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Advanced Technology Helps Sports Turf Managers Leave the 'Dark Ages'

by Dr. Kent Kurtz, executive secretary, Sports Turf Manager's Association

The primary challenge of the sports field manager today is to bolster his prestige and decision-making image, while continuing to gain agronomic knowledge. His hard-earned experience and the varied nature of his responsibilities warrant it. The initial target of these efforts should be management.

The tools are present.

In addition to such aids as the new generation of computerized sprinklers and hardier and more wear-resistant turfgrasses, today's sports turf manager can turn to the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA). An infant organization, it could be the best bet turf field managers have in gaining the professional status they deserve.

GCSAA a model

Sports turf managers could learn much from the success of related organizations; one of the most successful is the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).

The GCSAA, over a 60-year journey of education, testing, and image building, has elevated the *occupation* of greenskeeping into the *profession* of golf course superintendent. The GCSAA's continuing efforts are highlighted in an annual conference and strengthened by regional seminars and education programs.

The sports turf manager's path to professionalism needn't be as lengthy because of the model of the GCSAA.

The future

The era of the computer is here to stay. It is making inroads into the Green Industry. Computers speed inventory. They take much of the guesswork out of irrigation. Knowledgeable

Management Tools for Sports Turf Managers

- Computers
- New Turfgrass Cultivars
- Geotextiles
- Pre-germination
- Improved Turfgrass Equipment

sports turf managers are learning that computerized irrigation systems can apply water based upon soil moisture levels, climatic variations, or the needs of specific turfgrasses.

The potential of computers appears to be limitless. As more software is designed and developed, new groundskeeping uses will emerge.

Telecommunications offers sports turf managers exciting benefits. One phase of this new field is teleconferencing. It permits two or more groups to communicate via satellite using television or video screens. Imagine fixing a complicated piece of equipment while a manufacturer's engineer "walks" the repair through on a television screen.

Videotapes can be used to solve problems, provide information on maintenance practices and research, and stimulate the development of new concepts. Rarely used in sports turf manager's offices now, they will

become as commonplace as rakes in the near future.

New turfgrass cultivars

Plant breeders are beginning to unlock secrets in the hereditary complex of turfgrasses. New techniques promise that within a few years genetic engineering and tissue culture methods will allow plant scientists to develop sports turf grass that has even better wear tolerance, recuperative potential, color, tolerance to low mowing, and more rapid establishment qualities.

New warm season grasses which indicate potential for sports turf, appear to be selected zoysiagrass cultivars from the University of California, particularly 'El Toro' and possibly one or two others. Tifway II hybrid bermudagrass has the capabilities to perform better than Tifway. 'Excalibre', which is Seashore Paspalum, needs more time to prove itself as a sports turf. Californians are still waiting for a brilliant geneticist to develop a finer-textured cultivar of Kikuyugrass.

Cool season grasses adapted to athletic turf are limited to a few species which include the bluegrasses (Kentucky and roughstalk), the ryegrasses (perennial and annual), and the fescues (turf-type tall and creeping red).

Proprietary cultivars come and go. Experienced turf managers have learned to check with the agricultural universities in their areas, attend field days, and consult with turf farm advisors or representatives from reputable seed companies and sod nurseries.

New soil media

Work started in the late '60s and early '70s with sand media has dramatically influenced sportsfield construction. Sand in the medium particle range is needed because it does not compact, drains well, and provides a firm play-

Dr. Kent Kurtz is the executive secretary of the Sports Turf Manager's Association, 1458 N. Euclid, Ontario, CA.

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ing surface. Field construction concepts and techniques developed around the sand concept include: PAT, Hy-Play, Sportsturf Fields (TD, INTERLINK, and MOD), and Cell-system. Some of these combine moisture sensing, soil heating, sub-surface irrigation, maximum drainage, field pumps, and insulated covers. Any of these systems, if properly implemented and maintained, performs well.

Geotextiles

New geotextile (ground cover) materials are available. They're finding increased favor with sports turf managers. They've proven successful in saving turf during periods of severe wear (concerts, marching bands, motor events), improving field drainage, and protecting turfgrasses from winter injury and desiccation. Even more imaginative uses of these materials are expected.

Accelerated propagation

An idea doesn't have to be new to be useful to today's grounds manager. The idea of pre-germination of grass seed has been around a while, but its popularity is just catching up with its usefulness. To promote the quick es-

tablishment of overseedings, pre-soak the seed for several days until germination, then combine the soaked seed with a carrier (sand, organic fertilizer, amendment). It's a simple technique. It can save days.

When polyethylene perforated with holes is placed over a prepared seedbed or pre-soaked seed, the polyethylene creates a greenhouse envi-

The idea of pre-germination of grass seed has been around awhile, but its popularity is just catching up with its usefulness.

ronment and accelerates the establishment of grass.

