

USGA programs keep up with the times



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USGA Green Section

In 1962 the USGA Green Section employed seven agronomists who made about 800 visits to golf courses. Today, the service has 16 agronomists located in 12 regional offices. Collectively, they make consultations to more than 1700 golf courses each year. Each visit is followed by a written report to the club or course, detailing the agronomist's findings and recommendations.

The Construction Education Program, to educate and provide information to golf course architects, builders and developers, superintendents and others about course construction issues, helps to ensure the best long-term results from course construction and renovation dollars.

The Green Section's *Specifications for a Method of Putting Green Construction* was barely two years old in 1962, and was far from the accepted norm for green construction at the time. Nevertheless, 35 years of experience have shown that, when built and maintained properly, USGA greens have provided excellent results over a period of many years for golf courses in most regions of the United States and the world. Revisions were published in 1974 and 1989, and since 1990 several steps have improved the recommendations.

The USGA supports the largest, private, non-commercial turfgrass program in the world. In 1982 the USGA made a commitment to increase significantly its support of research to address issues that threatened to limit the growth and enjoyment of the game. Today, the USGA provides more than \$1.3 million annually in support of turfgrass and environmental research.

In 1991 the USGA began a 3-year, \$3.2 million study of golf courses and the environment. Among its objectives were to investigate what

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happens to pesticides and fertilizers applied to golf course turf; develop alternative (non-chemical) methods of controlling various diseases, insects and weeds; and determine the impacts and benefits of golf courses on people, wildlife and the environment.

A 3-year, \$1.5 million environmental study was started in 1995. The new studies stress:

- ▶ developing Best Management Practices (BMPs) to help golf course personnel minimize their impact on the environment,
- ▶ alternative pest control methods,
- ▶ pesticide fate studies where the initial work indicated a need, and,
- ▶ building a database to lead to the development of a good computer model that can accurately predict what happens to pesticides and fertilizers when applied to golf courses.

From 1983 to 1997 the USGA funded more than 100 turfgrass and environmental research projects at 37 different universities and institutions, at a cost to the USGA of nearly \$16 million. A success story of the 1990s is the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for golf courses. Sponsored by the USGA and administered by Audubon International, the program promotes environmentally sound land management and the conservation of natural resources on golf courses.

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