

2004 Turf and Grounds Field Day Recap

By Larry Vetter, Executive Director
Minnesota Turf & Grounds Foundation

The fifth annual Turf and Grounds Field Day was held on Thursday, July 29th on the St. Paul Campus of the University of Minnesota. The Minnesota Turf & Grounds Foundation is pleased to be able to sponsor this event in conjunction with the University of Minnesota.

While the forecast was rather dire until the last minute, Mother Nature cooperated beautifully and the event was graced with tremendous weather.

The day began with refreshments at the registration area, which was in the Display and Trial Gardens area on the St. Paul Campus. The total attendance continues to be disappointing but those who did attend were amazed at the expansion and quality of the work being conducted at the TROE Center. Approximately forty attendees indicated that they were affiliated with a golf course currently having an

MGCSA member.

Following registration, the day began with a Welcome by Larry Vetter, Dr. Thomas Michaels, the Head of the Horticultural Sciences Department and Dr. Brian Horgan, Turfgrass Extension Specialist. During the Welcome, Rob Panuska, MGCSA President, presented a \$25,000.00 check to Dr. Michaels in support of turf activities at the University of Minnesota. All involved both in the turf industry and the University are extremely appreciative of MGCSA's continuing support of this important work.

At the conclusion of the official welcome, attendees boarded wagons for the trip to the TROE Center site. The balance of the morning included nine stops at various research and demonstration projects on the TROE Center. Attendees circulated between these stops. The researchers

involved with each project described the work being done at the various stops.

At the first stop Pam Rice, USDA/ARS explained her work involving pesticide and nutrient loss with runoff. She also evaluated how management practices may mitigate these losses. This research is part of a multi-state cooperative initiative to improve the current understanding of pesticide and nutrient runoff from fairway turf. The two objectives of the study are 1) pesticide and nutrient transport with runoff from fairway turf as affected by regional variability, turf species variability, and test plot size, and 2) to

evaluate the ability of turf management practices to mitigate pesticide and nutrient loss with rainfall and snowmelt runoff.

Nancy Ehlke explained various aspects of the turf breeding program at the University of Minnesota at Stop 2. Current activities are concentrated primarily with perennial ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass varieties. "There is a large team effort to develop improved cultivars of perennial ryegrass with improved winter hardiness, turf quality, disease resistance and herbicide tolerance. Developing elite turf-type perennial ryegrass varieties would expand Minnesota's turf grass options, extend the range of adaptation and improve persistence in the turf environment. Breeding activities have been conducted cooperatively with Rutgers University to improve the level of turf quality and disease resistance in our perennial ryegrass populations."

"The highly apomictic nature of Kentucky bluegrass has limited the development of new cultivars that are different from existing cultivars. Recently, a hybrid breeding program was initiated at the University of Minnesota. Hybrid breeding programs have been very successful in producing the newer, high quality cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass. With the implementation of the hybrid breeding program, the University of Minnesota should be able to produce high quality cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass in the future."

Carl Rosen discussed research underway involving the evaluation of the effects of foliar iron formulations at Stop 3. "Maintaining dark green leaves is a key aspect of turfgrass management. A rich green color is esthetically important, as well as an indicator of turf health and quality. Color is affected by many factors, including nitrogen fertility, disease symptoms and iron deficiency. Iron (Fe) is required in only small amounts, but is important because of its essential role in chlorophyll synthesis. This project is a continuation of a study initiated last year to evaluate the effectiveness of different spray formulations to increase foliar Fe uptake and improve turfgrass color on golf course greens."

(Continued on Page 25)

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Temptations in the Workplace

Tales from the Peripatic Mr. Witteveen

Now that I have lived three score and ten, I am old and wise enough to deal with the delicate subject of ethics. In my time, I have seen it all and done some of it. Ethics is a personal matter and rarely discussed among superintendents.

It is only when someone gets caught stealing or scheming and is fired that we whisper among ourselves about the dastardly deeds of a colleague...the dastardly deeds of a colleague. They don't teach about ethics at turf school, but we do learn about honesty and integrity at home from our parents.

