

# A Meeting with the Secretary of Agriculture



*PICTURED WITH THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE are, from the left, Kevin Morris, NTF; Tom Delaney, PLANET; Bob Shearman, Ph.D., University of Nebraska; Clark Throssell, Ph.D., GCSAA; Secretary of Agriculture Johanns; Ike Thomas, TPI, Mike Kenna, USGA, Brian Horgan, Ph.D., U of M, and David Williams, Ph.D., University of Kentucky.*

Last year I was honored by my peers to be elected to the National Turfgrass Federation Board of Directors. The mission of this board is to elevate turfgrass science as a discipline and lobby for federal funding for research and extension. Over the last four years, the NTF has successfully lobbied congress to establish a turfgrass research program under the United States Department of Agriculture - Agriculture Research Service (USDA-ARS). Currently, the USDA-ARS has hired three scientists that are located across the country. The long-term goal is to assist USDA-ARS in hiring 20 turfgrass scientists with \$2,000,000 in discretionary research funds to be used in conjunction with University faculty across the country. These discretionary funds could, for example, be directed to the University of Minnesota to perform collaborative research projects with the USDA-ARS scientists.

To continue the lobbying efforts, members of the NTF board of directors recently met with Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns in Washington, D.C.

The meeting included Tom Delaney, Professional Landcare Network; Mike Kenna, Ph.D., USGA Green Section; Clark Throssell, Ph.D., GCSAA; Bob Shearman, Ph.D., University of Nebraska; Brian Horgan, Ph.D., University of Minnesota; David Williams, Ph.D., University of Kentucky; Ike Thomas, Turfgrass Producers International, and Kevin Morris, National Turfgrass Federation, Inc. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the turfgrass industry and the National Turfgrass Research Initiative.

*—Brian Horgan*

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## Up-to-Code –

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horizontal task lighting levels. The increase in vertical task lighting levels allowed employees to greatly improve tasks such as operating production equipment. The increased horizontal task lighting levels immediately increased proficiency for production functions, such as product assembly and packaging tasks. Increase in profits through employee productivity as a result of the lighting remodel can be difficult to qualify, but the nearly 60% in saving due to the reduction in lighting utility costs the company is now experiencing, is not hard to qualify.

More "Good News" is, the Utility "Rebate" paid to the owner by the Utility, reduced the total lighting equipment cost including installation, by 53%. Also, of significant importance, there are many great energy financing opportunities available for business owners, as well.

Many similar examples of the above have been realized by business owners in the Twin Cities area in facilities such as: auto dealership service garages, grocery stores, school gymnasiums, all types of warehousing, all types of manufacturing operations, office buildings and more. Also, similar "HVAC" opportunities are available through the proper implementation of new technology in HVAC equipment now available.

In closing, energy cost will remain high and continually increase. New Lighting and HVAC equipment now available, when properly applied, will dramatically improve the operation of any business, while reducing energy costs and improving the Bottom Line. Don't forget the additional "Good News"; the Utilities want to help us pay for these Improvements. Why not improve your Bottom Line "now"?

## Stephen Garske Receives 2005 Distinguished Service Award

Stephen Garske, left, owner of Par Aide Products Company, was a deserving recipient of the 2005 MGCSA Distinguished Service Award. Stephen has been a member of the MGCSA for the past 19 years. The course accessory business started for Steve in 1986 after his father's death. Steve had to make a decision: give up a very successful commercial real estate business in Denver, let the family business end, or come home and run it. Well, run it he has. Par Aide's many great products, under the leadership of Steve, have made the life of a golf course superintendent a lot easier. Pictured with Stephen is Tom Johnson, who presented the award at the Awards & Recognition Banquet in December.



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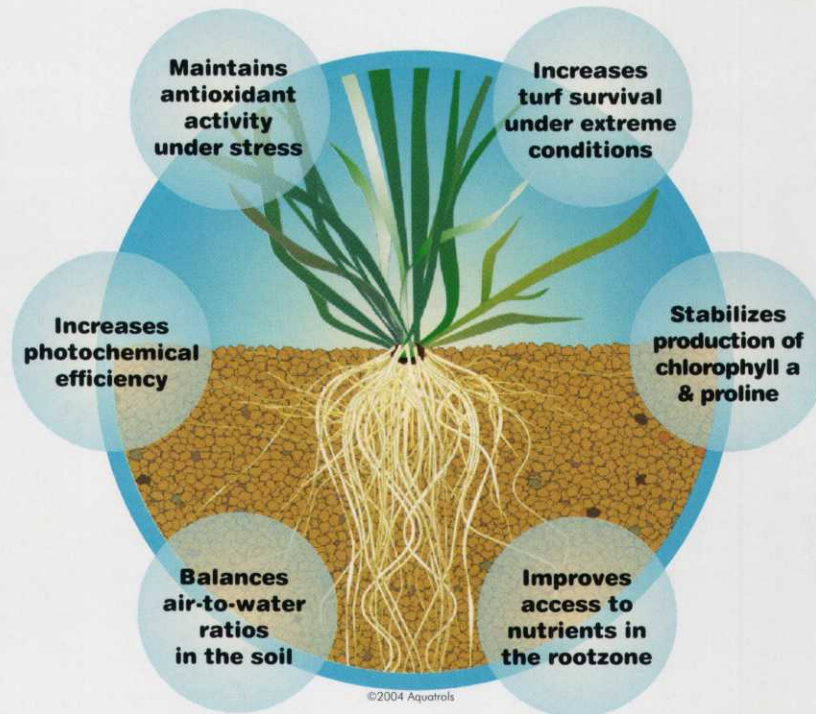
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# Preparing For the Next Step

