

THRU THE **GREEN** USGA

A Review of 1997

By Patrick J. Gross, Agronomist, USGA Green Section

December 1997. As we near the end of 1997, it is good to look back and review the successes we've had and the challenges that lie ahead. The following observations and comments are based on our travels in the Southwestern United States during the past year.

Less disease/more insects - In general, fewer disease problems were observed on putting greens throughout the region. I think this is due to three factors - (1) good management, (2) the availability of new pest control products, and (3) relatively mild temperatures during the summer. While most areas had few problems, diseases were reported in unusual locations, for example crown anthracnose in Tahoe; foliar anthracnose in Park City, Utah; pythium in Salt Lake City, Utah' and summer patch in Denver. Cut worm and white grub activity appeared to be greater throughout the entire region this year compared to previous season. There is no apparent explanation for this occurrence - maybe it was the mild summer weather?

Fairway topdressing - Many courses began a fairway topdressing program this year in an effort to compensate for poor soil conditions and to improve surface firmness during the wet winter season. Sand topdressing on fairways has been used for many years on courses in the Pacific Northwest with great success. New equipment and contracting services made this program less disruptive and easier to accomplish. Please keep in mind that the program must be continued for approximately five to seven years to accumulate a four-inch layer of sand topdressing on the

surface and receive the full benefit of the sand applications.

Another bad year for overseeding transition - Several courses in Phoenix as well as Palm Springs and Las Vegas experienced poor transition from overseeded perennial ryegrass to bermudagrass. This is not unusual, and it seems that bad transition occurs five out of every seven years. What are some of the possible reasons? It seems that many of the new perennial ryegrasses are more persistent and tolerant of high temperatures. Mild weather during the spring and early summer may have favored the growth of perennial ryegrass. Since many of the resort courses not cater to a year-round clientele, superintendents are not allowed to implement aggressive maintenance strategies to encourage rapid transition. Superintendents may be doing it to themselves too, with ever increasing seeding rates on the fairways. For courses that overseed, it is important to remember that transition injury is inevitable — in most cases, you can't have your cake and eat it too.

Creeping bentgrass variety trials - A cooperative project is underway sponsored by GCSAA, NTEP and the USGA to construct sixteen greens across the United States according to USGA specifications and evaluate twenty different creeping bentgrass cultivars under actual golf course playing conditions. We are fortunate to have two of the sites in the Southwestern United States - Crystal Springs Golf Course, near San Francisco, and the SCGA Members Course in Rancho Murrieta, California. Both of the greens are constructed and planted,

and we are looking forward to good data from both of these projects in the near future.

New bermudagrasses for putting greens - There are some excellent new bermudagrass cultivars for use on putting greens that have been performing well in the warmer portions of the region. Many courses with *Tifgreen* bermudagrass are considering changing the greens to *Tifdwarf* or one of the newer varieties, either *Champion* or *Tifeagle* (TW-72). All the new bermudagrasses exhibit finer texture, better uniformity, tolerance to low mowing, and provide faster ball roll.

Gypsum injection - It seems many courses have installed gypsum injection systems whether they need them or not. If gypsum applications are a necessary part of your maintenance routine to correct a sodium problem, then the gypsum injector is an excellent tool to apply the material. Conversely, if your water does not contain enough salt ($EC_w < 0.1$) then gypsum injection will improve water penetration into the soil. Before purchasing or installing a gypsum injector, it is important to have an independent laboratory analysis of your soil and irrigation water to see if the gypsum injector is appropriate for your situation

Organic fertilizers - Many superintendents are using various brands of organic fertilizers for putting green maintenance. Organic fertilizers are a great source of nutrients when soil temperatures are warm enough to convert the nitrogen into the nitrate form that is available to plants. While some manufacturers claim that their organic

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Boardroom Briefs

- ◆ Barbara Mikel Reports that member response to the salary survey has been almost 100%. The results will be tabulated after the first of the year and published shortly thereafter.
- ◆ GCSANC President, Blake Swint introduced for consideration the adoption of the GCSAA affiliate logo to replace the current GCSANC logo. Support by the board was divided. After a brief discussion, a decision was reached to survey the membership and introduce the topic at the general meeting in January. Based upon membership feedback, the logo change may be placed on the April Ballot.
- ◆ George Steffes, the CGCSA lobbyist has been designated as a Special Advisor to the Board. In this capacity Mr. Steffes will receive all GCSANC mailings, including the monthly board packets.
- ◆ Bob Costa, CGCS supplied the board with a contract proposal from Greg Crawford, a Media Relations Consultant. Costa, who has been a strong proponent of hiring a Media Director noted that our current budget does not include funds for public relations. "In essence we have done nothing to promote superintendents in Northern California," Costa told the board. The board continues to support the idea in concept and asked the budget committee to determine if funds can be made available to support such a program.
- ◆ Blake Swint noted that the Annual Meeting is scheduled for Castlewood Country Club on April 6, 1998
- ◆ Bob Costa, CGCS, reported that arrangements for the Etonic/GCSAA sponsored seminar on January 15th have been finalized. The four hour seminar entitled, "Growing Your People Skills," will be held from 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m. at Silvercreek Valley Country Club. "The cost of the seminar is very reasonable. At \$30.00 it's quite a value," Costa told board members.
- ◆ The scholarship committee will begin screening applicants on December 19th, Chairman Wayne Lindelof, CGCS, reported. The committee includes, Tony Steers, Jeff Jones and Mike Ravel.
- ◆ Dr. Ali Harivandi provided the board with a research summary. Amongst the projects Dr. Harivandi is currently involved in are: a bentgrass varietal study at Crystal Springs Golf Course, and a hard fescue sod establishment study. Pending research activities include, a fine fescue trial, a perennial ryegrass trial and a perennial ryegrass/crabgrass competitiveness study.
- ◆ The budget committee, comprised of Dave Davies, CGCS, Gary Carls, CGCS, Bob Costa, CGCS and Barbara Mikel reported that after meeting for 2.5 hours, they had made significant progress on the 1998 fiscal budget. A second meeting was scheduled prior to the Christmas Party in early December.
- ◆ Plans continue to restructure the advertising program in the newsletter. Barbara Mikel and Bob Costa, CGCS, are currently working on a plan to increase advertising revenues in the hopes of making the newsletter more profitable. "The newsletter has operated at a significant loss for the last several years," cited Costa. "Our goal at some point would be to break even."
- ◆ State Representative Dave Davies, CGCS, requested that the board consider making a contribution to CGCSA sponsored poa annua research project being initiated in Southern California. The board approved an annual \$1,000 contribution for three years.

A Review of 1997 (Cont'd)

fertilizers increase microbial activity, turf scientists are still unclear about what an ideal microbial population is in the soil, and exactly what benefit this may have for the turf. While organic fertilizers are typically more expensive, they are generally a safe, non-burning source of nutrients for the turf. Just be sure you know why and when you are using these products and incorporate them as part of a well-rounded fertility program that is verified by annual soil testing.

Those are just some of the thoughts and observations from around the Southwest in 1997. Mike and I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and best wishes for a successful and productive 1998!

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