First-time superintendents may at times be tempted by nefarious schemes that may compromise one's integrity. These usually involve material favors for services rendered or products purchased. Such awards may be as insignificant as a fishing rod or a ticket to a sporting event. Occasionally, the awards may become larger in scale such as an expense-paid vacation or even cash payments. You will be guided by your own moral code as to how you deal with such offers. You should also consult the Code of Conduct that you signed when you joined your local or national GCSA. Chances are that you did not even read it, because it was all in small print and written in legal language. Actually, the Code is a lot less complex than a pesticide label. In a nutshell, it states that if you misbehave, you could lose your membership and damage your professional reputation forever.

My first kickback...

Charlie the topsoil man dumped his load just where I wanted it, so I gladly signed his ticket without much scrutiny. When Christmas came, his card contained a crisp \$20 bill. That was my first "kickback," and it is worth noting that at the time it amounted to almost a day's wages. At first I thought Charlie was simply showing his appreciation for the business I steered his way. But then it occurred to me it could have been because I signed his tickets so quickly. Live and learn, and I told Charlie that I did not want his \$20 anymore. I also checked his tickets more carefully. Meanwhile, many of my colleagues were also buying topsoil from

Charlie and I often wondered if they also received Charlie's "gratuities." At our monthly meetings we discussed every topic under the sun, but never talked about kickbacks, as it was a taboo subject.

"How do you want it billed?..."

A colleague reports that when he was just starting out and bought a house some years back, he received a call from a supplier asking if he needed anything, since he had connections. The superintendent answered that, as a matter of fact, he did need a washer and a dryer. Sure enough, a few days later the washer and dryer were delivered, followed by a visit from the salesman. "How do you want them billed?" he asked. The super asked, perhaps naively, if he could use his VISA card. "No, no, no," the salesman replied. "How do you want it billed to the club? Fertilizer, fungicides? I do this all the time for the guys. You know, appliances, big screen TV's, you name it." Name it he did, chasing the man off the property and then returning the washer and dryer. We can only wonder how many others took the high road.

Check those tickets!

We employed a backhoe operator at one time to make alterations to the course. He did good work and we became friends. I enjoyed his company and the occasional visit to his home, where I was lavishly wined and dined. We parted ways when I found that his daily tickets were always higher than the actual hours


worked. I had learned from Charlie!

Most companies are scrupulously honest...

While most companies I dealt with in the ensuing years were scrupulously honest, there were a few with dubious practices. Monetary gifts and a case of whiskey or appliances in exchange for business done were by no means a rarity. By far the biggest opportunity for larceny in my time was in the worm-picking business. There was a big demand for worms in the bait business and lush country club fairways were crawling with thousands, even millions of worms. The pickers came out at midnight when all was quiet and scooped up the worms in their peculiar ways.

Mostly their work went unnoticed, but occasionally the pickers were confronted by the watering man or by a vigilant superintendent. That's when the negotiating started. The right to pick worms was worth several thousand dollars and the head picker knew that he could probably get a better deal in cash to the superintendent than in a check to the club. The temptation was great, as it was all in cash and it transpired in the dark of night. Who would ever know? A few succumbed and it was rumored that some made more from the worm pickers than they did in wages. No one was ever caught and eventually the pickers stopped coming,

(Continued on Page 17)






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Penn State Student Receives First Annual Scholarship

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has named Katelyn Ritter of Mount Airy, Md., as the first recipient of the Joseph S. Garske Collegiate Grant.

The \$2,500 grant, funded by Par Aide and administered through The

Environmental Institute for Golf, was established in honor of Par Aide company founder Joseph S. Garske. The program awards children of GCSAA members each year to assist in the funding of their education at either an accredited college or trade school. The grant is renewable for a

second year with proof of enrollment and a GPA of 2.0 or higher.

"It's an honor to present Katelyn Ritter with the inaugural scholarship, while recognizing her outstanding achievements in and out of the classroom," said Steve Garske, Par Aide president. "This program is also about doing something for the golf course superintendent. It's great to be able to give something back for their timeless dedication to the game of golf."