By **GARY DETERS**  
Assistant Superintendent  
St. Cloud Country Club

I have been preparing myself for a Golf Course Superintendent's position ever since I decided to become a Turf Student at the University of Minnesota. After three years of being the 1st Assistant Golf Course Superintendent at St. Cloud Country Club, I believe I'm ready to take the next step and become a Superintendent. It hasn't always been easy or fun being an assistant, but I can still say that I love our field of work and it has been very rewarding putting out a great product for the golfers to enjoy. Turf students and second assistants must learn the skills of communication, expectations and organization if they want to further their career.

Communication is probably the most important thing for any golf course manager. For the assistant, it is also a vital part of being the Superintendent's right-hand man and for being a manager of people. It's the exchange of information between my



*The picturesque par 3, 3rd Hole at St. Cloud Country Club overlooks the Mississippi River.*

*163 Yard Par 3 eighth hole at the Refuge Golf Club in Oak Grove, Minnesota.*



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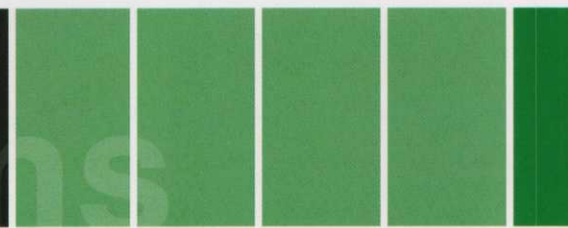
boss, Superintendent Dan Hanson, myself and the crew that gets us through the workday. Everyday Dan relays information to me that I forward to the crew or take the initiative and tell the guys what I want done and how to do it.

Without communication, work would be chaotic and it would definitely reflect on the golf course's appearance. I honestly can't count how many times a day there is communication to the crew one way or another. As assistants, there isn't a lot of direct communication to members because this is normally the Superintendent's job. However, it is important to pay attention to the strategies the Superintendent uses to get the attention of the members, because some day this will be your job.

Another important thing to know as the assistant is what the Superintendent's expectations are of you. By knowing his expectations, it can ease the burden of trying to figure them out on your own. Expectations might be delegating duties, promoting teamwork, learning on your own, working hard or so many different things. Remember, the expectations that the superintendent has of you will increase as you continue to work for him, so that means you have to take it upon yourself to become a better "manager." One thing that you should expect from your boss is a challenge, because without one you won't learn very much.

It's important to figure out questions or challenges that you have on your own. There is definitely nothing wrong with asking questions if you don't know the answer, but it is very satisfying if you can take it upon yourself to solve a problem you have. For example, when I first started to learn the irrigation system at St. Cloud Country Club, I had a lot of questions because I never had the responsibility of taking care of irrigation before. I would

