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Pricing from page 24

drive prospects past other properties that are badly landscaped and carefully point out what's wrong with them. Now the prospect can see for him or herself why the quality of your work justified your charges.

4) Seek out and use products that will allow you to do more work in less time—but charge the same or more for

such services. A case in point is using a growth regulator to cut the number of times you must visit the account to mow. This can be especially helpful for time-consuming hillsides, terraced landscapes and roadsides.

5) Don't overlook the high value of old pricing techniques such as \$29.95 rather than \$30 for a single item such as a potted plant; and "two-fer" prices, such as two for \$59.95. Despite the fact that

most customers realize that these aren't real bargains, studies show that they are amazingly effective.

Other old pricing "gimmicks" that have never lost their popularity and should be mentioned are:

6) Discount coupons which are sent through the mails, given to customers when purchases are made, placed behind the windshield wipers of nearby parked cars, or featured in ads.

Although the first purchase is made at a lower price, this is compensated by higher prices later, when customers have experienced the value of your landscaping services. Be sure to set time limits on coupons ("Good only until Sept. 30") to alleviate customer procrastination.

7) "Loss Leader" specials consisting of landscaping services sold to customers at a loss in order to encourage the purchase of other services, such as late fall leaf raking and yard work.

8) Offer "extras" that sugar-coat high costs, such as free how-to books on gardening, and free telephone advice on landscaping problems. Always detail such premiums in your ads and verbal sales presentations, and be sure to point out, if true, that no competitor offers such useful and welcomed gifts.

The marketing department of Evergreen Services Corp. of Bellevue, Wash., recently developed a two-page customer newsletter that gives maintenance tips and horticultural information. The little brochure also enhances the company's visibility and gives customers a place to air their concerns.

9) Remember that the marketing tool that will never be surpassed regardless of price is the reputation of your business. This reputation is based, of course, on performance.

"Our firm learned the hard way," reports one landscaper. "After experimenting with several marketing strategies, we are convinced that, even though our prices are considered to be high, most of our new business comes from customer referrals. Our clients are convinced that, even though we charge more than the competition, what they get for their money is well worth it.

"They pass their convictions on to their friends, who in turn become valuable clients."

—Bess Ritter May, author of this article, is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia, Pa. She is a frequent contributor to LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT.

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STRICTLY GOLF

U.S. Senator points finger at golf course managers

All agree: environmental responsibility falls squarely in the lap of the golf course superintendent.



Superintendents are environmentalists who must work with Congress for fair legislation, say Bob Ochs (left) and Bill Roberts (center), representing the GCSAA, and Senator Howard Metzenbaum.

■ Can it be? Is the golf course superintendent really viewed as an environmental villain in the hallowed halls of our national government?

"Golf courses were using four to seven times the (intensity) of pesticides as agriculture," Sen. Howard O. Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) told members of the GCSAA earlier this year in Anaheim, Calif. "You've got to cut down your use of pesticides and water."

Metzenbaum, doubtless feeling the euphoria and energy that followed his

party's first Presidential victory in 16 years, told the superintendents that they should more closely align themselves with environmental groups.

"Many of you have earned the title of environmentalists. But as an industry, you can and should do more. Help educate the people who use your golf courses; they can live with brown spots and weeds—it won't hurt their game."

Kirk Kahler, government relations liaison for the GCSAA, sees a slight difference

between Metzenbaum's perception of the golf course superintendent and that of the EPA.

"The EPA thinks golf courses are head and shoulders above the rest of the green industry," Kahler says.

Another message that comes through loud and clear when legislators like Metzenbaum take the pulpit: the big-time industrial polluters are a moving target, but our lawmakers know exactly where to find golf course superintendents.

