

Grab Bag

Nicklaus: common golf ball would help designers

With the really big hitters on the professional golf tour like John Daly and Tiger Woods, some of the longer holes don't play so long anymore. Golfer Jack Nicklaus again suggested that the pros be required to use a standardized golf ball that doesn't travel as far. He said the big hitters are causing designers to design

ever longer courses and more and more tee boxes. This isn't necessarily good for club or recreational golfers, said Nicklaus, wearing the plaid jacket of the American Society of Golf Course Architects at the GCSAA Conference in February.



Ever-green grass?

Sometimes, new discoveries turn up in nature itself. Scientists at the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research at Aberystwyth, Wales, report in "New Scientist" magazine that they had found the key to keeping grass green.

Seems they found a strain of meadow fescue grass that stayed green when surrounding grass turned yellow from drought. They discovered that the green grass was a natural mutant which lacks the enzyme that breaks down chlorophyll. Plant breeders at the institute have been able to transfer the characteristic to other grasses.

The scientists believe it could help reduce costs for maintaining golf courses, parks and sports fields, and perhaps even help farmers produce higher protein forage for livestock.



'They're decoys, ma'am'

When Tom Sprague, grounds superintendent, put the goose decoys into the pond here at Advanstar Communications headquarters this past fall, he didn't expect some of the phone calls he's been getting.

You see, the necks of the decoys have been twisted so that the decoys look like dead Canada geese. The idea is to scare away the real Canada geese that make a mess here at the Landscape Management offices just southwest of Cleveland.

Tom says the decoys worked pretty good this past fall and winter, but the pond froze early and he couldn't retrieve them. By mid winter six people had telephoned Tom to complain about the "dead" geese in the pond. As spring approached, the number of calls grew.

"Usually it's a mother who has driven by with their little son or daughter, and the kid got upset," says Tom. "I explain to them that they're really only decoys, and they're there to keep the real geese away."

Plant any *Gunnera tinctoria*, lately?

The *New York Times* reports a growing interest in 'weird and exotic' plants in home gardens. Horticulturists from Chicago, Denver, North Carolina, Massachusetts, and elsewhere are visiting China, Siberia and other far-flung locales to bring back exotic ferns, salvia, oaks, ice plants, fuchsias and other plants, all suited to particular American climates.

"Weird is in," says garden writer/photographer, Ken Druse.

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