Turfgrass equipment

Most of the changes in turfgrass equipment in recent years consist of improvements in old designs. Equipment is larger, wider, more reliable

and versatile. Improvements in vertical mowing equipment, aerifiers, and larger, more versatile topdressing equipment are noticeable. New companies are expected to develop equipment specifically for athletic field use.

Chemicals and fertilizers

It is in the area of chemicals and fertilizers that the greatest thrust for new products is occurring.

Fertilizers that release nutrients uniformly and over several months are on the boards. Some of these new products will not be dependent on specific weather conditions to release their nutrients.

Growth regulators which reduce seedhead production, maintain superior color, and reduce mowing frequency are close to being perfected and introduced into the turfgrass market. New and improved herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides with broader spectrum systemic qualities are being evaluated and will be available within a short period of time.

With all the activity currently taking place in the sports turf field, and the movement under way to build a professional image and organization, the future of the sports turf manager is on the rise. **WT&T**

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had to lift 80 lb. bags of seed or fertilizer. When we were planting trees I had to move 250 lb. root balls. And I did it."

The poll uncovered more than a few companies that agree with Merritt, companies that look favorably on women laborers, foremen, and technicians. Several claim females are more conscientious than men in their work habits (not tardy or absent as often), perform finish work well, and take better care of tools and equipment.

Even so, three out of four women newly incorporated into the landscape and lawn care industries (73 percent to be exact) end up in the office. Employers are more apt to hire a woman to keep the books, for her secretarial skills, or in a clerical or receptionist capacity.

Another area where women might have an advantage is in sales, the poll suggests. "In a corporate setting, they can get in the door when a man can't," one respondent notes. Another points out that women are a natural for selling lawn services "because 54 percent of decisions to buy lawn services are

made by women."

Approximately one third (27 percent) of the companies polled by LCI claim to "actively seek women applicants to fill specific jobs" within their companies. And 41 percent believe women can "outperform men" in certain jobs.

The survey hints the reason why more women haven't made significant inroads into the landscape and lawn care industries is that there is a shortage of qualified women seeking positions.

"I think the number of women will increase," one company executive notes. "I would not hesitate to hire a qualified female, but rarely does one apply." Another says, "for five years I've advertised for male or female help. And not one female has answered."

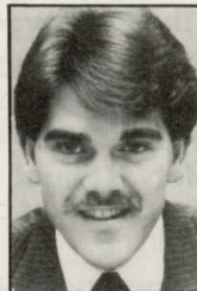
Says Smithlin, "There's no question I'm being more recognized as a part of this industry. Most women probably don't think they can handle it because it is so male dominated."

It could be that Merritt and Smithlin, and others like them ("survivors," one respondent describes them) are a step ahead in these basically male industries.

bide in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, **Phil Smith**, in the Southeast and Florida, and **Gordon Vosti**, in the West and Pacific Northwest.

Four Star Agricultural Services, Bluffton, IN, appointed **James A. Halloran** national sales manager for Penet-Turf, a landscaping soil treatment. Halloran comes to Four Star from turf distributor Arthur Clesen, Inc.

Daniel C. Alexander has been named advertising and promotion specialist for Arcadian Corp., a Par-



Daniel Alexander



Dr. Phil Robinson

sippy, NJ-based fertilizer manufacturer.

Dr. Phil Robinson is handling the introduction of Acclaim, a post-emergence grass herbicide. He has been named project leader while **Roger D. Boatman** takes over as manager of market research at American Hoechst, Somerville, NJ.



Roger Boatman



ALCA Field Day

Alan Hazel, assistant educational director for Briggs & Stratton, lectures to students at the 9th Annual Associated Landscape Contractors of America Student Field Day in March. The students were treated to 21 events and had the opportunity to interview with 66 industry representatives.

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PRODUCTS

Brouwer seeder fertilizes too

Brouwer Turf Equipment introduces a compact seeder which will fertilize at the same time.

The Model 24 Lawnmaker self-propelled seeder has a 24" seeding width and a 2 cu.ft. hopper with a stainless steel bottom. It is powered by a 5 hp Honda engine and can seed up to $\frac{3}{4}$ acre per hour. Brouwer reports the seeder is useful in seeding small and medium areas.

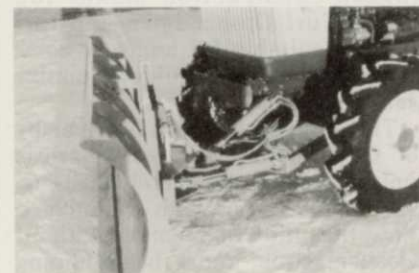


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American Trencher makes blades to fit Ford models

The Bradco 725 blade now fits Ford 1910 and 1710 tractors, American Trencher reports.

The 725 blade, featuring 8-way control (6-way hydraulic plus roll out and roll back), comes with a high-carbon skid shoe. The 725 Blade will soon be available on other popular tractors in the 20-35 hp range, its manufacturer says.



