



OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD

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Editorial Chairman

"Those flawlessly manicured ultra green playgrounds where polite people in pastel outfits chase little white balls are encountering hard scrutiny from environmentalists."

Audobon Magazine, Nov. '87

Dr. Elliot Roberts presented a fine discussion on organic fertilizers at our April meeting in New Prague. He stressed the importance of carbon, commonly found in organic materials, in turfgrass growth and how organisms in the soil encourage this process. These bio-activators, such as bacteria, fungi, and algae, help determine the proper equilibrium for optimal plant health. As influenced by man's introduction of pesticides, fertilizers, and adjuvants, this micro-climate, when in balance, al-

lows for proper growth dynamics. When these tiny plant and animal populations become unbalanced, however, trouble in turf begins. Predominance of one species over others disrupts the soil's equilibrium; the grass plant suffers. Dr. Roberts could see many new naturally occurring products on the market within the next few years which would help keep the turf dynamics equation in balance, lessening man's direct intervention in the natural order.

As I listened to his talk, visions of an organic approach to turfgrass management danced through my head. Already, new technology has developed many products like Turftech, polysaccharide-producing single cell plants, which aid soil aggregation and water penetration. Bacteria for frost control at orange groves (or even golf greens) is almost a reality. Besides adding another tool in our turfgrass management arsenal, maybe these biological approaches will reduce the pressure from concerned citizens and environmentalists over the use of manmade chemicals on the golf course. With the introduction of natural organic materials, our golf courses could become safer and better places not only for those who work and play there, but also for those who enjoy its surrounds. Assuming that these new natural products become a practical reality, some of the criticisms of turfgrass management practices may be tempered and diminished.

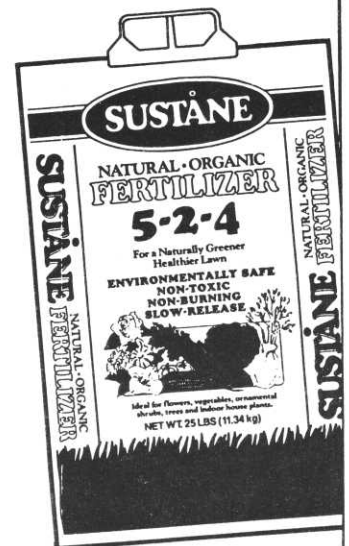
One thing is certain. As golf courses come under closer

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scrutiny, we must respond in a responsible manner to these concerns. Already, legislation relating to Community Right to Know laws is around the corner. Based on Employee Right to Know principles, this law could have great impact on golf courses. Posting requirements for chemical applications and re-entry restrictions, similar to those in the lawn industry, may become the rule. Are you ready to close your course after chemical applications? Can you effectively post your premises? How will these proposed laws affect your golf course on a financial and operational basis?

These questions and others are still to be answered. Natural biological control of turfgrass health may have some impact on reducing criticism of golf course management techniques, but until they become a reality, we must use our present tools effectively and properly. As golf course superintendents, we should welcome the criticisms and concerns of people like the Audobon Society and actively seek solutions to their problems. Their insights and observations could lead to new approaches in golf course management. Our concerns should be in concert. After all, we live, work, and play here too.

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