

Turf sod use increasing for golf courses

The percentage of all turfgrass sod purchases related to golf course development and renovation has nearly doubled in the last decade, according to a survey by Turfgrass Producers International (TPI), the international trade association of turfgrass sod farmers. In 1988, golf facilities accounted for 4.7 percent of all sod purchases. The percentage has grown to 8.1 by 1997.

"Turfgrass is being used in many more new course developments," says Doug Fender, executive director of TPI. "No longer just a remedy for poor construction or grow-in problems, sod has distinct environmental and aesthetic advantages over seed. But it is economics that truly drives the shift to all-sod use."

Installing sod creates an immediate maturity for a course and decreases grow-in and management costs as well as eliminating the need to rework washed out areas that traditionally amount to 20 to 30 percent of a seeded course.

In addition to speeding up construction, sod offers an aesthetic that can be a valuable marketing factor in promoting a golf course or home sales in a planned community.

"Sod's a perfect complement to the highly contoured golf course designs of today," says Fender. "Even fairways are getting solid sod because of sod's ability to control erosion."

In addition, Fender points out that industry innovations such as over-sized turfgrass rolls, washed sod and soilless sod are also driving turfgrass sod's appeal for use on every type of golf course.

New courses a source of inspiration

The introduction of a new golf course into a market does more than simply provide additional holes for play, claims Gordon Witteveen, a golf course superintendent at Toronto's Board of Trade Golf Club.

"There is no doubt that a new course with interesting design features forces all the courses already in that market to 'pull up their socks,'" Witteveen told over 60 members of the ASGCA at their annual meeting in Toronto, Ontario.

Witteveen pointed to Devil's Paintbrush in Caledon, Ontario, opened in 1993, where the use of sod bunkers triggered innovative thinking in many other Toronto area courses, including his own Board of Trade Golf Club. Working with ASGCA Past President Arthur Hills, the Board of Trade GC developed a master plan for renovation.

Alice Dye, president of the ASGCA, recommends that golf course owners and developers should give careful thought to their plans for both existing and future facilities.

"One of the best ways to stay competitive is to develop and implement a comprehensive master plan," she advises.

BIGGA members a hit at Birkdale

Members of the maintenance team at Royal Birkdale were in fine form during the playing of the 1998 British Open, as reported in the latest issue of *Greenkeeper International*.

"That there was not a blade of grass out of place was testimony to the course preparation," writes the publication, based in York, UK.

A 10-man team led by Chris Whittle and a group of volunteer superintendents were hard at work during the Open, and had very little time to rest.

The British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association held a competition for the fourth consecutive year to estimate how many bunkers the BIGGA Support Team would rake during the four-day tournament.

Overall, bunkers were raked a total of 1,140 times.

The BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team has provided support to the resident greenkeeping team at every Open Championship since St. Andrews in 1984, reports *Greenkeeper*.

The 1998 team was comprised of greenkeepers from seven courses from far and wide across the continent.

ASGCA website helps developers and others with design issues

The ASGCA has designed its website, www.golfdesign.org, to assist those involved in golf course development. A comprehensive resource, developers, members of greens committees, permitting boards, governmental bodies and golfers, will find the site to be of value.

Visitors will find advice on everything from getting started developing a new golf course to redesigning an existing layout. One popular feature is 'Architect's Corner' which spotlights different holes and offers insight into what comprises an outstanding golf hole.