

Greenskeepers Grow With Flow

Moisture Extremes Tax Superintendents

By JON ROE

(Reprinted with permission from the Sunday, July 27 edition of the Minneapolis Star Tribune)

If it's not one thing, it's another in the life of a greens superintendent in Minnesota. Early in the golf season, superintendents had to deal with trying to get grass to grow in the cold weather. Then, they were trying to handle a lack of moisture.

That has obviously not been a problem the last week or two, but that doesn't mean there haven't been other concerns for the caretakers of state golf courses. Now they're laboring daily to handle all of the rain and storm damage from recent downpours. And there's even more to worry about.

The high temperatures, high humidity and still air have generated diseases — pythium and brown patch — that can ravage a course in a day or two.

"If pythium gets started it can kill the grass on a course in 24 hours," said Tom Fischer, superintendent at Edinburgh USA. "Any time you get night-time temperatures in the 70s with humidity in the 60s and 90s, the conditions are at the maximum to get those kinds of diseases started. You can lose the grass that quickly."

All of that comes along with pumping water out of bunkers, and repairing bunkers after the rains have washed out the sand. Also, superintendents must pump water out of low spots in fairways and make sure that water hazards — ponds, creeks and lakes — don't overflow their banks and cause more damage.

Several courses, including Interlachen, have been battling fungus problems. The situation is compound-

ed by the difficulty of getting equipment to control the fungus on the course, since the roughs and fairways are water-logged and subject to ruts

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— Scott Nelson, director of special services for the five Minneapolis public golf courses.

and other damage. Furthermore, a 24-hour period without rain is needed to allow the spraying to be effective.

"We've had 16¾ inches of rain since June 28, and the normal amount for July is 3½ inches," said John Katterheinrich, Interlachen superintendent. "We rented some machines with 4-inch pipes to try to pump the water out of fairways and bunkers. But the tanks, which hold 300 gallons, for spraying are tough to get out on the course without doing some damage. And the daily message to the work crew is to shovel out bunkers — both to get the water out and to repair the washout problems.

"We had the course open for walkers only on Thursday, we were debating what to allow on Friday, and we'll probably have to keep carts off for a few days. In our business, it seems like it's always some kind of catastrophe, something we're complaining about."

Scott Nelson, director of special services for the five Minneapolis public courses, said Hiawatha has been the hardest hit, although Wirth also had to close the front nine for a couple of days last week. Gross, Columbia and Meadowbrook, which got a new drainage system last summer, came through in good shape, Nelson said.

"We closed all of Hiawatha for two days, but then opened it again at the end of the week," Nelson said. "The lakes there are close to going over their banks, and we couldn't guarantee anything, so we had the Bronze Amateur moved to Rich Acres for the weekend."

Different Problem

At Edina Country Club, there's a different problem. The course was closed last year for remodeling. New greens were put down with sod from Pennsylvania. The course opened earlier in the season, and pro Marty Lass said as many as 300 rounds a day were being played.

Then came the rains.

"We got what is called bent grass decline," Lass said. "The grass roots are so new that when it started to rain, the roots began growing back up instead of down and some areas on the greens got thin from the wear of playing.

"A representative of the United States Golf Association came in and recommended that we aerify the greens and rest them for a while. We'll probably open up for play again around August 5."



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AS WE FIND THEM

*This article about green speed was written 69 years ago.
It could have been written today.*

Stepping from the 18th green with the Green Committee Chairman and the Greenkeeper, it was suggested that we "stick around and hear the angels sing." You will hear their daily chant to the Green Committee and Greenkeeper. So there we waited and watched.

One Mr. Average Golfer soon waddled up to attempt what looked like a "dead sure one." In that terrifying silence, which precedes great storms, he went through all the most approved and prolonged preliminaries of sighting and preparing for that momentous tap. Horror of horrors, he missed! We guessed it; the green was all to blame. The storm broke!

"Bill, why in the name of galloping golf balls can't we have some greens on this course? These things would be a disgrace to any cow pasture. There isn't a golfer in the world who could putt on them." Ad infinitum.

All this in spite of the fact that the other members of his foursome sank good, long shots and were last seen headed for the locker room with beaming faces not ordinarily associated with "rotten" greens and high scores.