*(Continued on Page 18)*



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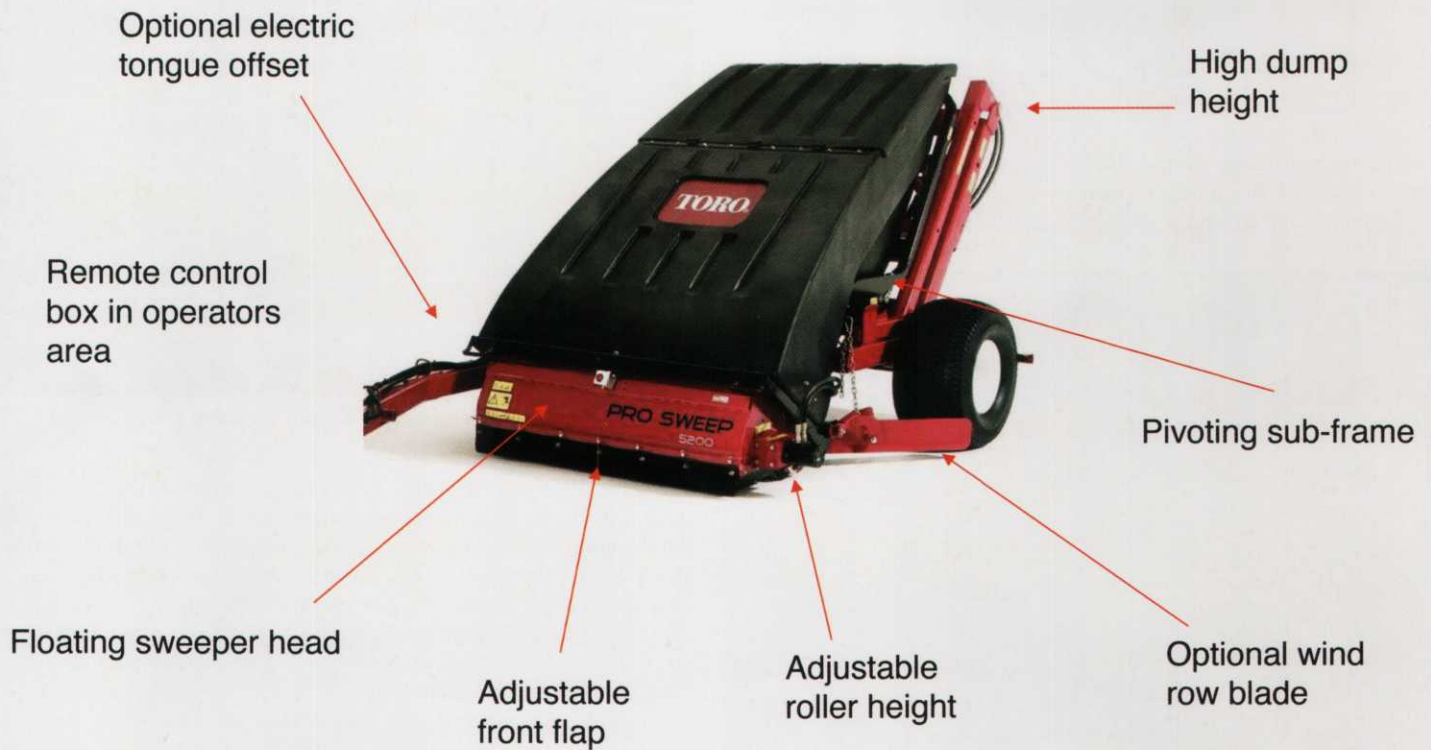
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## The Next Step –

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I always asked Dan questions about what to do, but decided that I needed to take it upon myself to learn the maps, the irrigation parts and the sprinkler heads on my own. It obviously didn't happen over night, but there have been very few things about the irrigation that I haven't been able to figure out just by determination.

*"Taking the next step in your career is going to be based mostly on what your goals are and how hard you want to work to accomplish these goals. There are usually no freebies in this business and you will have to get yourself in the door to make an impression."*

It is important to learn from your mistakes. There are plenty of mistakes to be made while being an assistant, but the key is to never let the same ones happen again. Learning from my mistakes has made me a better decision-maker because I am more thorough with my thought process.

If you're not thorough and organized, learn to be, because it is

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*The 6th Hole at St. Cloud Country Club.*

very helpful when you are a manager of people. I have always tried to be organized and it has helped me be better prepared for the things that come my way. In fact, I complete the daily duties sheet the night before, so I don't show up for work unprepared. This also allows me to be ready when people call in sick or don't show up because I usually have a backup plan to move people around to make sure all the jobs can be completed on time. When you are an assistant you have to expect the unexpected.

There are a variety of jobs that need to get done every day besides the daily maintenance procedures of mowing greens, tees, fairways, rough and changing cups. This is why it's important to know exactly what else needs to get done to provide quality playing conditions for golfers. There should be a list of jobs that need to get done on a weekly basis and on which days they need to be performed. Also, consider having some kind of notepad or writing material so that you can jot things down as you drive around the golf course. Yes, organization is a key to success.

Taking the next step in your career is going to be based mostly on what your goals are and how hard you want to work to accomplish these goals. There are usually no freebies in this business and you will have to get yourself in the door to make an impression. You are going to have to figure out how to piece all of the information you have gathered from school, work, books or your peers into your own philosophies. Everybody's work situation is different, but I think this article can give you a heads-up into what kind of situations you might face.



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# What Is It You Do In The Winter?

