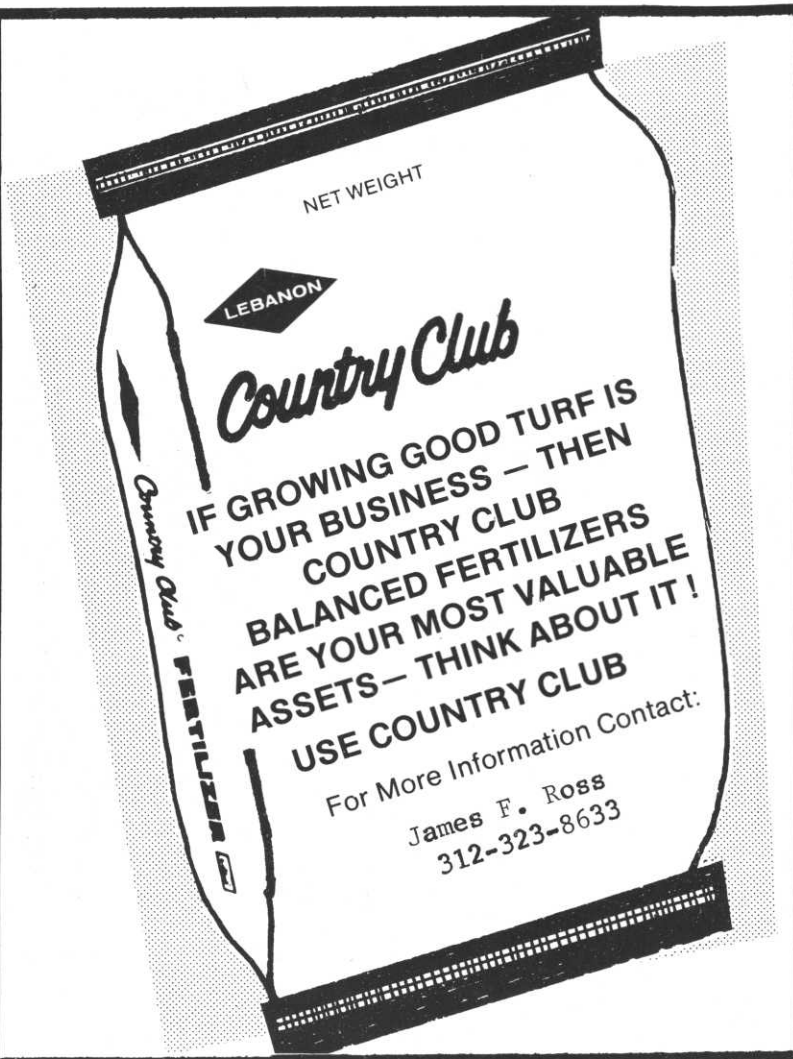
Get The Most Out Of Conferences

Conference and trade shows, such as GCSAA's International Turfgrass Conference and Show, offer an important opportunity for you to invest a small amount of time and money for a large return. Most professionals believe that occasional opportunities to educate themselves are central to their ability to provide continuing good service to their employers. This is especially applicable to golf course superintendents, whose responsibilities are expanding rapidly.

Learning opportunities come in several forms at a meeting such as GCSAA's. There is the chance to benefit from the knowledge of experts; the more concrete learning afforded by the chance to examine new equipment and products; and the benefit derived from associating with other superintendents.

Attending intensive education sessions can make conferees feel as if they're trying to drink from a fire hose - so much is coming so fast that it's difficult to absorb anything. The best way to overcome this problem is to plan ahead. Select your program of educational sessions carefully, considering the value that each topic has for your problems and situation. Take plenty of notes - they help you keep organized - but be sure you're not so busy writing things down that you forget to listen. If conference proceedings or recordings of the sessions are available, take advantage of them.

Trade shows offer an opportunity to observe a wide variety of equipment and supplies in a relatively short period of time. It's possible to "comparison shop" among many equipment manufacturers. Whether you have a specific need to fill or are "just looking", you will benefit from the time you spend on the exhibit hall floor.



If you own or can borrow a camera, consider taking one along to photograph items that you are interested in. Photographs of informative posters can save you time by keeping you from copying down information. Don't be hesitant to discuss your requirements with the sales representatives on the floor. They are there to inform you. They may also have descriptive brochures you can take home with you.

Meeting strangers at a conference need not be difficult. All you have to do is be willing to introduce yourself to those around you at a meeting or in an elevator, for example. Have a ready supply of small talk about the weather or sports ready to ease the first few minutes of conversation. There is a rapport that develops quickly in these kinds of encounters which can lead to valuable exchanges of information.

Look for the new attendee and pay special attention to him. If he feels lonely or isolated, chances are he won't return next year. If that happens, he loses and so do you.

Education, exhibits, exchanges with fellow conferees - they are three important aspects of attending a conference.