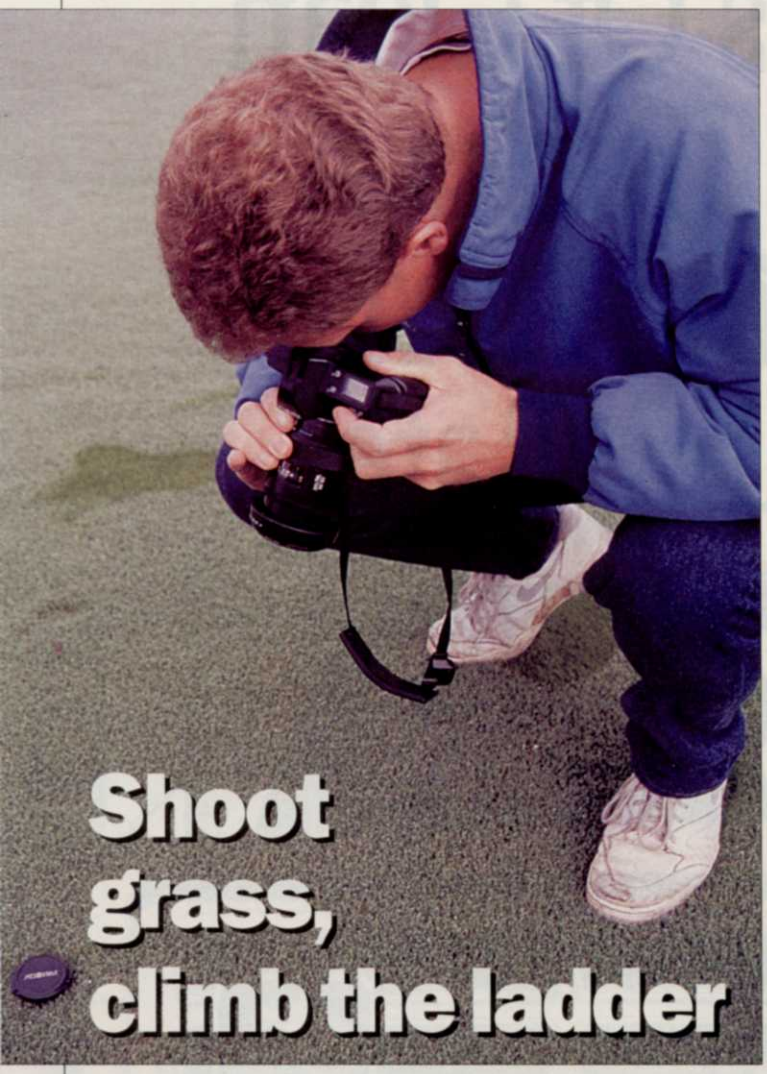

Shoot grass, climb the ladder

Pictures are a good way to document your progress on a new project, or to help you climb the career ladder.

by A. Douglas Brede, Ph.D.
Jacklin Seed Co.

■ In the turf business, anyone who makes it up the career ladder realizes that to get ahead you have to sell yourself and your accomplishments. One of the most persuasive ways to document your accomplishments is through photography.

Pictures don't lie. A good set of photographs of the sod you've laid, the tees you've designed, the flower beds you've constructed, or the clean shop you manage will go a long way in promoting you and your career.

Equip yourself—Obtaining necessary photography gear is easy. An outlay of a few hundred dollars will get you a suitable camera and accessories. Here are the basics of what you'll need:

- A 35mm SLR (single-lens reflex) camera, with both an auto and manual mode. (You won't need one of those elaborate cameras with all the bells and whistles.)
- A carrying case (if your camera doesn't come with one).
- Film and an extra battery.

◀ **Close-up photography is necessary to properly chart turf disease.**

After you've been photographing a while, you might want to invest in the following extras:

- A small tripod.
- A polarization filter.
- A 28-70mm zoom lens.
- A gray card.
- A flash attachment.
- A set of screw-on, close-up lens rings.

Learning how—I think the best way to learn to take photos is to actually take photos. Plan on using (wasting) about five rolls of film on mistakes before you shoot your first "must take" photo. After each roll, get the pictures developed before you begin the next. This will be a powerful aid to correcting errors.

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Doug's rules of thumb

What to photograph:

1. All new projects, before, during and after completion.
2. New plantings as they're being made.
3. New plantings as the grass is coming up.
4. Nice overall turf shots (remember to take "pretty" shots, not just pictures of diseases and repairs).
5. Variety and product trials at field days.
6. Disease and insect problems.