By NATE USELDING

Assistant Superintendent, Dellwood Hills Golf Club



When you are out and about meeting new people, the standard question asked is, as an icebreaker, "what do you for a living?" Everyone loves to talk about themselves so this is a perfect way for two people to engage in a conversation, talking about work. Now, when you ask me what I do and I respond with, "I am an assistant superintendent of a golf course," you generally receive two responses. First, the courtesy, "oh really?" followed by a puzzled look on their face. Not only did I say I worked for a golf course, but I also said I was an assistant to something. Now they are really confused and with a slight cock of the head, their follow-up question is, "So, what do you do at the golf course?"

This question is easy in the summer, I manage a golf course and I make it look and play the way it does everyday. At this time of year, you have to go into much greater detail because you know the next question. "What do you do during the winter?" When I am asked this question my first reaction is to laugh and say not much, but in all actuality, we get a lot accomplished in the winter. The winter months are a more stress-free, laid back and enjoyable time of year. It is a time for us to take a breath, not sweat daily routines and not worry about the course playing perfectly. I love it when it snows. The course looks so good under a blanket of snow. It signifies us changing gears and taking care of our needs indoors. I am going to share with you how we prepare Dellwood Hills in the winter, for the summer months.

Our priorities for the winter months are simple but don't necessarily have a definite deadline until April 1st.

**Painting.** It is becoming a thing of the past with plastic hazard stakes and all weather wood. Back in the day painting was a major labor expense with all the pieces on the course we had to cover. There were garbage cans, ball washers, water cooler stands, tee signs and benches. Fortunately, we only have to paint our tee markers. Our benches are now stained with polyurethane and we only have to stain them every three years.

**Tree pruning and removal.** We have an ongoing process with tree removal due

to the large amount of trees at the end of their life expectancy. Our course was built 35 years ago and was littered with a large amount of garbage trees for quick growth. Today, these trees are dying and are becoming a safety concern to our membership. Every tree we cut down is carefully selected to ensure its removal is beneficial to the course. We will prune and trim up trees for playability and mobility. We also look for unwanted branches like suckers to be removed.

**Burning.** What do we do with all of our rubbish? We are fortunate to have the space on site to burn most of what we cut down. This saves us big bucks rather than having it removed by a separate company. After obtaining a permit from the city, we have a controlled burn. These burns are a long and slow process and usually take two or three weeks for us to finish. Most of what we burn is last year's material along with the past summers debris. We only burn in the winter because marshmallows taste the best this time of year.

**Reel grinding and mechanical work.** Our mechanic stays busy by taking all our equipment apart and putting it back together again. He is in charge of making everything look and work like new again while also doing the annual maintenance, like reel grinding. When the temperatures dip below the single digits in the early mornings I help out until the temperatures rise up after lunch. What a great way for assistants to learn new traits of the job.

**Education.** January kicks off with the Green Expo and what a great way to start thinking turf again. A bit of education combined with a great opportunity to network allows us to effectively brush up on our skills. We do not always attend the national show but again, it is a great opportunity for anyone to attend. Other than attending the shows, we get a chance in the winter to meet up with other superintendents and have a round table discussion and talk turf. This was reassuring last year due to our severe weather where everyone was in the same boat.

**Brainstorming.** Anything and everything we think of is discussed throughout the winter to help out our operation. There are some crazy ideas that get

brought up but that is what we want to encourage, creative thinking. It is also a time to read up on all our publications we receive throughout the year. Numerous times we will toss aside a publication or just skim over it in the summer. The winter months give us an opportunity to catch up on key articles that pertain to us.

**Clean and reorganize our facility.** It is very easy to overlook misplaced items during the season when time is tight. I'm not talking about a misplaced shovel, I'm talking big items that don't get put back on the shelves or up in the rafters. It is amazing how time goes by and certain things don't get done. We are starting our third year in our new facility and we are still working out kinks to make our operation run smoothly. Each year we find better ways to maximize productivity.

**Plowing.** The clubhouse is open year round, and we maintain the sidewalks along with our maintenance facility's parking lot when it snows. This isn't a big deal because most of what our job entails is weather dependent, rain or snow.

**Audubon Society.** I am currently taking on this project for Dellwood Hills to become a certified course. This is very rewarding to me as I get my feet wet with many new issues and then I have the opportunity to implement them into our regime. It is a very time consuming process, and I dedicate about 8 hours a week to completing the project.

Everyday, it goes without fail, I answer questions about our profession because people are so intrigued with what we do. I am happy to tell them, I manage a team which performs maintenance tasks to a golf course, so when you come out and play, it looks and plays the best possible way. You see, back in college, I couldn't sell my major to someone within 30 seconds and now, as an assistant superintendent, I am happy to explain what I am passionate about. The more we can educate golfers on what we do, the more they will see our perspective and understand the ins and outs of our profession.