"You people are in a position to do something about this environment," Metzenbaum says. "I think you'd be a lot smarter to figure out how to join and work with the Congress and administration. And become the leaders in your community. I urge you to take the leadership in pre-

ELSEWHERE

Golfers like sign posting programs,
p. 66

Run-off comes in handy against Calif. drought,
p. 67

'Scout' programs popular on some golf courses
p. 70

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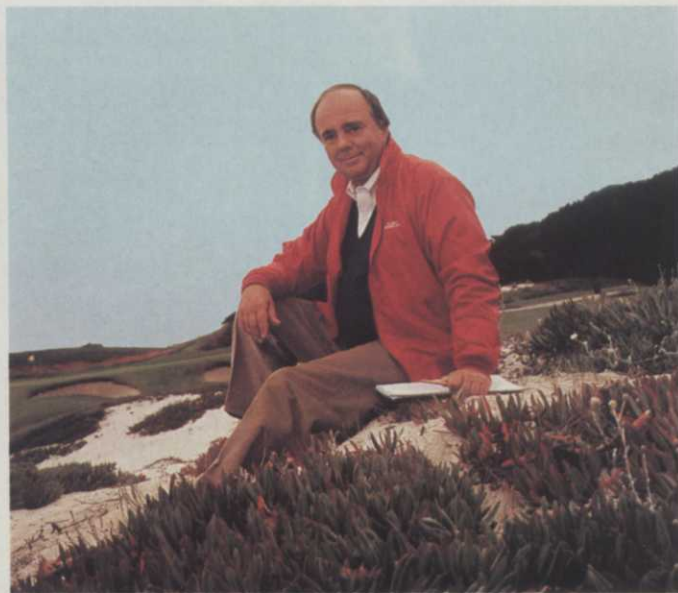
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Jones: Architects, supers must show environmentalists 'we follow the rules.' Photo by Terry Husebye

...serving the environment. Get off your butts."

Bill Roberts, the GCSAA's past president, defends Metzenbaum's statements.

"He's not saying anything different than we're saying," Roberts observes. "We are simply going to have to be environmentally responsible."

Famed golf course architect Robert Trent Jones Jr., in a speech to the USGA Green Section (just one day following Metzenbaum's presentation), confirms:

"Get off your butts."

—Senator Howard Metzenbaum

"The message is loud and clear," Jones says. "The environmental movement is here to stay. But let me caution against the violent kneejerk reaction to environmentalists. They only want what we want: to make the country a better place."

"Show them that we follow the rules. That we are dedicated environmentalists and getting better. That we have learned to be lean with our chemicals and water. That we now have new and different kinds of grass and plants."

"Golf is not an environmental problem—it's an environmental answer."

—Jerry Roche

'Informational' sign posting earns high marks from golfing public

■ This program, using write-on, wipe-off signs, didn't just advise golfers of pesticide applications. The signs also served to inform golfers of other maintenance practices like aerifying and top-dressing. Participating golf course superintendents, to varying degrees, took advantage of the opportunity to give golfers course maintenance information beyond chemical applications.

Posting is growing at golf courses in the United States. Some states require it to warn golfers of the possible presence of pesticides. (Nebraska does not.) Typically, courses post with pre-printed signs in language—depending on one's views of pesticides—that might seem threatening.

"This was not the typical 'caution/warning/pesticide-applied' approach," explains Dr. Roch Gaussoin of the University of Nebraska. The university, in cooperation with the Nebraska Golf Course Superintendents Association, came up with the more informational posting program. "These signs had multiple uses."

A snapshot of the courses using the

voluntary posting:

- Four public, three semi-private, and three private.
- Two nine-hole and eight 18-hole courses.
- Five with fewer than 30,000 rounds per year, four with 31,000 to 60,000 rounds, and one with more than 60,000 rounds.

Golfers responded positively to a different kind of posting program at 10 Nebraska golf courses in 1992.

- Annual maintenance budgets ranging from less than \$50,000 to \$249,000.

When Gaussoin surveyed golfers and superintendents at the 10 courses at the end of the 1992 season, both groups said they supported this more-inclusive posting.

