

# 'I NEED A DRINK!'

Many superintendents  
could be uttering that phrase  
in the not-too-distant future.  
But it's not water they'll be drinking.

**W**ater continues to create problems in the golf course market, problems that could drive some superintendents to drink. But they won't be drinking water; that will be in too short a supply for a large portion of the country.

Some areas are facing the problem now. States on the eastern seaboard faced shortages this past summer, and New Jersey actually banned some water use. But the Southwest is where most of the trouble will hit.

Bob Randquist, superintendent at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa, Okla., says his course has a steady water supply. But, he adds, a number of other courses in the area could be without one soon. "Water is at a premium right now."

Like Randquist, Tom Athey does not face a problem at Fremont Country Club in Omaha, Neb. He is hooked into the municipal water system, where his water bills and supply have remained stable. But courses outside the area relying on their own wells or aquifers will soon be left high and dry.

Something, Randquist notes, must be done. He believes most clubs are

willing to spend the money to research alternative sources of water, such as effluent or recycled water. Nothing has yet been organized, though the industry has been discussing the problem for some time (see *WEEDS TREES & TURF*, Jan. 1986, p. 82).

Dennis Orsborn, a golf community developer, says water management programs will be a big part of the conservation effort in the future. His company, Sunrise of Palm Springs, has been installing computerized irrigation systems that use pumps with a variable frequency drive motor. The system is more efficient, providing the exact amount of water and pressure desired.

He says of the situation in the Southwest: "It's going to get worse, not better." Orsborn adds that parts of Arizona and Southern California are required to use effluent water.

Randquist notes there is potential for widespread use of effluent, though "we need a better understanding of its content."

Dick Herr, superintendent of Jupiter Hills Country Club in Jupiter, Fla., has been using recycled water for some time with no problems. But,

he says, his area has only a three- to four-year supply. For him, recycled water is only a stop-gap solution.

Randquist understands this problem and is calling for research to develop longer-term effluent supplies, as well as alternative sources. Some of these alternatives include hybrid turf grasses more resistant to drought conditions.

Jon Scott, golf and grounds director at Grand Traverse Resort in Michigan, expects some offerings soon—possibly a variety of bentgrass. He also notes that water management programs can take some of the heat out of the drought.

The problem is convincing golfers that the browner looking turf they're playing on is still of high quality, though maybe not as high as previously. "There could be a trade-off in quality," Scott admits.

However, research costs money.

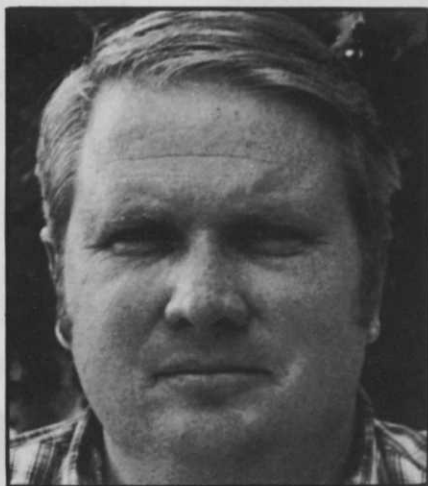
Randquist hopes that a superfund can be created by the GCSAA and the USGA. But he admits that the possibility of help other than advice from courses in the North (where often the problem is too much water) is unlikely. Until the North feels the thirst, he says, the rest of the country should experience only a trickle down effect.

### The black death

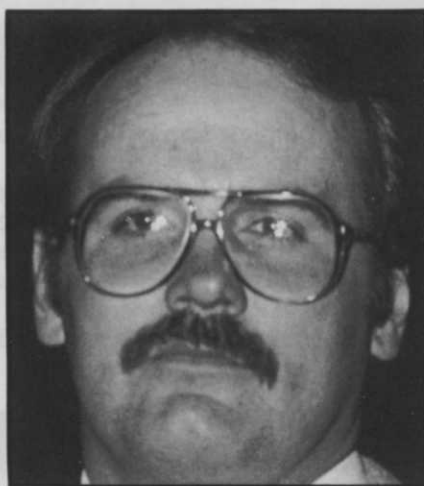
Ironically, this water shortage could save courses from another, potentially more serious problem: anaerobic black layer.

The common denominator in the problem, which is becoming more widespread nationally, is water—too much of it. Black layer has forced Scott to replace a number of greens at the Grand Traverse course.

