

Calif. superintendent breaks away from 'rescue chemistry'

'Feed the soil' are the words they live by at Lake Wildwood Country Club.

■ The maintenance crew at Lake Wildwood Country Club, in Penn Valley, Calif., has successfully incorporated a nutritional program into the daily turf care program.

At the center of the program is the belief that soil nutrition is the most essential factor to disease control.

The program at Wildwood is currently led by Mark H. Bunte, who earlier in his green industry career earned a degree in ornamental horticulture from Cal Poly State University/San Luis Obispo, and who also has experience in landscape construction.

But Bunte is quick to credit former superintendent, Dave Wilber—now with Brookside Labs—with laying the groundwork three years ago.

According to Bunte, Wilber believed—based on supporting research—that microbial activity in the soil was the key to healthy, disease resistant turf.

"Before," recalls Bunte, "all applications were synthetic, and fungicides were used in antici-

tion of disease problems."

Three years ago, Wildwood's greens and fairways suffered from poor heat and wear tolerance, shallow rooting, poor water infiltration and *Poa annua* encroachment. The belief was that the heavy use of fungicides on the greens were having a negative effect on microbial populations.

Competent soils analysis discovered that there were severe nutrient imbalances throughout the course.

A custom blend of 5-26-25 was needed for tees and fairways. Greens were treated with Scotts' starter fertilizer and Bests' 0-0-50.

Calcium levels were, as Bunte recalls, at a "critically low" level.

"We hired one of those lime trucks that spreads material in the rice fields



Lake Wildwood superintendent, Mark Bunte, uses a refractometer to measure sugar levels in leaf tissue.

"We decided on a fertilizer based on what was needed, not on what was available."

to do the job," says Bunte. The truck spread 100 tons of sugar beet lime
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Sugar beet lime is applied to fairways and roughs at a rate of one-and-a-half tons per acre.

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