For instance, 74 of the 75 golfers answering the survey said they felt the program should continue the following

season, while eight of the 10 superintendents said they would definitely use the program the next season. The other two said they probably would.

Although a few of the golfers admitted they were indifferent to posting, most felt either "positive" or "very positive" toward the program.

Gaussoin said six of the 10 superintendents said they felt a stronger relationship with golfers on their courses because of the program. None felt the posting had weakened their relationship with course users.

"Public relations is one of the critical facets of being a superintendent," said Gaussoin. "Anything a superintendent can do to improve the relationship with golfers is obviously a plus."

Gaussoin said superintendents shouldn't worry about giving golfers too much information about golf course maintenance.

"It's a benefit because the golfer feels a little more involved in what the superintendent is doing, and can perceive what the superintendent is doing as doing as more professional," he added.

—Ron Hall

Using run-off helps to reduce effects of California drought

Heavy clay, high salt greens also a solvable problem at Rancho Bernardo Inn G.C.

■ Tim Roth was anticipating a real water shortage problem. It wasn't that he might have to stop irrigating, but that the homes and businesses surrounding his golf course would have to stop watering their lawns and washing their cars.

Roth is superintendent at Rancho Bernardo Inn Golf Course, 25 miles north of San Diego. Prior to the recent heavy winter rains, the continuing drought in California had county official contemplating ordering all lawn watering stopped. That would have eliminated most of the run-off that flows into a 10-acre natural lake on the edge of the course. And the lake supplies most of the course's irrigation water.

"Only our greens are watered with city water," says Roth. "Separate irrigation lines for the greens were put in two years ago, because the lake water was starting to cause some problems.

"Besides run-off from the steep rocky hillsides, the lake catches run-off from local car washes and other businesses, as well as some from surrounding lawns. The pH of the water tends to get too high from dissolved alkaline salts.

"We inject sulfuric acid with the lake water when we irrigate. That keeps the pH low enough so we can use it to water the fairways. But now, the greens are irrigated with potable water from city lines."

Heavy clay problems—According to Roth, the original greens were constructed of native "push-up" soil. As a result, the greens are mostly heavy clay, and high in salts, making them more compaction-prone and tougher to manage turf on.

In fact, Roth is gradually rebuilding the greens and sodding them with bentgrass. The first one was rebuilt last October and the plan is to re-do one or two greens each year. The existing greens are covered with a mix of about 20 percent bentgrass and 80 percent *Poa annua*.

Fairways, tees and roughs are overseed-

ed with perennial rye in October to keep them green year-round. Although the heaviest use is generally during January through June, the course gets steady play through the year and averages about 50,000 rounds annually.

Along with a regular aeration program, Roth began an intensive topdressing program this year. He puts on a light dressing of sand every month, then a heavy topdressing after every aeration, usually in February, June and September. Sometimes, he adds an extra summer aeration, using smaller 1/4-inch tines.

Roth has reduced his aeration manpower requirement by picking up cores with a Cushman Core Harvester attachment. "Before, core removal was a three-man operation," he says. "Since we got the Core Harvester, it's now a one-person job."

Because of the heavy clay and high percentage of poa, aeration cores are removed rather than dragged back into the turf. The heavy sand topdressing is dragged in, after aerification and core removal, to increase surface playability.

Cores are dumped off the side of the green and picked up later with a skid loader.

Specialized care—Roth's crews also apply gypsum to greens frequently. Both sulfuric acid and wetting agents are inject-

ed into irrigation water to increase percolation and "flush" salts below the rootzone.

Greens are mowed daily to about 9/64-inch height. Mowing height is reduced slightly to 1/8-inch during the winter months.