No cure has yet been discovered. Some stop-gap solutions have been used to control and isolate (but not



Tom Harrison: spikeless shoes



Tom Athey: hooked on muny water



Bob Randquist: calling for research

## In 1986, what were your expected expenditures for:

Chemicals, supplies	% sample purchasing	Average per purchaser	Projection to WTT readership
Turfseed	82.3	\$2,590	\$20.3 million
Sod	31.6	2,010	6.1 million
Dry-applied turf fertilizer	86.1	8,480	69.6 million
Liquid applied turf fertilizer	46.8	1,490	6.7 million
Tree fertilizer	25.3	464	1.1 million
Soil Amendments	38.0	1,430	5.2 million
Adjuvant spreaders	30.4	368	1.1 million
Wetting agents	62.0	554	3.3 million
Pre-emergence herbicides	64.6	3,240	19.9 million
Post-emergence herbicides	69.6	1,770	11.7 million
Aquatic herbicides	39.2	526	2.0 million
Fungicides	83.5	6,850	54.6 million
Insecticides for turf	79.7	2,320	17.6 million
Insecticides for trees/ornamentals	32.9	612	1.9 million
Growth regulators	34.2	293	1.0 million
Equipment			
Golf cars/gas: # owned	49.4	26.1	123,000
expenditures	32.9	\$5,730	\$18.0 million
Golf cars/electric: # owned	45.6	31.1	135,000
expenditures	21.5	\$9,210	\$18.9 million
Utility/ATVs: # owned	78.5	4.3	32,000
expenditures	49.4	\$2,670	\$12.6 million
Sweepers: # owned	41.8	1.2	4,590
expenditures	17.7	\$334	\$201,000
Irrigation pumps: # owned	89.9	2.4	20,600
expenditures	46.8	\$1,990	\$8.9 million
Sprinklers: # owned	83.5	361	2.87 million
expenditures	57.0	\$1,940	\$10.6 million
Electronic irrigation controls: # owned	53.2	20.3	103,000
expenditures	27.8	\$1,790	\$4.74 million
Walk-behind mowers rotary: # owned	89.9	3.8	32,200
expenditures	54.4	\$336	\$1.74 million
Walk-behind mowers reel: # owned	58.2	4.3	23,300
expenditures	31.6	\$2,170	\$6.54 million
Riding mowers rotary: # owned	69.6	1.8	11,700
expenditures	34.2	\$2,870	\$9.34 million
Riding mowers reel: # owned	81.0	4.3	33,500
expenditures	51.9	\$5,890	\$29.1 million
Tractor drawn gangs: # owned	82.3	2.4	18,700
expenditures	39.2	\$2,840	\$10.6 million
Spreaders: # owned	89.9	2.6	22,400
expenditures	29.1	\$282	\$784,000
Soil aerifiers/corers: # owned	87.3	2.1	7,360
expenditures	46.8	\$1,140	\$5.1 million
Sprayers: # owned	88.6	1.8	15,600
expenditures	41.8	\$354	\$1.4 million
Line trimmers: # owned	73.4	2.8	19,300
expenditures	44.3	\$171	\$721,000
Chain saws: # owned	84.8	2.0	16,300
expenditures	43.0	\$215	\$881,000
Plant materials	59.5	\$2,070	\$11.8 million

## LANDSCAPE PROFILE

get rid of) patches of the layer, which has so far been limited to bentgrass greens. Weekly aerification and fertilizing, along with application of hydrogen sulfite, seem to somewhat contain small patches. But a cure is obviously needed before the problem becomes epidemic.

### Good and bad

Despite some problems, golf course use is still on the rise, with most private clubs having to put prospective members on a waiting list.

This has its downside. Increased traffic means more work for supers.

Spike marks on greens and tees have been a problem at some courses because of traffic. To aid the greens' recovery, Randquist has been aerifying the greens at Southern Hills more frequently.

Lower cut and slower growth have not helped the recovery process either. Tom Harrison of Maple Bluffs Country Club in Madison, Wis., has been trying to convince his members that a slightly

higher cut, slower green, would be beneficial to the course. Unfortunately, he says, golfers prefer faster greens.

Harrison hopes that the spikeless shoe market will pick up. He has been encouraging club members to purchase the less-damaging shoe, and says of the spiked variety, "I'll be tickled the day they're gone."

Jon Scott believes that many courses being built now and in the future will take on a more practical shape: adequate-sized greens, tees and fairways, but not excessive. "I see a more manageable course, less extravagant," he says. He adds, however, that there will always be a niche for the extravagant course.

Dennis Orsborn concurs. "Our heyday is over. We must become as well educated as we can, and keep up with changing technologies as best we can. This is a business, and we must treat it like a business."

### Points of interest

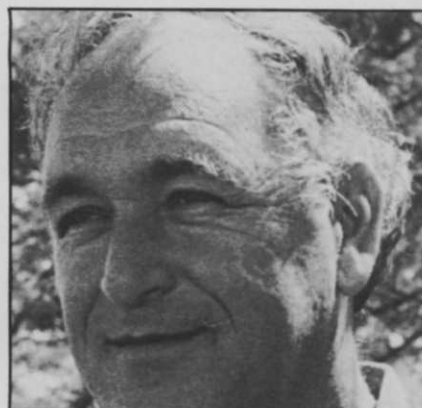
Increased traffic should also provide some good sales for equipment manufacturers, especially of aerifiers. Golf course managers who read *WEEDS TREES & TURF* reportedly spent more than \$5 million on them last year (see chart).