Taking good photos:

1. When loading film, take two and only two shots with the back open; verify that the film is winding before closing the camera back.
2. Always get closer to your subject than you think you should; it should fill the viewfinder.
3. Squint your eyes before you take a photo; if you can't discern what you're about to photograph, it won't show up on the film.
4. Over-expose green turf shots by 1/2 f-stop.
5. Over-expose photos of a bare area or new planting (where there's a lot of light soil in the photo) by 1 to 1-1/2 f-stops.
6. A polarization filter helps bring out the green color in a turf photo.
7. To photograph a large area and have it all in focus, set the f-stop as high as possible.
8. When photographing individual plants on bare soil, put the nose of the camera within three inches of the plant, take an extra exposure reading and lock the reading into the camera, then back up and shoot. A gray card (cheap and available at photo stores) can also be used for setting exposure.
9. Check that the rewind handle tightens up as you turn it, indicating the film is properly hitched.
10. If the camera seizes up after shooting the last photo on a roll, retake it on a fresh roll.
11. Photos can be taken with the camera held either horizontally or turned vertically. Bear in mind that vertical shots do not fit on the screen in most slide presentations.
12. Keep a cheap second camera around for "must have" shots; take photos with two cameras during important events.

—D.B.

Shooting *from page 22*

Keep a log of when, where and how each of your pictures was taken. This will give you a guide as to where your mistakes are occurring.

Most photo store owners can give you pointers on how to improve your photos—it seems they live to give advice.

Unfortunately, an automatic camera doesn't do everything automatically.

The plague of under-exposed (too dark) photos haunts many beginners. Naturally, when it says the camera has automatic exposure, we assume it knows what it's doing. Wrong assumption.

The electronic eye in automatic cameras takes a reading on the overall brightness of a scene to determine the best exposure. If you have a lake or a sand bunker in the picture, your photo will invariably turn out too dark.

Why? The extra light from the bright sand tricks the camera into thinking it's photographing a much brighter scene than it really is.

This problem can be overcome by thinking about the shot you're taking. If the picture contains something particularly bright, set the camera's manual override to purposely over-expose the picture by one f-stop.

Blurred pictures can be caused by improper focus settings. But more often they stem from moving the camera as you snap the shutter. Never take a hand-held photo at a camera speed slower than 1/125th of a second. With practice, you might be able to take pictures at 1/60th or even 1/30th of a second, but most beginners should stay above 1/125th.

Shadows and colors—The camera captures images in two dimensions. It can't discern a dip, which is a third dimensional feature. So how do you shoot the scene so the dip will show up?

The trick is using shadows. Take the picture just after sunrise when the sun is low in the sky. That will cast a shadow along the dip and make it look quite pronounced on film.

Remember, too, that film is tremendously sensitive to a wide spectrum of colors. Unfortunately, film is not particularly sensitive to varying shades of green. To capture patterns of green hues in a picture, you have to get a bit creative. Try waiting until there's dew or frost on the grass; sometimes different grasses present distinctive dew patterns. You might also try different sun angles at different times of the day.

Most important, never take only one shot of something important. Film is cheap. But make sure you vary the camera setting each time.

—The author is research director for Jacklin Seed Co. He maintains a working collection of about 10,000 turf slides.

Optimizing turf health for football season

by Ken Mrock

■ You've got to be in great shape to stand up to a bear; in excellent shape to stand up to a team of them—especially when those Bears wear football uniforms and play for Chicago. So establishing and maintaining turf fields healthy enough to take all that punishment is a year-long task.

These are the procedures I follow to establish and maintain safe, playable turf. Working closely with me is John Berta, assistant groundskeeper at Halas Hall, the Bears' practice facility on the Lake Forest campus.

Spring—We start our spring program by pre-germinating a 50/50 mix of bluegrass and perennial ryegrass seed in 55-gallon drums. After drying, to make application easier, the seed is added to a small amount of our topdressing mix (calcified clay, shredded peat, sand and native soil).

As early in the spring as possible, we completely core aerify our fields in two directions with either a Ryan Reno-vaire or a Ryan G-A-30. This aeration relieves compaction and produces a suitable seed bed for our pre-germinated seed mix.

We allow the cores to dry, then break them up with a woven steel drag mat to provide topdressing across the field. The best topdressing is the existing soil structure. Since we have virtually no thatch on our fields, debris removal is unnecessary.

After the initial dragging, we broadcast the pre-germinated seed/topdressing mix into the sparse areas.

Next we use the slit-seeder and sow an ungerminated 50/50 bluegrass/ryegrass mix in two directions, forming a diagonal (diamond) pattern across the field.

Then we apply a starter fertilizer high in nitrogen and phosphorus (19-26-5). The nitrogen stimulates the existing turfgrass and the high phosphorus promotes seed development.

Next, we apply a granular pythium control to safeguard against seed pythium disease (damping off) and give the seed a better chance for establishment.

We then spot topdress, lightly covering those areas that have been desiccated over the winter. We cover the fields with Evergreen sports turf covers to speed seed

Ken Mrock, right, and John Berta use an Evergreen sports turf cover for faster seed germination. *Photo by Dean Pope*