

# TURF MANAGEMENT

**Golf  
Course  
Superintendent Uses**



Turf records are vital tool in maintaining fairways, greens and tees. Dennison's clipboard (above left) is in steady use as a planning tool. (Above) He also spends much time in his office. As president of Allegheny Mountain Superintendents Assoc., he keeps up to date on the latest in the turfgrass industry.

**W**HEN it comes to jobs in the "Green Industry," few present such a diverse challenge as that of a golf course superintendent. Consider, for example, the experience of M. S. "Denny" Dennison, who moved into this slot last summer at the 4-year-old Pines Country Club in Morgantown, West Virginia, after 13 years as superintendent at another club.

In his first year at Pines, Denny faced a full measure of management problems, involving people, weather, budgets, equipment, supplies, and schedules . . . as well as the constant pressure of familiar turf diseases and the friendly supervision of a greens committee and more than 250 avid golfers.

Denny Dennison, of course, is only one of more than 10,000 superintendents who have the responsibility of maintaining U. S. golf courses in top condition through most or all of the year. Circumstances vary. It's unlikely that any two superintendents manage their

jobs the same way. Still a close look at Denny and his work at Pines show why a golf course superintendent must know not only a great deal about turf, but also a good deal about the role of a diplomat, detective, labor expert, financial planner, and maintenance or construction coordinator.

There are some unusual aspects to the Pines course. It has bluegrass fairways (and Pennncross creeping bentgrass tees and greens). It is built on top of an abandoned coal mine, and last summer, a 40-foot shaft suddenly and unexpectedly opened up on the 18th fairway. The club provides living quarters on the course for the superintendent. This is convenient, but it also adds some to the 24-hour-a-day aspect of a superintendent's job — nocturnal pilfering of flags, for instance, can be better controlled when all you have to do is step out of your door to see the action underway.

Correction of mine-shaft holes on

the fairway obviously involves more engineering — locust poles, a concrete cap, and seeding of new top soil took care of the 18th hole fairway problem in 1972. But bluegrass on a 6,592 yard course means some special turf maintenance headaches, including intruding annual bluegrass, incipient leafspot and overabundant seed heads. All in all, a man like Denny Dennison has found it useful to do a lot of looking and listening, as he has carried on with a disease control and turf protectant program already underway when he arrived at Pines Country Club.

West Virginia weather is variable. While year round the temperature on the Pines course in Morgantown is 2 to 4 degrees cooler than in Clarksburg, where Denny spent a number of years, the rain and humidity patterns are similar. These help to set the stage and the need for disease prevention in a typical season.

Leafspot, which thrives in cool,

## New Ideas To Upgrade Maintenance At Pine Country Club



Course maintenance includes regular equipment checks. Here, Dennison inspects sprayer for proper operation. His staff includes a full-time mechanic, but he makes a personal point of keeping equipment in top condition. He also welcomes company representatives to the course to review technical

aspects of products. (Above right) Craig Monroe of Du Pont (l) inspects a green with Dennison. Good management is the interaction of many individual programs all working in harmony.

damp conditions, has been the main turf problem on the Pines Course. To overcome it, Denny has continued periodic treatments with Tersan LSR. In 1972, his crew made five fairway applications at intervals of about three weeks. These repetitive treatments kept disease under control — and at a relatively modest cost in materials.

Dollarspot was more than a threat in 1972. It hit twice on several fairways and it came practically overnight! But Denny was ready and sprayed Tersan 1991 quickly, thereby containing the problem. The fairways came back.

Disease problems on greens and tees are being handled at Pines by regular applications of Tersan LSR in the spring, Tersan 1991 in the summer, and Tersan SP in the fall to stop snow mold. Denny Dennison believes in starting his spray program right after the first mowing. With bluegrass fairways, he expects

leafspot problems. Yet, by starting his program early and staying with it, he avoids disaster.

Management of the Pines' turf disease problems is paralleled by Denny's management of the rest of his job. Altogether, he operates on a maintenance budget which is about average for course maintenance at U.S. golf clubs, but the figure is up substantially over a decade ago as golfers have set higher standards for their courses.

Denny figures that 50 percent or more of his budget goes for labor, perhaps 15 to 20 percent for turf chemicals including fertilizer, fungicides, herbicides and insecticides; 10 percent for top soil, top dressing and seed, and the balance for miscellaneous items and supplies such as pilfered flags and poles.

Denny and his 9-man summer crew (he has 2 men year round) work with an impressive array of tractors, mowers, trucks and miscellaneous equipment, which represents

an investment of something well over \$50,000.