Ritter will attend The Pennsylvania State University next fall to study architectural engineering. Her father, Thomas Ritter, CGCS, has been the golf course superintendent at Hampshire Greens Golf Course in Silver Springs, Md., since 1997. He is a 16-year GCSAA member.

Since 1954, Par Aide has been providing golf course accessories "Wherever Golf is Played." The family-owned company offers a full line of premium golf course accessories, including tee, greens and practice area products, tools, and signage. Headquartered in Lino Lakes, Minn., Par Aide distributes products to golf courses through a worldwide network of dealers. For more information, visit www.paraide.com.

The Environmental Institute for Golf, the philanthropic organization of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), is a collaborative effort of the environmental and golf communities, dedicated to strengthening the compatibility of golf with the natural environment. The Institute concentrates on delivering programs and services involving information collection, research, education and outreach that communicate the best management practices of environmental stewardship on the golf course. For more on The Institute, visit www.eifg.org.

Since 1926, GCSAA has been the leading professional association for the men and women who manage golf courses in the United States and worldwide. From its headquarters in Lawrence, Kan., the association provides education, information and representation to more than 21,000 individual members in more than 65 countries. GCSAA's mission is to serve its members, advance their profession and enhance the enjoyment, growth and vitality of the game of golf. Visit GCSAA at www.gcsaa.org.

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It's In the Hole

Mike Kelly, Superintendent at Edina Country Club, participated in the Noran Clinic MS 150 Bike Tour. On June 12th & 13th he joined more than 2,600 people from around the state and successfully completed the 150-mile ride. From sponsor pledges, Mike was able to raise over \$1,600 to help the fight against Muscular Sclerosis. Donations will help support research and local services to those affected by MS.

WindSong Farms, Independence, celebrated its Grand Opening the week of June 14th. Superintendent Scottie Hines and assistants Jeff Girard and Chris Halverson had the course in outstanding conditions for the celebration. Among the guests was course designer Tom Lehman.

Loggers Trail, Stillwater, celebrated its Grand Opening on July 13th. Congratulations to Superintendent John McCarthy and assistants Mark Plombon and Eric Hansen.

Sam Bauer, an undergraduate student at the University of Minnesota, recently received a 2004 Bayer Undergraduate Scholarship for \$1,000. Bauer is pursuing a degree in environmental horticulture with a concentration in turfgrass management.

Stephen Kimball, a sales representative for Bayer Environmental Science, presented Bauer with the scholarship in April. "Sam has an excellent academic record and will be an asset to the green industry," said Kimball. The Bayer Undergraduate Scholarship recognizes students pursuing careers in the green industry who have demonstrated academic excellence and leadership skills.

The 2005 Minnesota Green Expo will take place Jan. 5-7 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. The Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA) and the Minnesota Turf & Grounds Foundation (MTGF) are partners in the regional trade show and educational program which targets a broad spectrum of green industry professionals. The show includes 100 educational seminars and over 850 trade show booths and exhibits. For exhibit or registration information, call 651-633-4987 or 888-886-6652.

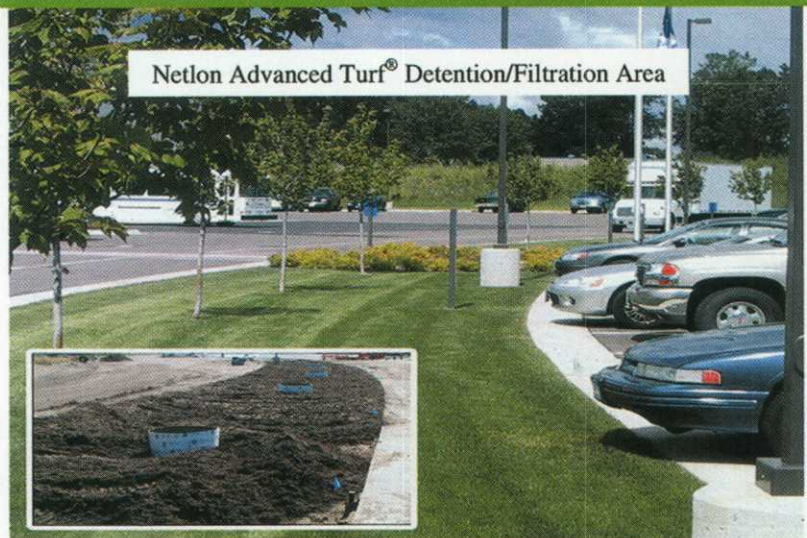
Highlights of the three-day educational program include: Vision and Execution - Ed Laflamme; Building Profits; Selling from the Heart; Plant Combinations; Shrub Roses; PGRs; POA/Bent Competition; Rebuilding Greens; Artificial Turf; Nursery Mechanization; New Annuals; Profits and Promotions, and Strategic Planning.