Golf courses also have provided 75 percent of all expenditures on

walk-behind reel mowers (\$6.5 million worth) and nearly 70 percent of riding reel mowers (\$29 million). Golf courses have provided about half of the industry's expenditures on tractor drawn gangs (more than \$10 million).

As always, fungicides occupied a good portion of golf course expenditures this year.

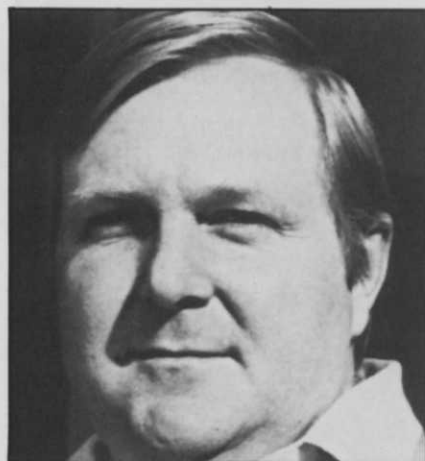
Superintendents who read *WEEDS TREES & TURF* spent around \$56.4 million on them in 1986. All other readers of *WT&T* spent \$25.2 million. Finally, supers laid out a good amount of cash for plant materials last year, nearly \$12 million worth overall. **WT&T**



Dick Herr: finds stop-gap solution



Dennis Osborne: our heyday is over



Jon Scott: less extravagant courses

## THE COMEBACK

Three years ago, cows grazed at Castlewoods Country Club in Jackson, Miss. Now the course is among the area's finest and improving quickly.

**T**hree years ago, Castlewoods Country Club resembled a cow pasture instead of a golf course. Today, it's the site of the Mississippi Golf Association four-ball state tournament.

Castlewoods, no longer ridiculed as Jackson's worst golf course, is much nearer the top of that list and continuing its climb. You can thank the new owners for deciding to put

up the money needed for nurturing a quality course.

And then there's Stanley Reedy, a soft-spoken, 26-year-old native Mississippian, who has served as superintendent since October, 1983.

He's the guy who took the beater course and shaped it into an effective advertising tool for the surrounding housing development.

No big deal, says Reedy with



## LANDSCAPE PROFILE

typical "aw shucks" modesty. But one senses Reedy is proud of what he's done.

"This place was a goat ranch," says Reedy. Castlewoods didn't really have a superintendent; just people who mowed periodically.

"The clubhouse was a little trailer. When I first interviewed for this job I told them 'no way.' I was coming from a lush place with a \$400,000 budget (Belle Terre Country Club, a Pete Dye course in Laplace, a New Orleans suburb). But they promised me they were going to do everything they've done," says Reedy. He's referring to Castlewoods Land Development owners Zack Hederman and Larry Edwards.

"Now I'd match this course against any course in the state," says Reedy. "My crew is doing a great job."

### Disaster zone

In 1983, Castlewoods wasn't a pretty place. "I would estimate the turf was 40 percent bermudagrass, 30 percent dirt, and 30 percent weeds," recalls Reedy. "There were open ditches in front of the greens and the sand traps weren't really sand," says Reedy. Drainage was poor and the traps were essentially mud. The No. 18 green was bald.

The club owned one tractor and two greensmowers, one halfway buried in mud. (Reedy and crew unearthed the Jacobsen tractor. It still runs today.)

"The first thing we did was buy equipment," remembers Reedy. Included was a JI Case backhoe, two Ford tractors, two 72-inch Toro mowers, two Toro greensmowers, a sprayer and a Chevy pick-up truck. They also bought a turf vacuum, blower, sand pro and two Cushman truckstors.

"The workers didn't even know how to calibrate a sprayer. I'm not knocking the guys—they did the best they could," says Reedy.

Next came the necessary job of upgrading and, in some cases, installing drainage systems. "We contracted out a bunch of it. Then we installed culverts and catch basins the first fall and winter," says Reedy.

In 1984, Reedy and his reliable crew paid particular attention to upgrading the club's poor fairways.



Castlewoods was once called Jackson's worst golf course. Today the course is in tournament condition.



The crew at Castlewoods built several greens and changed the contour of others. Hole #1 is an example of the successful renovation.



## LANDSCAPE PROFILE

Reedy row-sprigged Tifway 419 bermuda. The crew also rebuilt a few greens and changed the contour of others.

### A focal point

Among the vast changes, none is as dramatic as the picturesque lake that highlights the first hole. Reedy ordered it built immediately for aesthetic purposes.

Other smaller bodies of water have been extended, like the pond to the right of the green on the par 3, 172-yard seventh hole that is perhaps the course's visual highlight.

Reedy has taken an idea from Pete Dye and added some cross-tie work along the pond's bank. He's also added a number of bunkers, upgraded the Toro irrigation system, rebuilt the driving range and started

a tree-spading program.

### Room for improvement

Reedy readily admits he and his crew have more work ahead. Play has increased tremendously and traffic problems are apparent. Membership has grown by 200 percent in two years thanks to the improvements and resulting population boom in the adjacent Castlewoods development.