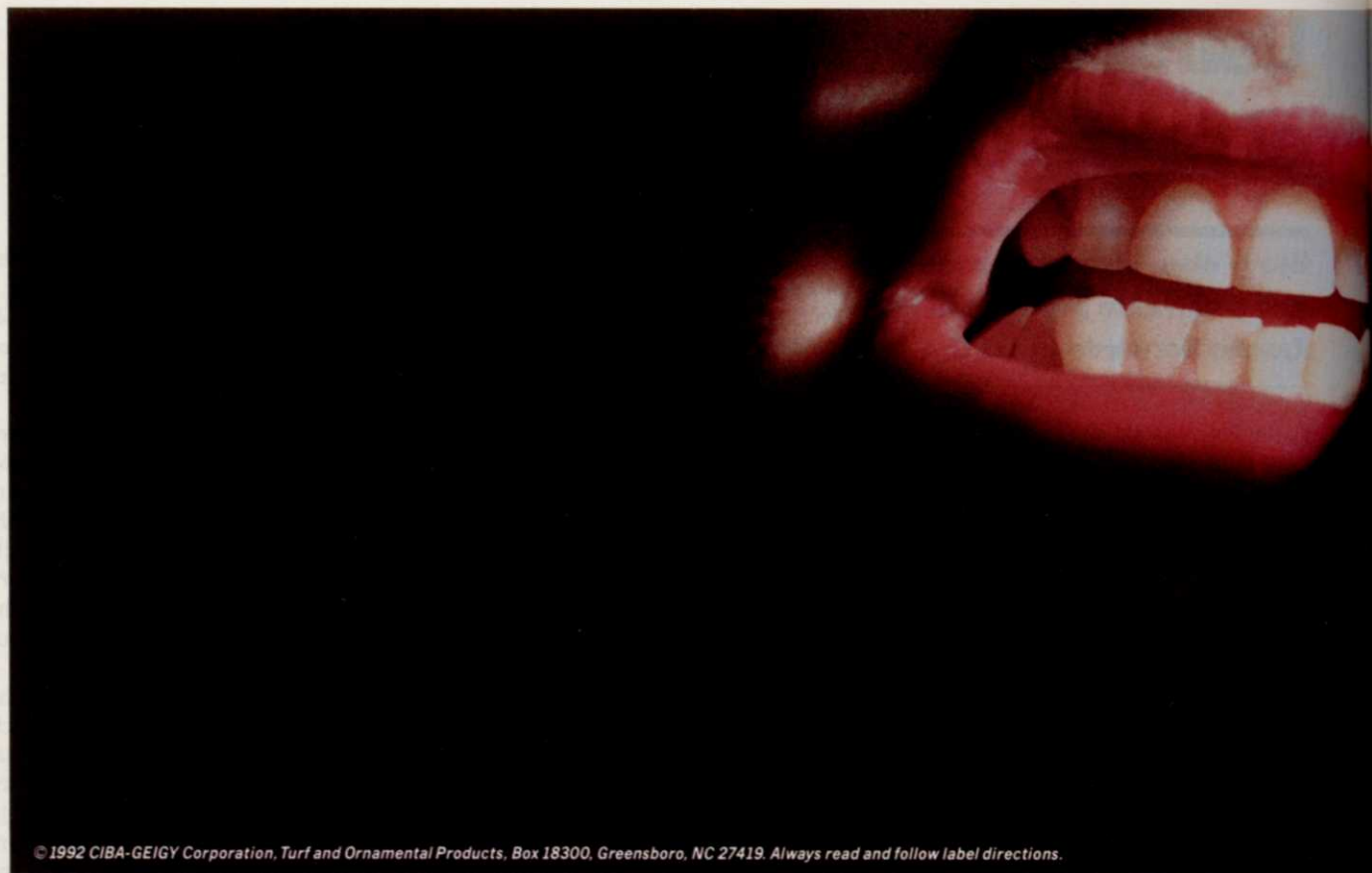
Roth follows a consistent spray program, both for fertility and disease control. Summer patch, anthracnose, fusarium patch and pythium blight can all be problems, so Roth follows a preventive schedule of spraying every 10 to 14 days from April to October. During the winter season, he sprays only as necessary, usually every four to six weeks.