One of their most productive tools is their 100-gallon Hudson sprayer mounted on a turf truckster. With a 16-foot fixed boom, the sprayer applies 50 gallons per acre, and in just about three hours all the greens and tees on the course can be sprayed. It takes a full eight-hour day to cover the 40 acres of fairways with a turf protectant spray such as Tersan LSR or Tersan 1991.

People are another potential problem for the golf course superintendent. Denny has built his 9-man crew mostly through local recruiting. On an hourly basis his labor costs are nearly double what they were 10 years ago at another club. He tries to compensate for this increase by greater use of modern equipment, improved training of his men, and consideration for other possible solutions in the future — in-

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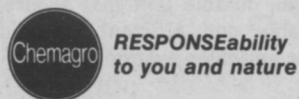


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## TURF MANAGEMENT

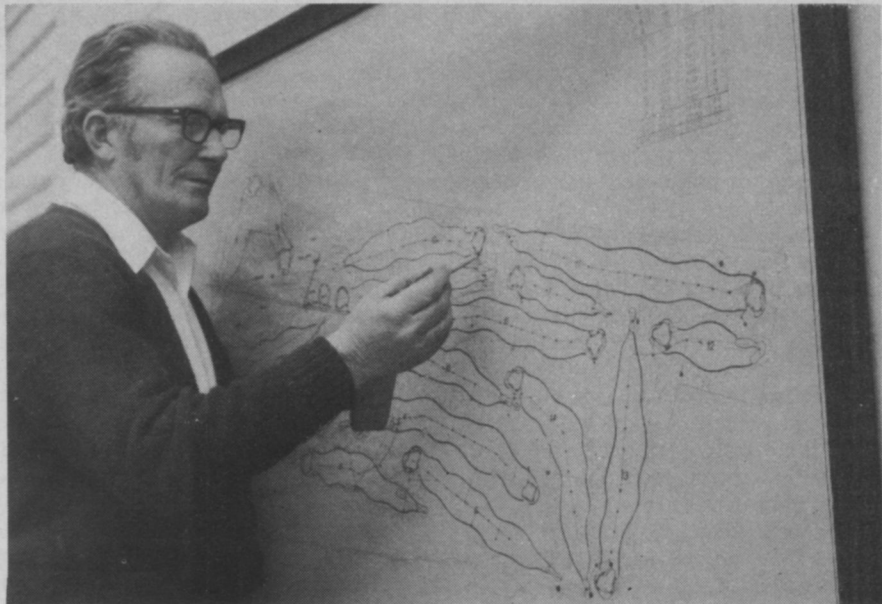
(from page 15)

cluding the hiring of women as members of his maintenance crew.

Work assignments are made on the basis of know-how, skill, and course needs. One man handles major mechanical maintenance, though all the men are expected to keep their tractors and mowers lubricated. One man has been trained in boom spraying, so he can apply fertilizer and turf protectants. One man mows fairways; another mows the roughs; and others handle maintenance in sand traps and bunkers, trees, and the watering.

The Pines Club has a semi-automatic sprinkler system and its use is conditioned in part by the weather, with water being started just before the wilt stage on the fairways. Greens and tees have pop-up sprinklers; heads must be attached for fairway sprinkling.

To keep things running smoothly, Denny spends part of every day walking the course and anticipating needed maintenance. A clipboard



Irrigation is an integral part of the operation at Pines Country Club. Dennison reviews the pipe layout on the master plan. Ample source and supply of water has been essential in establishing turf on this four year old course.

and a pencil prove useful for notes, as he makes his rounds. He schedules two of his crew for the night shift to handle fairway watering; but greens and tees are watered in the morning to help keep disease pressure down on these critical areas.

Looking ahead, Denny recognizes unfilled needs. He is starting a turf nursery to insure availability of turf in a crisis and to serve as a test area for new turf programs. For he recalls an incident at another course when over zealous representatives misapplied a fertilizer and burned up most of a green.

He is also working to increase his knowledge of turf and course maintenance. He attends four or five short courses each year to learn more about equipment or turf disease. He meets with technical representatives of chemical firms. And for years he has been active in the

Allegheny Mountain Superintendents Association and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. This year, in fact, he is serving as president of the Allegheny Mountain Association, that meets 10 times a year to review mutual problems and needs that relate to better turf and better golf.

Pines Country Club in Morgantown is one of many new courses to open in the past decade. With an investment of more than \$500,000 already and with an interest in improving club facilities in the future, the club needs the best kind of superintendent it can find. Denny has developed the experience and know-how useful in keeping turf disease under control. Managing turf programs has also yielded other dividends. And a man like Denny Dennison has the ability to put it all together. □



Dennison's son John adjusts a nozzle on this turf sprayer. He is a maintenance foreman at the club.



This is the maintenance shop. It adjoins Dennison's office and the supply storage area — all in one building.