The next group furnished this helpful suggestion: "If you fellows are interested in improving greens, why don't you first find out what the players want? After all, greens are for the golfers and everything should be done to give them exactly what they want."

We beat him to that idea by many years. We had long ago been told, "When a baby cries, give him what he wants." But we had also learned that to obtain results it makes some difference whether baby is "crying for something" or "just crying."

The greenkeeper suggested that we question a few of the club's best players as to how fast they preferred to have the greens. "One of my men is ill and that has interrupted our schedule. Number 16 has not been cut and is very slow today, but this 18th is the real 'lightning type.' The first reply was:

"This green is perfect! Anyone can putt on it. If you could only get all our greens as fast as this one, every player in the city would be clamoring to join this club. Number 16? Is that supposed to be a green? We thought you were planning to let that grow up for hay."

"Fore!" The next foursome is having a terrible time rolling them back and forth across the green. "Bill, what on earth is the matter with this green? If you simply touch the ball, it goes clear across. No use trying to

putt on it. Why can't we have all the greens like 16 is today? You can really hit a ball on that one without making it roll a mile."

Now that's settled! All that the green committees, greenkeeper and "those scientific guys" have to do to give the players just what they want (in speed of greens, at least) is to develop some kind of gear-shift. Then if a player "likes 'em fast" he can shift into high, and if he "likes 'em slow" he can shift to low. Bet some of them will want it fixed so they can shift after the ball is struck. Then they'll want a "reverse" so that the one which is "too strong" will roll back at just the right speed — all counting a single stroke.

(Editor's Note: This article was reprinted with permission from the USGA Green Section Bulletin, Vol. 8, No 2, February 1928.)

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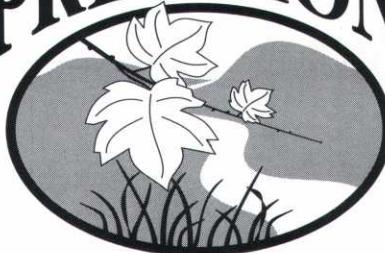


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Join the GCSAA Online Directory

Would you like to find a superintendent across the country who manages a course similar to yours? Or perhaps you've gotten onto GCSAA Online and would like to know who else is connected to the Internet. GCSAA's Web site has the solution.

With the recent launch of the "GCSAA Online directory," you can now meet superintendents who share your turfgrass disease problems, management issues and even your interests in sports or other hobbies.

Here's how it works: First, sign up in the guestbook in the member services area of the site. You'll be asked for contact information and general information about your course, such as the number of holes, type of courses, types of grasses, major weed problems and major insect pests. Then you'll be asked about your outside interests, including your involvement in other organizations and participation in hobbies and sports.

You can provide as much information about yourself as you wish, as long as you include the mandatory contact information. Once the form is completed and you've submitted it, the information is written to a database that is programmed to be updated every 15 minutes.

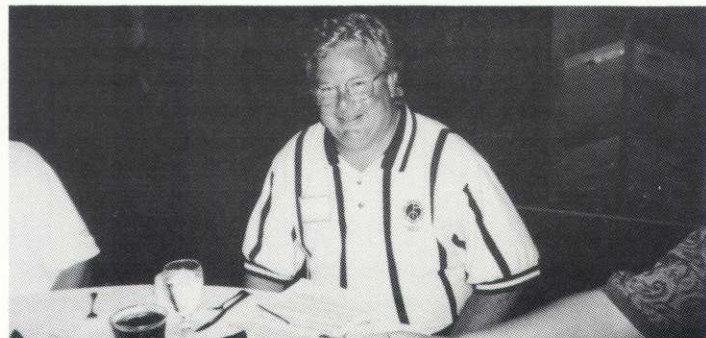
To look for a member, go to the search form and fill in whatever fields are necessary to narrow your search. Using this method, for instance, it's possible to find a member who is a superintendent at an 18-hole public course in your state and whose main insect pest is the sod webworm.

Or, if you prefer, you can conduct a general search on the entire database for whatever key words you enter into the field.

An added feature of this database is the ability to send e-mail directly from a member's record. To do this, simply click on the member's e-mail information, and if your browser has the capability, a pre-addressed form will automatically come up on your screen. Type in your text and then hit send.