Surprisingly, despite the Jackson humidity, Reedy has few disease problems. He is experiencing a war against the pine bark beetle which has taken out a number of the course's pines.

He says the course will be in top condition for the State Amateur championship coming this summer, should Castlewoods be chosen. Right now, the course is in the top two.



Castlewoods' superintendent Stanley Reedy has wanted to work on a golf course since his teen years when friend Pat Sneed told Reedy how rewarding the job is. Reedy later married Sneed's sister, Dot. Sneed is superintendent at Tupelo (Miss.) CC.

That makes two of the top four state tournaments held at Castlewoods.

Come to think of it, Stan Reedy has a right to be proud.

## MAKING A LIVING

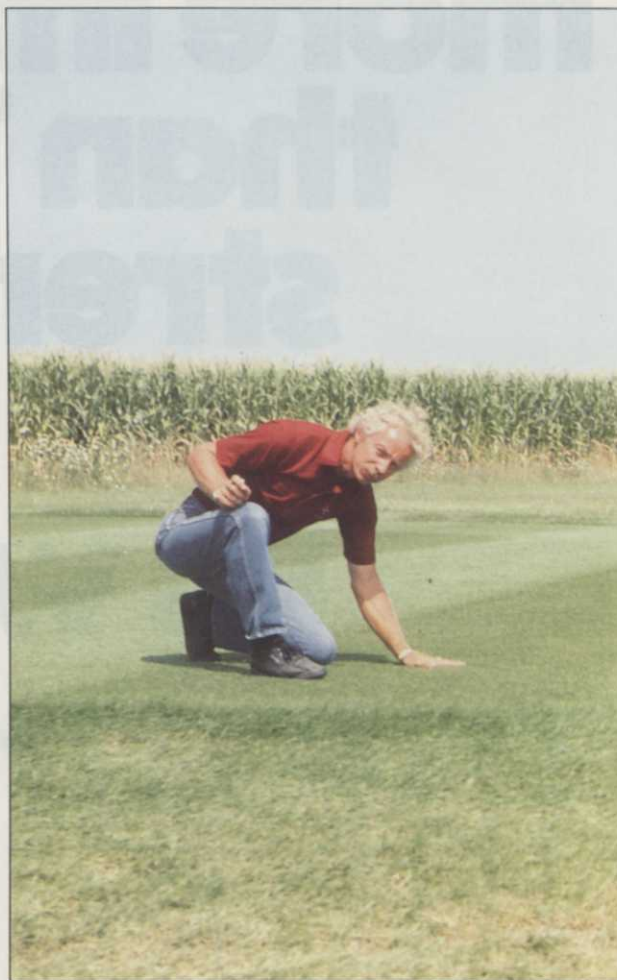
Owners of public golf courses, like Jay Scott of Tanglewood, depend on greens fees for a livelihood. They might make the best superintendents of all.

**J**ay Scott has invested a life in 18 golf holes.

And if you don't think that Tanglewood Golf Course isn't the most efficiently-run, best-manicured course around, you don't know what "investing a life" means.

Twenty years ago, Scott's father Ralph spurned the life of a

**Jay Scott checks a Tanglewood tee for overall quality, his number one consideration.**





## LANDSCAPE PROFILE

Delaware, Ohio, farmer and decided to build a golf course. Ralph is now retired. Son Jay, daughter-in-law Sue and son Bob run the course. It is their livelihood.

"It was Dad's idea," says Jay, a central Ohio twang in his voice. "It was his way of keeping the family together. Twenty-one years ago, we were farmers."

Farming didn't agree with Jay, for one. So Tanglewood opened with nine holes in 1967. Two years later, the second nine opened.

### What's pythium?

"We told Jack Kidwell to build us a course that makes money," Scott remembers. "Our schooling was strictly from experience. Turfwise, it was a phone call to Jack every day of the week."

"There was a time we didn't know what pythium was. For five years, learning turf was strictly question after question after question. Of course, there's no way you could do that today without a professional."

His family has prospered because Jay treats golf course superintendent-ing as a business.

Everything is costed out. "With the greens fees from the 280 people that go through here on a typical day, I can control weeds the whole year," he observes.

### Selling good turf

Tanglewood is 20 miles from Columbus, Jack Nicklaus and Muirfield. That means the competition to attract golfers is intense.

"I don't have a scenic course," Jay admits. "If I want golfers, I have to sell good turf. And there are no more excuses left for not having a beautiful course. We've got too many good products at our disposal."

Tanglewood greens are Penn-cross. Tees are half ryegrass, half bluegrass. Nine fairways are Merion bluegrass, the rest half rye, half blue. All are due to be completely renovated with Roundup non-selective herbicide during the next three years.

"This fall, we're going with 100 percent ryegrass," says Scott. "Prograss herbicide kills everything but rye, it will kill poa annua either pre-emergence or post-emergence,



Sue and Jay Scott relax for a moment amid Tanglewood's fleet of golf cars.