The show's audience includes nursery and greenhouse growers; garden center operators; landscape and irrigation contractors; landscape designers; lawn, tree and gardening professionals; golf course and park superintendents; school and cemetery grounds supervisors; sports turf managers and arborists.

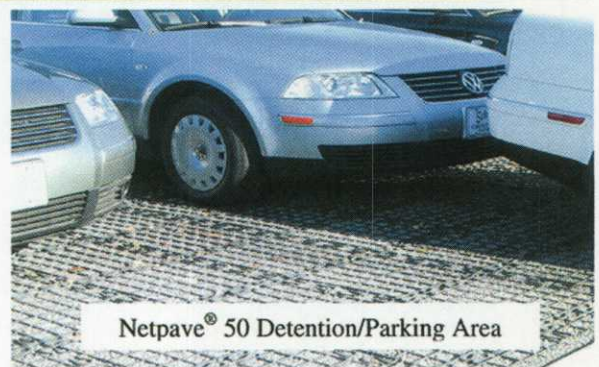
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Temptations –

(Continued from Page 12)

blaming the use of pesticides for the diminishing returns.

At times I was offered trips and vacations, and once, just once, I accepted a junket to Las Vegas in the company of other superintendents. I lost a few hundred dollars, but we had a lot of fun. On the last night, when I bombed out at the blackjack table, it occurred to me that I was taking a far greater gamble with my livelihood than at the gaming tables. My employers would have had just cause to fire me for accepting bribes for business. From then on I no longer accepted trips, not even to fertilizer companies for the questionable purpose of becoming educated in plant nutrition.

Many superintendents are natural-born entrepreneurs. They live in the business world and deal with business people all the time, on and off the golf course. That is why so many of us have casual sidelines as a means to earn extra money. For some it is yard work and lawn maintenance, while others consult. For me, it was

selling Christmas trees. The Christmas tree business fit perfectly into my professional life, since it occurred at the very end of the golfing season. For several years my tree business was booming, but inevitably we had a recession and I was left with several hundred trees that were buried on the golf course and covered with dirt. My golf club never objected to my tree business since it took place in the off-season. In fact they surreptitiously encouraged my entrepreneurial spirit, but I am not sure they approved of the burial mound to the left of the ninth fairway.

There are plenty of opportunities for connivance, but all is well as long as your golf course is in prime condition...

It is not unusual for superintendents to become incorporated and run a formal business on the side in addition to their prime responsibility of managing the course. To keep the two separate can be tricky, especially if they are somewhat related, like landscaping, custom work or supply services. Will you be using the golf course truck for your own endeavors? Do

you also use golf course workers as your employees after their regular shift? There are plenty of opportunities for connivance, but all is well as long as your golf course is in prime condition and your popularity is running high. The minute the golf course begins to suffer, however, the powers that be will scrutinize your extracurricular activities.