Liquid fertilizer is applied weekly, using urea nitrogen in summer and more calcium nitrate in the winter. Nitrogen applications are completed with a micronutrient program, and wetting agents are added to the spray tank to enhance absorption. Extra iron is added to fertilizer, with the heaviest iron boot added in the winter months, when the turf responds better.

The course recently purchased a new Cushman Turf Master for making its spray program more efficient. The Cushman Turf Truckster with mounted Smithco sprayer that Roth had was moved to the another J.C. Resorts course, Oaks North, so spraying can be done on a more timely schedule there.



Superintendent Tim Roth checks with one of his crew members during a post-aeration core removal on a Rancho Bernardo green.



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Tell the media you will call back

■ *"Listen, I don't want to mislead you. I want to give you the exact facts. What is your deadline? I will get back to you."*

Remember this phrase. Jot it down. Keep it handy. It might keep you from saying something to the media you'll regret, says John D. Fox of Strategic Communications, Riverside, Calif.

Keep your promise, though. Return the call.

"You can make a friend out of that reporter. You can even build a pretty good image for yourself and your organization by being an expert, a good source," says Fox.

Here are some other crisis communication tips Fox gave golf course superintendents at the GCSAA Convention in Anaheim, Calif., this past January:

- Review the types of crises that might affect your business or vocation. "Most can be anticipated, not in particular, but in general," he says.

- Develop a plan ("a crash book") to deal with crises. Your staff should help you put it together.

- Keep internal communications healthy. "The worst thing that can happen in any organization in a crisis is to have everybody running off in all directions," Fox says.

- Appoint someone that is knowledgeable and articulate—it could be yourself—to be the spokesperson for your organization. "Then, ask your people, 'Please, don't talk to other people until you've told me, and let me decide on it,'" advises Fox.

- Be aware of what's going on around you and your company: environmental, political, social and economic. "Right now the public is in a pretty grumpy mood," he says.

- Keep your message simple and positive. "The media are not experts," says Fox. "They are generalists. They react to

situations very much like the public."

Fox has been a reporter, photographer, news director, and he most recently worked in communications with the University of California Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources.

—Ron Hall

The media are looking for an excuse to give you some bad publicity. Don't give them one.





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Circle No. 114 On Reader Inquiry Card

What to do when workers lose interest

by Joe Carbone

■ "I don't understand it. That guy was real gung-ho when he got here. Now he spends all of his energy avoiding work and figuring out ways to do the least amount possible. I wonder what's got into him?"

How many times have you asked yourself that same question: "I wonder, what's got into him? There are few things more frustrating to a supervisor than witnessing the case where a good worker gradually deteriorates into a marginal worker. I believe that a good supervisor has to take a completely different approach to a problem like this and that approach has to be based on a different way of thinking. All it takes to uncover the shortcomings of the standard thinking is a closer examination of the question itself: "I wonder what's got into him?"

The question implies that something might have invaded and destroyed what had been a perfectly good worker. This

idea of an "Invasion of the Productivity Snatchers" is of course absurd, and I only mention it to make a point. The question does imply that the problem is being blamed on forces beyond our control, even if not from beyond our solar system. And this is where we have to change our thinking, and our approach.

As a supervisor you are in a position to influence workers' attitudes towards their jobs. You are in a position to keep those good workers going strong. You are even in a position to improve the performance of marginal workers.

Among the primary factors that influence worker attitudes are:

- the example that is set by, and the attitude of the supervisor;
- the importance and value the supervisor attaches to superior job performance;
- the consequences and penalties that the worker's supervisor has attached to inferior job performance;
- the degree of personal challenge the worker associates with performance goals

that have been set by the supervisor.

A good supervisor can't wait around for the personnel department to send them the perfect worker. Neither can a good supervisor expect superior worker performance by adopting a course of inaction.

When we claim or imply that a problem has arisen due to forces beyond our control, we are doing little more than making an excuse for our own inaction.