* * * *

If you have any questions about the directory or the Web site, contact the information services department at 800/472-7878, ext. 493; or via e-mail at infobox@gcsaa.org.



MGCSA VICE-PRESIDENT JIM NICOL, Hazeltine National Golf Club, served as chairman of the 1997 Stodola Research Scramble held at The Preserve in Pequot Lakes.

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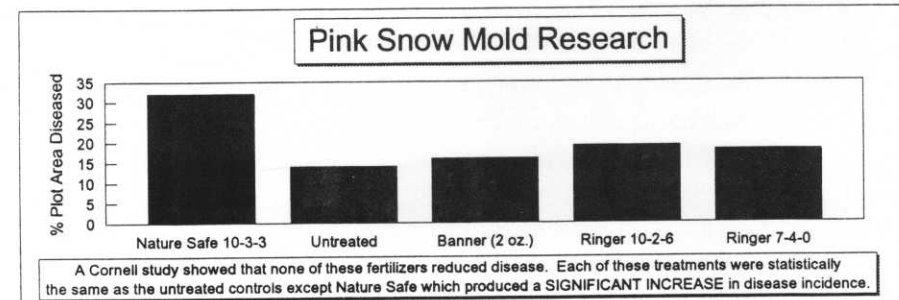
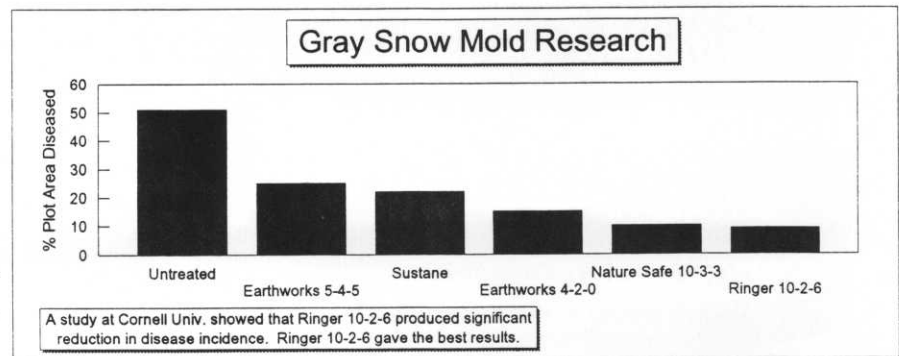
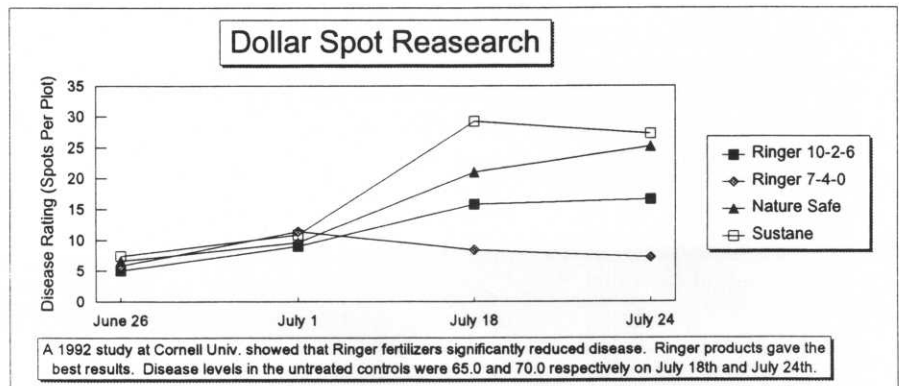
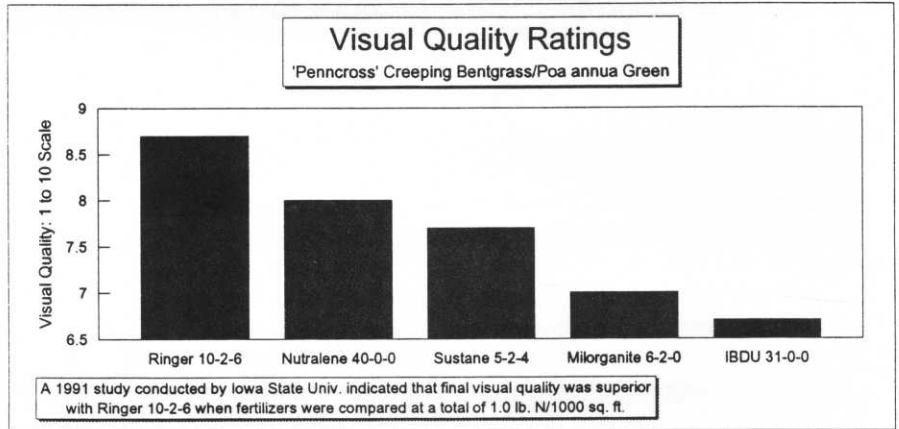
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The Changing Role of the Assistant Superintendent