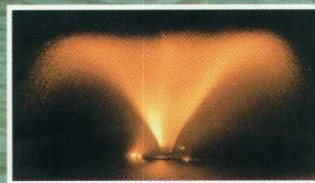
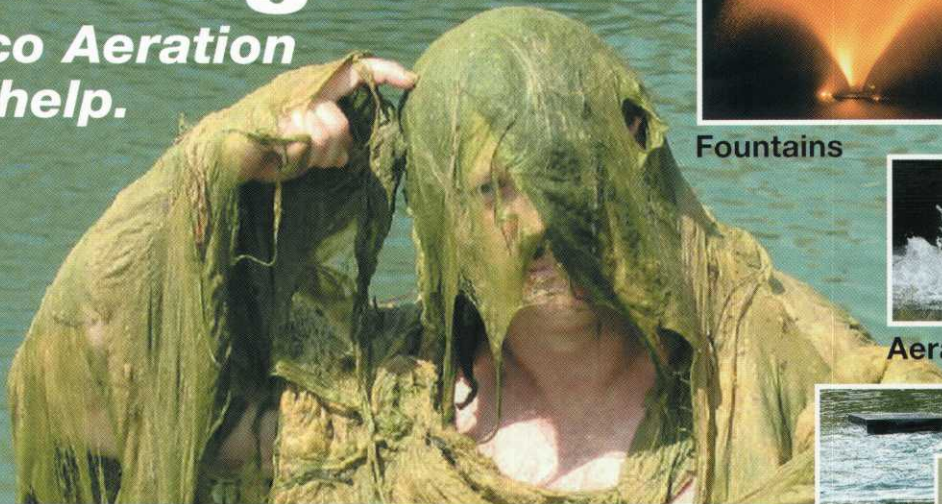
As I stated earlier, honesty starts at home and is based on values that your parents lived by. These values are reinforced at school and will guide you for the rest of your life. Is it OK to cheat on your taxes, to pad the payroll or sign inflated invoices? Of course not! But choices are rarely black and white, and it is how we handle the gray areas that matters in the end. I once asked an elder statesman in our industry, an icon who had been around for a long time, for his opinions on the matter and his answer was, "If you can't eat and drink it in one day, don't take it!"

* * * *

(Editor's Note: This article was reprinted with permission from TurfNet magazine and Mr. Gordon Witteveen.)

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Greenskeeper's Diary

THIS IS THE WEEK THAT WAS

Author Unknown

Monday

Want to spray bad dollar spot on greens. Cushman won't work. Sprayer won't work. I don't want to work. Nobody else wants to work. Two of the crew stayed home and did not work. Just had a phone call the Junior Golfers are to have a shotgun start on both nines at 8:30. Hung up in caller's face. Should not have had that last beer last night. Mowed greens and tried not to notice that the cups needed changing and the dollar spot is even worse than I thought. Did not mow 13. Hate it. Between the winterkill, oil spill kill and the disease, we ought to tow it to the S.P.C.A. and have it put to sleep. Chairman left message in the pro shop to get in touch with him at once. He better not hold his breath. Hit 95 by late afternoon. Late for supper, wife mad, supper lousy, I'm mad. Watered 'til dark. Showered and went to bed. Wife sexy - I'm not.

Tuesday

Went in at daylight - the air feels like a police dog's breath. Got the sprayer working. Can't figure out why the chemical companies package dusty chemicals in bags that are impossible to open without getting it all over yourself, and the sprayer, not to mention breathing it. The cheapest cereal on the market is packaged in easy-to-open-and-close containers. We all should go to granulars - that would snap their eyes open. Fairway tractor stuck in wet spot right next to the huge localized dry spot the crew calls Iran. Why are there so many cars in the club lot? The Pro shop says it is a ladies member-guest transferred from another club that had a fire in their kitchen. I think I will set one in ours and let them eat at Burger King. Went home early - slept through supper. Wife mad again, too tired to be mad. Mowed rough 'til dark. Showered and ate cold, leftover supper. Felt sexy - wife still mad from early evening. Lost interest.

