

HOLE NOTES

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MINNESOTA
GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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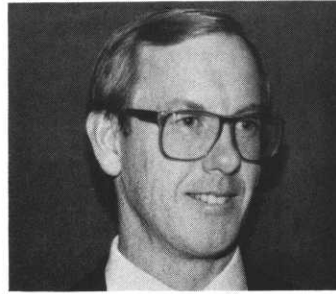
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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

DOUG MAHAL

You'll note by our masthead that the Association is 60 years old this year. MGCSA has enjoyed a rich heritage with the help of some extremely dedicated individuals, not the least of which was Harold Stodola. Harold who passed away a year ago April 20 really helped direct the course of today's superintendent and his current professional status. Gentlemen like Harold might enjoy this little bit of history: In the early years of golf course maintenance, cutting of the greens was often referred to as "shaving". Subsequently came the once commonly used derivation "little shavers" to mean the greenkeepers' young children.

May is the month that some of the more routine maintenance begins on our golf courses. Turf begins to grow reliably and requires that daily attention that our memberships have grown accustomed to. At the same time, May is too early to get many of our seasonal staff members to help us with the work. It's a busy time but let's not forget what's coming up on May 10.

As usual, our April monthly meeting was well attended, particularly when a game of golf is possible on a well maintained golf track like Faribault Golf and Country Club. A special thanks to host superintendent Dale Wysocki and the rest of the staff at Faribault for a wonderful day. We added a new feature to our monthly golf meetings, a long drive and closest-to-the-pin contest. We'll be giving away a dozen golf balls for the winner of each. Winners in April were: Long Drive - Dave Swanson of S&S Tree Specialists. Closest-to-the-pin Harold Batzer, a landscape pest consultant. Faribault had a large number of evergreens in the rough areas, many of which I was able to observe up close and personal while searching for errant tee shots.

Most of us that do play the game are

really looking forward to this month's meeting at Somerset Country Club on May 12. For those of you who have never played there, you're in for a real treat. Somerset has one of the great golf tracks in the region and I for one am pleased to have the opportunity to play it for a second time. I am sure Mr. Gerlad Murphy will have things in great shape for us both on the course and at the dinner table.

Looking ahead, plan now to attend our annual picnic at Tartan Park. Mike Leitner is spearheading a big effort to make this year's event well worth attending. It promises to be like no other MGCSA summer picnic you have ever attended in the past, including the family!

I hope we get a little more "free" irrigation in May than we experienced in April. Natural rain water has a quality that grass plants definitely recognize.

SIMPLE QUESTIONS MAKE FERTILITY A PRIORITY

"It's not necessarily doing things right. It's doing the right things right." That's the message from many professional consultants and management trainers when they speak to groups. The key to success as a modern manager is setting priorities, they say.

Turf managers face the same challenge. Those that succeed know the priority of fertility management as part of their management responsibilities.

Less than 10 percent of a turfgrass management budget is allocated to fertility, and often less than 5," estimates Dr. D. B. Pfliegerer, general manager, Lebanon West, Lebanon Chemical Corp. "This small investment, however, can affect 50 percent of the outcome. An operator can maximize the quality of turfgrass with a minimal investment in fertilizer."

That kind of return on investment makes fertility management a priority for

today's successful turf professional.

Two critical aspects of fertility management are simple questions: "How much?" and "When?" - the same questions fertilizer salespeople ask each time they take an order.

For turf operators, however, these questions require a little more thought. The answers are not always simple.

To determine how much fertilizer is needed, the first step is fertility testing. "The objective is to supply plant nutrients that are deficient in the soil," says Pfliegerer. "The best way to do that is with soil and plant analysis."

Soil testing is a simple but often neglected practice. Standard procedures involve taking at least six one-inch diameter soil cores from an area that is uniform in soil type, topography, previous fertility treatment, drainage and other cultural factors. Separate samples should be taken where these characteristics are different.

A better measurement of the amount of nutrients available to the plant comes from plant tissue samples, which can be analyzed using a mass spectrograph, according to Pfliegerer.

He stresses that balance of important primary nutrients like nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) is the key in prescribing fertilizers and rates for turfgrasses.

Nitrogen sources should be a combination of slow- and fast-release products, which provides the safety margin needed to prevent turf burn and produces good color without causing excessive growth.

Pfliegerer says phosphorus is particularly important in establishing turf. "It stimulates early root formation, encourages vigorous beginning growth and provides winter hardiness," he explains. Potassium also increases plant vigor, which promotes disease resistance and aids in forming and moving starches and proteins, he adds.

Operators should request fertility recommendations for more than just P and