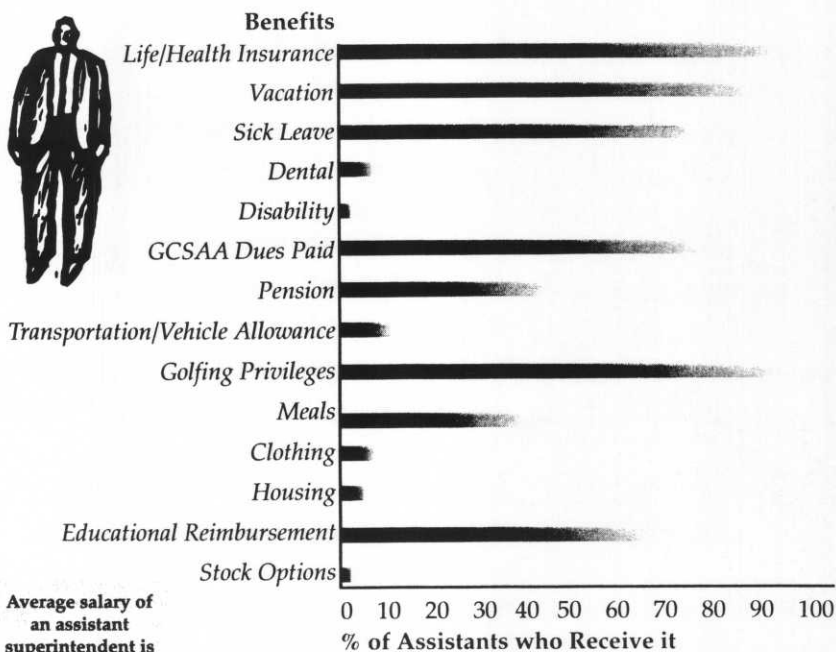
By **LARRY GILHULY**
Western Region Director
USGA Green Section

As the superintendent's role at the golf course has expanded, the responsibilities of the assistant have also evolved. **Role:** The assistant is much more involved in the day-to-day operation of the golf course. Fifteen years ago, a golf course superintendent may have gotten by with just a foreman. **Changes:** The increasing responsibilities of the golf course superintendent in regulatory compliance, personnel and financial and business management keeps him or her in the office. Much of the golf course operation falls to the assistant, who acts as the eyes and ears of the superintendent, deals with sophisticated irrigation systems, and supervises and trains the crew. **Importance to the golf facility:** Without an assistant, the golf course becomes top-heavy in labor and the quality of the course conditions may suffer. **Responsibility of the golf facility:** Support the superintendent's programs for assistants, including:

- Approve budget allocations for continued education and training.
- Endorse participation in GCSAA and local chapter associations.
- Welcome attendance at management meetings and require participation at green committee meetings.
- Appreciate the opportunities provided to the assistant to play golf, which enhances an understanding of golf course maintenance practices from a golfer's perspective. Encourage the assistant to play with the ladies' and the men's groups and give on-the-course presentations about maintenance practices.
- Acknowledge the assistant's value to the golf course.

Typical Benefits Provided to Assistants

Superintendents indicate that they offer the following benefits to their assistants:



Sources: GCSAA's Employment Referral Service; 1995 Compensation and Benefits Report.

- Support the golf course industry by advocating advancement of the assistant to a head position when your

superintendent recommends it.

- Treat your assistant with respect.
- (Reprinted with permission from Leaderboard.)