A 21-foot, nine-gang tractor mower races between trees.

and it will thin bluegrass so much that the rye will take over.

"I'm leaning more to the idea of 100 percent rye being a great salvation. The only problem is red thread, so you just have to plan on four applications of fungicide a year."

Tees and greens are in impeccable shape. "There's no way I can improve on them," Scott says. They are mowed at  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch and  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch, respectively.

Fairways, which are mowed at  $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch, however, need some

improvement. "I only give them half an inch of water a week. But, eventually, I'd like to have them up to the level of the tees and greens. And I'm not afraid to spend any amount of money to do it."

### Tricks of the trade

The course does not have an overabundance of trees. But none have been planted nearer than 21 feet from another. Why? "Because we use nine-gang, 21-foot mowers, and we can zip between them."

Tanglewood is one of the few



## LANDSCAPE PROFILE

grassy weeds."

Berry uses a preventive program to treat cutworms and grubs. He also stops problems from developing by paying close attention to soil nutrition.

Berry, a strong believer in the use of potassium, uses 2½ lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. once monthly of 0-0-50 sulfate of potash.

He also uses 3 oz. per 1,000 sq. ft. of soluble potash each time greens are sprayed. By keeping phosphorus low, he has eliminated poa annua.

### Cost considerations

"We figure fertilizer use at a price per acre," Berry says, "and we have found that on the turf we have developed on our 27 holes, the IBDU is less costly than most nitrogens."

Robert C. Klinester, golf course superintendent at the San Francisco Golf Club, Calif., agrees. "We have to watch all maintenance costs," he says, "because we operate with union personnel."

Wages are \$10.54 per hour for a crew of nine on the 18-hole course.

Klinester first used slow-

release nitrogen in 1984, because he wanted density and steady growth.

"I didn't want a flush of growth," he explains. "We don't have help on weekends; we mow Friday and we can't have high fairways by Sunday."

Klinester used two applications of Par Ex 24-4-12 on fairways and tees this past season.

"We applied the slow-release at the 1 lb. rate," he says. "We like the residual which produces good results on our very drouthy and very loamy sand."

He previously used urea and ammonium sulfate and had problems with rank growth.

Klinester had four years of golf course experience in Michigan before coming to the California club as superintendent in 1982.

His biggest problem on the course has been growth of English daisy. He has practically killed out this weed pest by using Banvel, which also helps control poa.

Because of this, and a soil nutrition program, fairways and tees

are beginning to develop acceptable turf stands.

Management for this area is year-round. The Golf Club has some 500 members, although only 120 are active golfers.

"We can irrigate at will because the sand readily absorbs the water. But with slow-release nitrogen sources, we have found that we don't need to water as heavily," Klinester says.

He verticuts tees once monthly; and double verticuts greens each week.

Greens are cut six days each week with a walking mower; fairways every two weeks in summer at 7/16-inch height or at 1/2-inch. "Crew members," he says, "do a better job of repairing ball marks and other surface injuries. Riding crew members do not stop as readily and make the needed repairs."

Both superintendents couple good cultural practices throughout with their soil nutrition program; problems are fewer and less likely to develop.

WT&T

## BENTGRASS SHOWCASE

Having a premium playing surface is a must at Stonehenge Golf Course in Tennessee, so bentgrass fairways were the obvious choice. Being on the Cumberland Plateau made it a little easier.

**K**ee the ball out of the rough at Stonehenge Golf Course in Fairfield Glade, Tenn., and a golfer can play bentgrass from tee to green. That's a rarity that far south.

Stonehenge is one of three 18-hole resort courses. The decision to establish bentgrass fairways is a result of a combination of elevation and a strong disease maintenance program.

"We were working to make this a showcase course, and this type of turf provides a premium playing surface," explains superintendent Harold Franklin. "We knew establishing and maintaining the bent would be difficult and



The Cumberland Plateau offers the opportunity to combine scenery with challenging golf holes.



## LANDSCAPE PROFILE

public courses using some higher-priced materials. Most can't afford them. But Scott's not afraid to spend money, if he knows there is a long-term payoff.

"I'm working with Elanco," he mentions. "I'm using Rubigan on greens with poa to see if we can slowly convert them to bentgrass without damaging their playability."

"I wouldn't last too long at a country club," he claims. "I couldn't put up with a greens committee long—doctors and lawyers telling me how to grow grass. I don't know a thing about medicine or law; how can they know anything about turf?"

The Scotts dream of the day when they can sell their farmland to a development company. They own 150

acres, which is worth about \$1650 per acre now. Each acre would be worth about \$75,000 (\$25,000 per one-third acre) if a housing development were to materialize.

But until then, they are happy to live off greens fees.

"It's fun to be in the business now," Jay admits. "It's very lucrative."

## SLOW RELEASE, FAST RELIEF

Slow-release nitrogen sources are perfect for golf course situations in both warm-season and cool-season areas of the country. La Paloma and the San Francisco Golf Club are examples.

