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WAS SMOG RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GREAT TURF LOSS OF 1973?

Richard Anderson, Superintendent
Burning Tree Club

With a record number of air pollution alert days in 1973 and the majority of fine turf grass areas under stress during this period the effect of direct sunlight on grass became very evident. Smoke, smog, and clouds can screen out a large majority of the sun's rays from reaching the earth's surface. With the absence of direct sunlight, a noticeable difference in the grass plant can be observed in just a few days. Photosynthesis will be greatly reduced and the grass plant will have to utilize its carbohydrate reserve. I believe this happened this year in that the smaller, younger leaf blades were shadowed by the larger, more mature blades and they had to rely on the outer leaf blades for carbohydrates. This in turn weakened the entire stand of turf. With a continued screening of the sun's rays from smog, the underlying or shadowed leaf blades eventually died. Having utilized most of the carbohydrate reserve from the entire plant the outer or exposed leaf surfaces were weakened and the quality and vigor of the turf was lost.

The stomates on the leaf blade do not open as wide because of this sun screen and the transpiration rate of the plant is reduced. This allows irrigated water to remain near the surface longer than desired and now, we have the already weakened plant also under water stress. Air spaces in the soil decreased so the lack of available soil air prevents the plant from taking up water and we have in a sense created wet weather wilt in a time of drought.

With the turf now in a very weakened state — conditions for turf diseases have become ideal. Many diseases are activated by the reduction of light and wet soil conditions. This year because of the smog cover these disease organisms could continue working in the daylight hours. Fungicides and management practices to prevent the spread of the disease were futile. Because of the lack of direct sunlight the ability of the grass plant to recover was also affected.

With the smog alert now over, *slowly* the affected areas are being revived. The year 1973 will long be remembered as the worst year on golf courses in over 20 years. Unless these larger cities push for cleaner air and better smog controls, 1973 will only be remembered as the year it all

started. Grass does need light — *direct* sunlight not filtered through and screened out by smog.

THANKS FOR RESERVATION CARDS

by Bob Shields

My thanks are extended to all members who returned their reservation cards for the Woodmont Meeting.

Ninety-two cards were received with 76 people indicating they would attend. Then there were phone calls saying some would like to cancel out while others wanted their name added. The number I told the house to prepare for was 80 and that was the number we had!

The reason for the return card is of course to let the club house know how many dinners to prepare, but one of the side benefits I have always liked is the friendly hand written notes on some of the cards when they are received.

For example:

"I will hopefully attend the October 2 meeting at Woodmont. Always look forward to your invitation — will do my darndest to attend." Claude Barrick

"I will 'with pleasure' attend the Woodmont meeting." Brownie

"Looking forward to seeing my favorite golf course — South Woodmont." Bill Emerson

"Bob — sorry I can't make this one. It's always a pleasure at Woodmont. Hope you have another good meeting." Elwyn Deal

"I look forward to it." Fred Grau

"Hate to miss it but have a conflict." Jack Hall

"Will be out of town." Jack Hewitt

"Deep regrets, it would be great to see Woodmont again." Charles K. Hallowell (Mr. Hallowell was USGA Greens Section representative in 1957 when Woodmont decided to have Bermuda grass fairways on the South Course, and a visit from him would be welcome at any time.)

"Sorry Bob, I will be unable to attend." Percy W. LeDuc (He is Mr. Argyle C.C.)

"Sorry Bob, I can't be there. As you know I will be in London at that time. Have a good tournament." Bob Martino

"I am disappointed that I cannot make the meeting, but I am settling on a new house that day and will be tied up all day. Hope the weather is good and best regards to all." Carl Schoening