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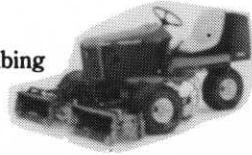
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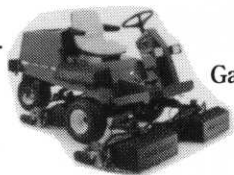


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Potassium: The Winter Set-Up

By PETER BLAIS

One of the best ways to protect golf course turf against the cold months ahead and help it green up earlier in the spring may be a fall application of potassium, according to manufacturers and researchers.

"The ability to apply coated potassium in the fall to winterize and still have nutrient available to feed once the soil warms up again in the spring could be the biggest asset to courses," said Tim Lacy, product manager of Pursell Technologies Inc., manufacturers of a slow-release potassium fertilizer using a temperature activated POLYON polymer coating.

"Potassium's ability to strengthen turfgrass and act as an antifreeze has been well researched and documented. Likewise, its role in the transition process is considerable — this provides a welcome jump start to the spring feeding schedule."

An adequate supply of potassium can help grass plants produce carbohydrates longer into the fall which in turn allow the turf to tolerate lower temperatures without freezing, according to Michigan State University turfgrass researcher Dr. Paul Rieke. Even with the shorter daylight hours and cooler nights, the photo-synthetic process that creates carbohydrates continues into the late fall.

"How far north or south a course is located plays a role in how long the potassium is needed," the MSU professor said.

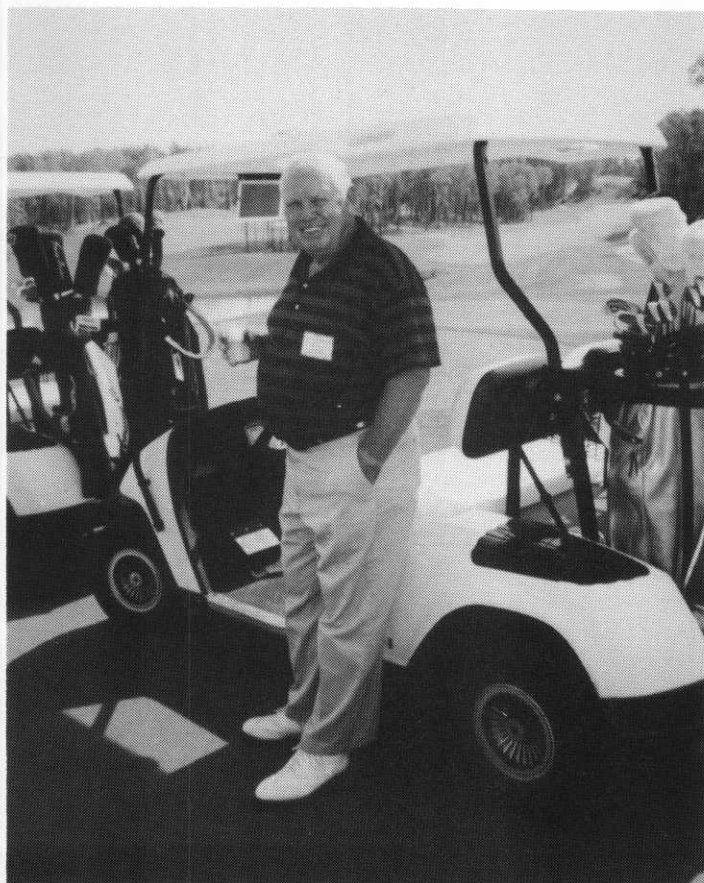
In his book, *Management of Turfgrass Diseases*, MSU researcher Joe Vargas writes: "After nitrogen, the two most important elements for growing plants are phosphorus and potassium. The role of these elements in controlling diseases has not been determined, although (J.H.) Madison explains how the interaction of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium affects specific diseases."

Indeed, researchers aren't certain exactly how potassium increases a plant's cold tolerance or fights disease, said University of Nebraska researcher Terry Riordan. Potassium is also known to improve a plant's traffic, heat and disease resistance.

"It seems to increase root development, which makes the plant more tolerant of many stresses," Riordan said. "The feeling in the research community seems to be that potassium is important."

One of the things researchers do know, however, is that potassium leaches quickly out of sandy soils, such as putting greens.

(Editor's Note: Reprinted with permission from Golf Course News.)



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