**K**ent Berry has a thing for Jack Nicklaus-designed courses. He spent seven years at Muirfield in Ohio before becoming head golf course superintendent at La Paloma Country Club, a new Nicklaus course.

La Paloma is a 27-hole facility, serving a resort of private homes and public hotel facilities. It was built literally on top of the desert floor.

Errant balls land in the desert. The newly sodded or seeded greens, tees, fairways and roughs are an oasis in the desert. Few golf courses match its beauty.

Berry joined La Paloma as superintendent just two years ago when construction began. The first 18 holes opened for play in November, 1984; the last nine holes last August.

"We irrigate daily," he says, "and find that this, along with close mowing speeds the activity of any plant food applications."

Berry says that by doing this, he sees response of a slow-release nitrogen in one week, compared with the usual four weeks in other geographic areas.

Since he waters every night with effluent, he uses IBDU (Estech's Par Ex brand), which depends on water for its release to the soil.

"We like the slow-release," Berry

says, "and we don't develop any thatch or burn. We feed greens every four weeks and keep them cut at  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch. This gives us good control of clippings and no growth surges. We even feed in cold weather since this nitrogen can handle our temperature



Robert C. Klinesteker, superintendent at San Francisco Golf Club, uses a careful soil nutrition program coupled with herbicides to reduce English daisy and build strong fairway turf.

extremes (110 to the 30s)."

Some fertilizers, he explains, require lots of mowing. The IBDU does not. Yet, in less than two years, new greens have developed 6- to 8-inch root systems.

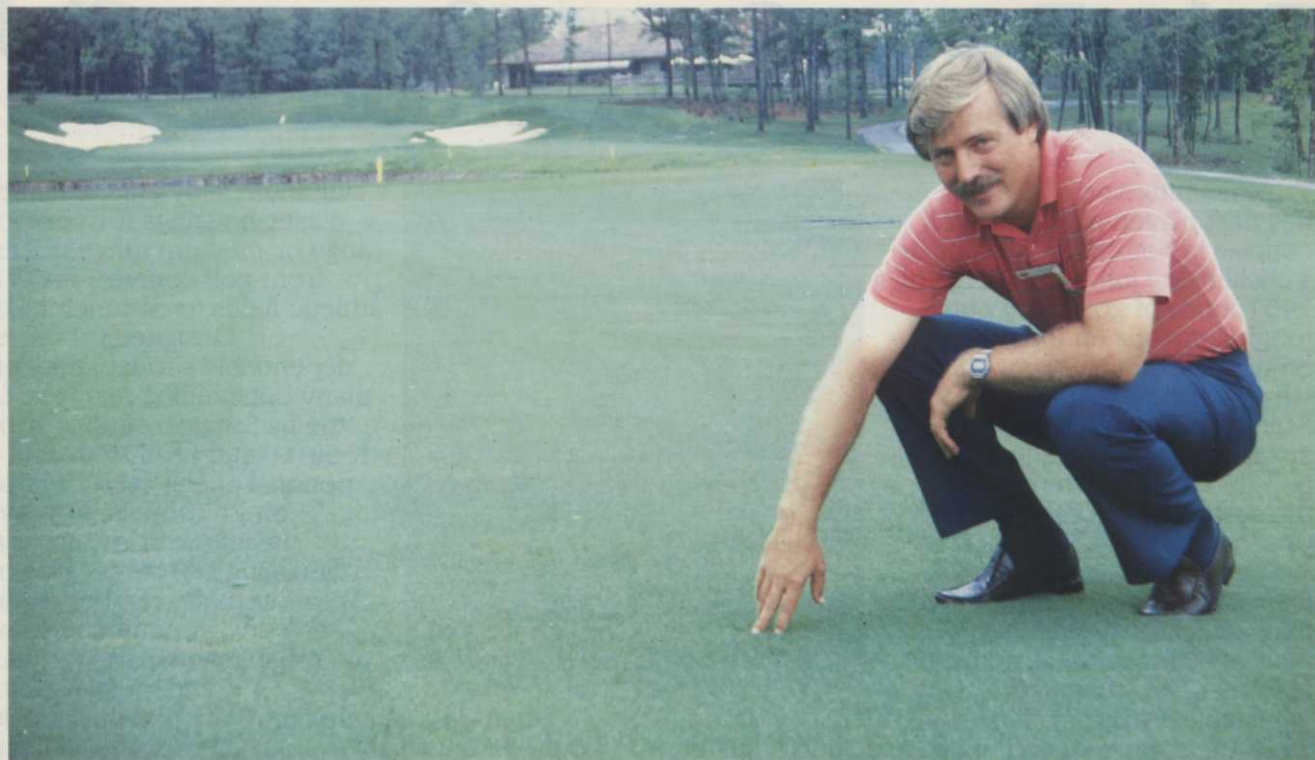
He verticuts fairways every month and overseeds with ryegrass each season. Fairways are maintained at  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch and the rough at  $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch. He verticuts greens every two weeks. Greens get  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. at each feeding during the summer and 1 lb. in the remainder of the season. Fairways are treated about every two months.

