

A LIST IS A LIST, BUT TAKE NOTE ADDRESS PROBLEMS

Lists attract our attention. They enumerate our problems, pleasures and needs. They are a condensed index of things to do, we should have done, and could have done.

Lists are powerful documents. We respond to them quickly, whether it is a shopping list, a Christmas list, a work list, a sports list or a problem list. It must be the simple declarative style of a list that triggers a quick response. I responded quickly when I read the list of "Golf Course Superintendents' 10 Deadly Problems." Then I saw that they were "The Top 10 Sins of Golf Course Maintenance" as seen through the eyes of 12 USGA agronomists.

The list was the result of a survey requested by a group of golf course owners. Observations were tabulated and the results listed according to frequency in the survey. These problems not only were sinful. They were deadly; a fatal combination.

The list implied that superintendents might be responsible for these problems. Golf course maintenance is a career for superintendents; it is a matter of job security. Industry leaders who listened to the talk or who read the article may erroneously interpret the tone of the list.

Jim Connolly, USGA agronomist who presented these facts at the Maine Golf Turfgrass Conference and Show, stated that it was not his intention to fault the superintendent but to make the industry aware of the problems.

There is no denying these problems exist.

In presenting the list in this column, I changed the order to reflect my view of the importance of each problem. The comments following the category are my thoughts.

Following is the list of ten important problems facing golf course superintendents. The number in parentheses indicates the original ranking.

1. Labor (9). Size alone puts this problem at the top. Labor comprises the largest percentage of golf course budgets. The human element demands attention. Low wages, few benefits, seasonal employment, poor working conditions, lack of training and scarcity of qualified people contribute to this problem.

Labor needs a strong planning effort equal to or greater than other maintenance programs.

2. Communications and Public Relations (1). To resolve this important issue, communications should begin at the top and set the pace throughout the golf course organization. A positive attitude must be developed in the organization to make it effective. The forms of communication should be kept simple. The quality of writing, speaking and listening must be emphasized.

Public relations can be easy: be courteous to everyone; golfers, staff administrators and sales reps. Community activities are a means of establishing a solid public relations image.

3. Green Speeds (3). An important concern because of its impact on overwatering, pesticide use, equipment and labor. Fast greens and low-cut fairways perpetuate the problems of maintaining the grass in a constant state of stress. Pressure is exerted from all sides in this question of keeping fast greens. As superintendents, we are not entirely blameless.

4. Overwatering (2). A significant problem that a superintendent may be forced into to preserve the "green" look. The stress of present maintenance standards are a contributing factor to this problem.

Automatic systems left unmonitored overwater; manual systems left in inexperienced hands overwater.

5. Pesticide Use (4). Pesticide misuse is the problem.

Superintendents today are taking a judicious look at their use of pesticides. Using diagnostic tools to identify pests, employing longer application intervals, and carefully selecting the correct pesticide are means superintendents are using to eliminate any misuse of pesticides.

Superintendents understand the complexities of pesticide use and the financial



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and environmental cost associated with any misuse.

6. Continuity of Club Officials (5). An important issue that is unmanageable. The constant changing of club officials creates a climate of uncertainty in the superintendent's mind. Lack of short and long-term goals impede the progress of the golf course maintenance program. At times, new club officials have conflicting management priorities, causing disruptive shifts in maintenance strategies.

"Nobody asked, but..." Five year terms for club officials would anchor a sound maintenance program.

7. Equipment (10). It isn't a compliment to our industry to hear that we have to scrounge for workable equipment. When maintenance goals are established, buy the equipment to support those goals.

So often we "put the cart before the horse" or, in our case, "play ability before the equipment."

8. Pesticide Storage and Maintenance Buildings (6). A serious problem for the superintendent burdened with inadequate structures to store pesticides and equipment that fail to meet minimum standards.

Pesticide storage and disposal are regulated fiercely at all levels of government. But these new structures are costly to build and maintain, forcing golf courses to delay construction.

9. Amount of Play(8). Secretly, most superintendents would like to have the course all to themselves, with no play. But we know we must share this beautiful creation with the golfers if we are to continue working. But give

us adequate time to insure the golf course is properly maintained.

When cultural practices are missed or delayed, quality is diminished. Blocking sections of time each week or month during the season is critical to survival of the golf course.

10. Tree Management (7). I don't see this as a top ten problem. Cutting down trees is an environmental issue in most jurisdictions.

As in any listing, nominees left off deserve recognition. The problems that didn't make the top ten include: Superintendents unable to read soil tests (it takes a degree in agronomy), poor record keeping (can assistants type), inappropriately-timed maintenance (did you aerify before a member-guest), and taking advice from the wrong people (think about it).

My perspective has changed since I read the article in "Golf Course News."

A LOOK AHEAD

November 6,7,8
Superintendent's Institute, Santa Rosa

November 21,22
GCSAA-GCSANC Seminar
Integrated Pest Management

December 6
Christmas Party



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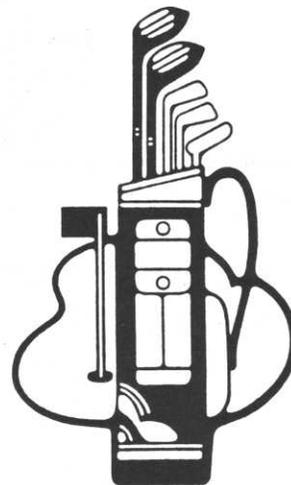
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