Circle No. 191 on Reader No. 191

Worksaver spreaders team with ATVs

The complete, 24-model line of Worksaver rear-mounted seeder/spreaders includes units designed for use with all major makes of all terrain vehicles (ATVs).

Worksaver says an ATV-mounted seeder/spreader covers confined or rugged areas impossible to reach with a tractor, is not destructive to soft or muddy ground, and handles smaller

jobs more economically than manual seeding.

Each seeder/spreader is equipped with a one-bushel hopper made of corrosion-resistant polyethylene, and features seed gate control and vari-



able fan speed. A hopper lid eliminates the loss of seed or fertilizer to the wind. Splash guard, 12-volt motor, and complete wiring harness are included.

Circle No. 192 on Reader Inquiry Card

Roto-Hoe shows four new shredder models

Shredding vines, stalks, and tree prunings shouldn't be a problem with an assortment of new shredders being offered by Roto-Hoe.

Smallest of the new offerings is the Model 500 with either 6 rigid tine-type tines or 21 hammermill knives and a 3 or 5 hp Briggs and Stratton engine. The unit is 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. wide and 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. high.

The largest is the Model 2000 which comes standard with 44 flail or hammermill tines, an 8 hp Tecumseh engine (with cast iron sleeve), and is 40-in. wide and 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. high. Roto-Hoe also makes two models (the 550 and the 800) in between the 500 and 2000.

All units feature side feed for vines and tree prunings up to 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. in diameter and a top hopper for lighter materials like leaves and grass clippings. The units are made of 12-gauge steel with 16-gauge top and side hoppers.

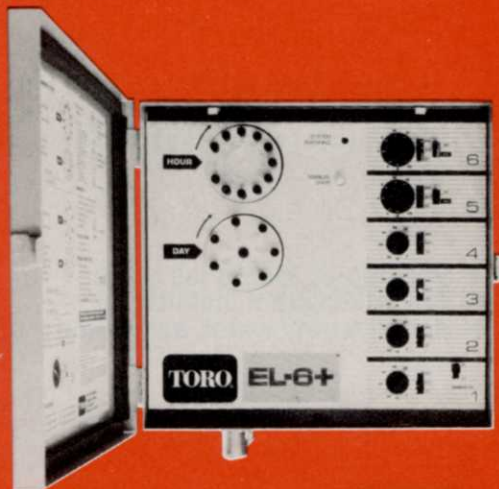
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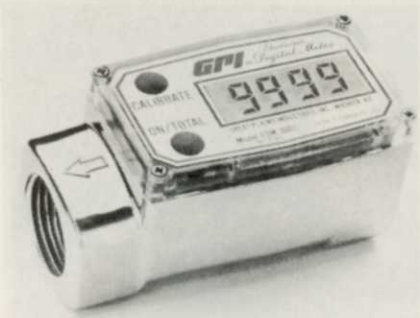
Front grate bars, tow bar, and swivel wheel assembly are standard. A mulch catcher attachment is made for all models.

Circle No. 194 on Reader Inquiry Card

Electronic flow meter measures liquid sprays

A new electronic digital meter by Great Plains Industries tells exactly how much you or your applicator has

sprayed on each service call. Made of stainless steel, the EDM-300S high pressure unit (up to 600 psi) installs easily onto the pump, spray gun, or boom. It is compatible with all fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and other chemicals. Flow range is from three to 30 gallons per minute.



The unit comes with push button calibration and lithium power cells rated for 1,700 duty hours.

The EDM-300S features Delrin rotor and support, tungsten carbide shaft, ceramic bearings, and straight flow through which minimizes pressure drop and provides easy flushing

to prevent residue buildup. Circle No. 194 on Reader Inquiry Card

Reuter shows six new "natural" pest killers

Six new products fill out Reuter's Attack line of natural pesticides. Reuter Laboratories now has 16 insecticides in the line which is being marketed as an alternative to chemical pesticides.

New products include: Sod Webworm Attack, Vegetable Insect Attack, Mosquito Attack, Caterpillar Attack, and Tomato Worm Attack. The biological pesticides contain Bacillus Thuringiensis (BT), harmful to insect pests but non-toxic, non-chemical, and ecologically safe.

The products enlarge the line which previously had consisted of milky spore for Japanese beetle grubs, now labeled Grub Attack in both powder and granular form, and 14 other Attack insecticides.



Circle No. 195 on Reader Inquiry Card

Turf sweeper for home, commercial use

Rugged construction makes the CM136 Turf Groom lawn and turf sweeper suitable for home or commercial use, says its builder, Country Manufacturing.

The unit's spiral brush is driven by 16" O.D. pneumatic tires. There is enough power to completely fill a bag. The CM136 comes with a clutch to allow the unit's movement without sweeper action, and a bag-dumping lever lays flat for working under low branches.



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