

O. J. Noer Foundation Report

BY JAMES M. LATHAN, RESEARCH DIRECTOR

The O. J. Noer Foundation was initiated in 1959 by associates and friends of O. J. Noer to honor him for his lifetime of work in turfgrass improvement throughout North America. Noer was a native of Stoughton, Wisconsin who graduated from the University of Wisconsin and did graduate work there which resulted in the production and marketing of Milorganite. The Foundation is dedicated to the generation of original research through grants to universities and experiment stations. Most of these projects, being basic in nature, would have no "commercial" support. But being basic research, the information will have value over a broad range of interests.

Much of the data generated has no immediate, direct effect on turf management since it is fundamental in nature. It does, however, form a base from which more practical projects can be developed. Dr. Jim Beard calls this the "fallout effect". If basic facts have been developed, a great deal of time, money and effort has been saved to do other things.

An example of this fallout effect can be illustrated by thatch studies. The Foundation established grants at Michigan State and Texas A & M concurrently to study the Identification, Cause and Effect and Control of Thatch on cool - and warm - season grasses. Since then, there have been many projects on thatch dealing with subjects like insecticide effects, disease generation, etc., all based on data accumulated by the initial projects.

The very first project was at the University of Wisconsin by Dr. Jim Love. This was the first time anyone had shown visible nutrient deficiency symptoms in turfgrasses. The paper by Love and the photographs are classics in the field. The color plates, by the way, can be found in Dr. Beard's forthcoming book.

Wisconsin does not have the extensive turfgrass research facilities found in other states. It is incumbent upon superintendents, however, to put money into research since they will be the beneficiaries in the long run. To do this on an orderly basis, an organization such as the O. J. Noer Research Foundation, Inc. is the best vehicle to use.

Most of the monies contributed to the Foundation comes from Milorganite distributors who have a self-assessed fee on tonnage sold each year. Superintendents' Associations across the country also make gifts along with interested individuals and companies like Jacobsen and Toro.

Noer grants have been made toward worthwhile projects in all sections of the country from New Jersey to California and from Florida to Washington.

There are four national level funding agencies for turfgrass research: the U.S.G.A. Green Section provides the most money, followed by the G.C.S.A.A. Research and Education Fund, the Noer Foundation and Musser Foundation. Most G.C.S.A.A. projects are, and rightly so, on a more practical plane such as the Toronto bent problem in Chicago last year when G.C.S.A.A. and the Green Section went to the aid of members to try to solve a local, but vexing problem.

One final word. Noer Foundation grants are made from investment profits. Thus, any donations continue to bring dividends from now on. In addition, since there are no paid employees, there is a minimum overhead. In 1980 the management cost of managing the \$164,000 fund amounted to only 2%. Officers and Directors receive no pay, no transportation or living expenses at meetings. They serve because of their remembrance of O. J. Noer and their commitment to the field from which their livelihood comes. That's how the Foundation has generated \$180,000 for turf research in the last twenty years.