Wednesday

Slept late, went in at 7:00. Changed cups 18 greens, hit 14 rocks. No record, but close. Thirteen green has a disease that looks like vomit - on close inspection it is vomit - what a relief! You can always hose off vomit. Birds working on greens - how many cutworms does it take to fill up a crow?! I think their mother was raped by a rooster the way they scratch with their black toenails and dig with their beaks. The member who owns the ice cream plant told me we need more sand in the traps - I told him his maple walnut needs more nuts. He said "times are tough" - I agree. Went in the club for a cup of coffee and the manager asked me if I knew anything about the septic backing up. Left without getting the coffee. Fairly normal afternoon

Two of the crew stayed home and did not work. Just had a phone call the Junior Golfers are to have a shotgun start on both nines at 8:30. Should not have had that last beer last night.

except we are down to one Cushman. Are flat tires contagious? Home for supper at the right time for a change - no one is home. Note says heat a T.V. dinner. Go down to the Old Eagle Inn and wash a steak down with a half-dozen 'hinnies'. Finish mowing rough. Wife mad. Don't care, sleep on floor after watching Sands of Iwo Jima. Love Big Duke.

Thursday

My yellow crud is back. Every year it comes the end of July. Interesting light green spots get weaker looking then turn yellow ... then gray ... then dead. Some say it is Fusarium, some say Anthracnose, some say funose. Wife says it is my imagination. My assistant got rid of the persistent red leaf spot patch on the practice green, he cut it with an eight-inch patcher and threw it in the pond. Sure is wonderful what they teach you at the University of Rhode Island.

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We have all read about, or viewed on television, the stories regarding water coolers and the sanitary procedures implemented upon golf courses. Yes, it is a tragedy that a fatality and illnesses have occurred due to the consumption of contaminated water. Accidents do happen.

But I wonder how many golfers have suffered from heat exhaustion during a hot round of golf, wishing for, but not having any water to drink. And I ponder how incredibly few counts of personal injury are directly related to the millions of gallons of water upon the thousands of golf courses across our great country. Too bad the health department and pure water politicians don't have the same curiosities.

Enough of my queries and onto the point, new rules and guidelines are to be implemented and there is no getting around the sterilization of water coolers. To be honest, I pooh-poohed the idea as time consuming and difficult to implement. After all, we do maintain 13, ten-

gallon water cooler stations on a daily basis. Depending upon the individual doing the job it can take up to two hours, especially if they have to dodge around play. However, my reluctance was soon swayed due to the ease of our sanitization process.

First I asked our chef for a product to sterilize the coolers. He gave me a bottle of Steramine tablets. One tablet per gallon of water filled four quart sized spray bottles for pennies. My chef also bought a kitchen grade hose for the process of filling the containers.

Executing the sanitization procedure took very little time. First, the carry cart box was washed out and sprayed down with Steramine. The second step was to pick up the "extra" replacement containers and spray the insides of the cavity as well as the lid. Once covered again, the units were transported to the clubhouse for a quick rinse, ice and water. The time to transport was more than necessary for the

chemical to do its job.

The coolers were then taken onto the course, swapped out and the procedure repeated after each container was emptied of ice. Oh yes, we also mist down the nipples after placement in the cooler houses, followed by a rinse, of course.

The additional steps to sanitization are truly negligible, and if it prevents one case of slippery shorts than I am all for it. There is a suggestion that the coolers be sanitarily serviced every four hours. This is ridiculous. Maybe spritz the nipples with sanitizer at two in the afternoon. But a change out is over the top. Perhaps this is the next big thrust for our association in the upcoming year, the development of a reasonable sanitation program.

In my humble opinion, of course.

— Jack MacKenzie, CGCS
North Oaks Golf Club

(Editor's Note: STYMIED is a new column for members to speak their mind. E-mail jmackenzie426@msn.com)

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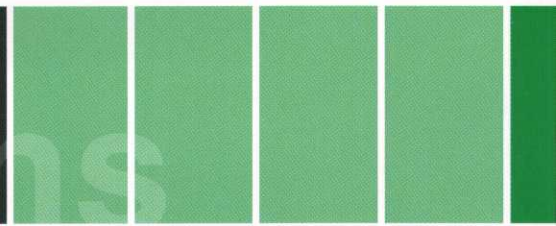
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