"We have a strong turf," Berry says, "and few weeds. We use very little pre-emergents. At times we will spot spray a few broadleaf and grassy weeds."



Kent Berry, superintendent at La Paloma, manages 27 holes laid on top of the desert floor. All turf has been newly sodded or seeded during the past two years.





**Superintendent Harold Franklin says that bentgrass fairways improve the playability and "showcase" image of Stonehenge.**

expensive, but we place a high value on the premium playing surface."

Stonehenge could use bentgrass because of the course's elevation. "The heat in the South normally makes maintenance of bentgrass fairways extremely difficult," Franklin says. "But we're located on the Cumberland Plateau, with an average elevation of 2,000 feet. Our temperatures don't get quite as hot during the day, and it cools into the high 60s most nights. The cool temperatures give the grass relief and a chance to recover."

Even with the advantages of a high elevation, the heat and humidity promote disease development. From June through mid-September, Franklin uses a monthly preventative fungicide program on the fairways, with tees and greens treated every three weeks.

### **Battling brown patch**

Brown patch is his biggest disease problem during summer, and dollar spot, red thread and snow mold are additional threats at various times of the year.

"We use Chipco fungicide in the preventative program, alternating every third application with Bayleton or 2787," Franklin says. "We also have to go in at times between the monthly sprays under high disease pressure situations to hold brown patch in check."

Franklin supplements his preventative spray program by

culturally managing fertility to reduce disease pressure. He applies potassium nitrate in mid-May and again in mid-September, to build the potassium levels for drought and disease resistance.

"During the summer months, we don't fertilize the bentgrass because we don't want to promote rapid growth during the disease-prone period," Franklin relates. "High levels of nitrogen just prior to the onset of hot, humid weather increases the severity of the disease, so we try to hold off and keep the bent on the 'lean' side."

Franklin concentrates on keeping the bluegrass rough as weed-free as possible to control potential weed contamination in the bentgrass. He uses Presan liquid as a pre-emergent spray on tees and greens, and the same product in a dry form, blended with 19-4-9 fertilizer, on the fairways. In the bluegrass rough, he uses the 19-4-9 mixed with Chipco Ronstar G for annual grass control.

### **Going hog wild**

Franklin uses a thorough insecticide program to maintain the fairways. Sod webworm and black cutworm are two of the major insect pests.

Compounding the normal grub problems are uninvited guests—wild hogs—which can cause some unusual turf damage to the rural, wooded course.

"If we don't keep the grubs under control, wild hogs can come onto the course and start rooting for them,"

Franklin says. "This gives us an additional incentive to keeping our grub problems under control."

Before the bentgrass could be established at Stonehenge, Franklin and his staff had to contend with a rock problem on the course. Rock had to be blasted out in places to allow for installation of the Toro irrigation system, which also contributed to difficulty in maintaining a proper ground for the system's safety during storms. Rock just beneath the soil surface had to be removed, fill brought in, and then additional topsoil applied to prepare an adequate seedbed.

"We hydroseeded the entire course and the bentgrass established itself very well," Franklin says. "The grass was all ready for play by June, but we had to pave cart paths and get the bunkers ready in order to open."

All the work and maintenance necessary to care for bentgrass fairways pays off for the players, especially since it can be mowed closely. Stonehenge hosted the 1985 Tennessee Open in only its second year of existence.

"It's obvious that you want the course to look and play well, but you want the players to feel good about the course after they've left," Franklin summarizes. "We want them to appreciate the condition and playability of the course, and I think the appearance and playability of bentgrass fairways helps them to do so."

**WT&T**





At Druid Ridge, vice president of operations Bob Larson uses a combination of Roundup and Surflan for areas around headstones at the Baltimore, Md., cemetery.

## AN OUTDOOR ART MUSEUM

Rich in tradition, Druid Ridge cemetery in Baltimore is a unique 230 acres. Its unique head landscaper could be the reason.

by Heide Aungst

**A**s if he were sitting around a campfire, Bob Larson recited his favorite ghost story.

"They call her Black Aggie...It's said people have died of fright in her arms..."

Larson continues, telling of fraternity dares to sit in Black Aggie's arms through an entire night. "She was beautiful," he remembers, as if he's lost a close friend.

He drives by the site where she once rested. An empty stone

remains, the family name "Agnus" engraved in the rock.

Black Aggie, a priceless black granite statue, is now in the Smithsonian Institute.

A visit to Druid Ridge Cemetery in Baltimore is like a visit to an art museum. Some of the statues marking graves date back to when the cemetery was built in 1896. So do some of the trees.

Larson, vice president of operations, points to a beautiful blue

atlas cedar at the entrance. The tree is nearing the century mark.

Nearby is a beautiful large purple leaf beech. The Japanese and maraschino cherry trees are beautiful in the spring, he says.

Larson's 230 acres are as much an artwork as the granite statues his crew mows around. Druid Ridge won the PGMS Grand Award six years ago.

### A home for wild ducks

A seven-acre lake, maintained with copper sulfate, gives visitors to Druid Ridge the sense of being in a park. In fact, Larson says, people visit regularly just to feed the wild ducks, which sometimes number close to 175.

But maintaining a cemetery is different from maintaining a park.

Ghost story over, Larson dismisses the myths of what it's like to work in a cemetery. "They're headstones, not tombstones," he says. "This is a





**Druid Ridge, built in 1896, features a slew of trees close to 100 years old.**

cemetery, not a graveyard."

He confesses he was hesitant to take the job.

But in 1978, the cemetery's executive vice president asked Larson's brother, Mike, if he knew someone who could maintain a cemetery the way Mike maintains a golf course (he's superintendent at Rockville Golf Club).

Mike suggested they contact Bob, who wasn't very happy as assistant landscape manager at Johns Hopkins University. As identical twins, the brothers have a lot in common—including maintaining turf.

Larson never regrets leaving Johns Hopkins. "You don't have a bunch of drunken kids at night tearing up things," he says.

He's also glad he's steered clear of golf courses. "I'm not married to my job," he explains.

### **Balance means happiness**

Larson and his wife have four boys ages one to 16. His family gets all his attention when he's home. His job gets 100 percent when he's there. Balance is the key to a happy life, he says.

He also has to juggle working at two cemeteries. In addition to Druid Ridge, Larson oversees 430 acres at Loudon Park, a cemetery built in 1853.

He employs 13 full-time people and five part-time at Druid Ridge, and 25 full-time, 14 part-time at Loudon Park.

He divides his time about equally between the two sites, although Loudon Park tends to have more burials.

Digging holes for the caskets is the part of the job Larson likes least. "We're like utilities, you have to dig in all types of weather," he says.

With Baltimore in the heart of the transition zone, Druid Ridge has both warm- and cool-season grasses. Larson describes it as "Heinz 57."

Although some plots might be zoysiagrass or bermudagrass, the majority is Rebel tall fescue.

The head and foot-stones are lined up in aisles, making mowing easier. A small tractor always follows behind a large one to get missed areas.

That process saves time and labor. The crew mows at least once a week.

Larson uses only Ford tractors and backhoes because of their reliability. He estimates he has 20 tractors between the two cemeteries.

While other cemetery landscape supervisors squirm at the use of upright headstones, Larson says he prefers them. "Those flat stones freeze and thaw. They heave and move up and down," he says.

### **The proud inventor**

Larson doesn't need tricks to trim around headstones. He uses a mixture of Roundup and Surflan, around July 1 each year, to kill the turf. Roundup initially kills the vegetation and Surflan provides the residual control.

"I think of myself as the inventor of that," Larson says proudly. "I started doing that eight years ago, before it was labeled to be used together."

Larson claims he doesn't do too many things out of the ordinary. With a budget close to \$2 million, he's free to do just about anything.

Larson calls his operation a "self-contained entity." Loudon Park features a greenhouse where he grows all the perennials used in the gardens around the mausoleums at both cemeteries. The crew also does its own paving and construction work.

Only about three acres of Druid Ridge are irrigated. Larson doesn't do any special watering on the burial areas.

He fertilizes only once a year, usually in late September, with slow release nitrogen at 1½ pounds per 1,000 sq. ft.

Larson has experimented with Monsanto's new turf growth regulator, Limit. "It's the most promising one I've seen," he says. "It works. But I think people are expecting too much out of the PGRs. Areas still have to be maintained."

Some cemetery landscape managers use turf growth regulators around headstones to slow turf growth. Larson has used Limit on entire plots and has cut mowing in half during the six-week period it's active.

### **Still a 'long way to go'**

The use of PGRs or the Roundup-Surflan mixture to kill turf around stones are fairly modern methods of cemetery maintenance. But Larson feels the industry still has a long way to go.

"Cemetery maintenance people are not an organized group and they need to be," Larson says. "About 95 percent of them are behind the times."

He blames the cemeteries for not going after good, well-trained people. He also criticizes landscape managers who don't keep up on the latest developments in the industry.

The reluctance of others to get into the industry does have its advantages for cemetery landscape managers. "You can just about name your price," Larson says. He has, after all, just bought his wife her first Mercedes.

But it's not the money that keeps Larson happy with his job. It's an overall sense of peace and contentment with life.

"If you're Christian, this is where life begins," Larson says, shrugging off any suggestion of a deeper meaning behind that statement. "I'm just your average run-of-the-mill Catholic."

Beyond religion, is the history lesson. "You're maintaining areas where people who helped form a country are buried," he explains.

Confederate soldiers who defended Fort McHenry and writer H.L. Mencken are buried at Loudon Park.

Someday, Larson hopes to be buried in the cemetery he kept beautiful for so many years.

"Yeah," he smiles, "I want to be buried on the highest spot and my epitaph will say, 'I'm watching what's going on.'" **WT&T**