The job performance of your workers is a function of the attitudes they bring to the job. The supervisor is in a position to control the primary factors that influence those attitudes. A good supervisor will learn when and how to make this happen, and won't make or accept excuses.

—From *"Getting it Right: What it Takes to Become a Good Front Line Supervisor,"* by Joe Carbone. To order, contact: Front Line Supervisor, Publications Dept., P.O. Box 267, Lansing, NY 14882-0267.

More U.S. golf courses using 'scouts' to monitor agronomic/pest conditions

■ Scouts are sprouting up on more and more U.S. golf courses.

No, these scouts don't start fires by rubbing sticks together. They don't sit around camp fires singing "95 Bottles of Beer on the Wall." These are turfgrass scouts. They observe and record agronomic and pest conditions on golf courses.

Increasingly, they're the advance guard of integrated pest management (IPM) programs that allow golf course superintendents to target and reduce pesticide use while keeping their courses in excellent playing condition.

These scouts must be experienced and educated in turfgrass. Increasingly, however, they must also be adept at gathering and then feeding information about weather, pest activity, soil conditions, etc. into computers. This data provides a day-to-day snapshot of the condition of courses. It also builds an historical record of each course.

The data, gleaned by these scouts, guides and justifies appropriate maintenance practices. In these times of more stringent economic and environmental accounting, the data also controls the proper, most effective use of chemicals.

"In a scouting program you really

The scout does not have to be the course superintendent, but sometimes it is—particularly since many superintendents like to tour their courses daily anyway.

need to make a commitment to keeping rigorous records of what you're finding, particularly concerning pest activity," says Dr. Pat Vittum, University of Massachusetts. "That includes what you found, where you found it, how many you found, and what kind of damage you observed."

The scout does not have to be the course superintendent, but sometimes it is—particularly since many superintendents like to tour their courses daily anyway. Or the scout can be a trusted and knowledgeable assistant. In either case, the scout must develop, then commit to a plan to observe the golf course literally at the hands-and-knees level each day,

says Vittum.

"If you get into a scouting system where you're scouting regularly and you're beginning to notice the effect of weather and temperature conditions on pest activity, that will help you in predicting what's going to happen on the golf course throughout the rest of the year," says Vittum.

For those superintendents starting a planned scouting program, Vittum urges them to begin modestly, initially scouting maybe just the greens. They can expand the program as they become more comfortable with it.

A scout's activities can be as detailed as budget and time allow.

"The number of samples a scout can take has to be balanced between the cost of the time for taking them and the accuracy a superintendent demands to make the system work for them," says Vittum.

Dr. Vittum spoke about scouting at the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of American Convention in Anaheim this past November. (The GCSAA, at each annual convention, holds a one-day seminar of Scouting, Sampling and Monitoring Golf Course Pests. The next will be in Dallas, January 1994.)

—Ron Hall

Soil management program pays off for Falcon's Fire resort golf course

■ Falcon's Fire Golf Club in Osceola County, Fla. owes its reputation for "character" to a soil management program.

When the championship layout was designed by Rees Jones, certain perimeter mounding and elevation changes were built into each hole. Also factored into the construction process was an extensive soils management program which placed the right soils in the right places.

Newfield Interprises International, developers of Falcon's Fire and of Seralago, the 550-acre master planned resort on which the course is built, retained the services of Michael D. Slms & Associates geotechnical engineers.

"Over a million cubic yards of fill were

All soils were screened for organic content, percolation quality and compaction. Only soils with the highest percolation quality were placed on the fairways.

moved, but the job wasn't just a case of placing any old dirt wherever it was needed," says Seralago project director Valerie Sewell.

"The tees and greens needed to be built to exacting standards of the USGA, and the entire course envelope received a two-foot layer of fill, even before any fill for contouring was deposited.

"In addition, all soils were screened for organic content, percolation quality and compaction. Only soils with the highest percolation quality were placed on the fairways."

Since opening, Falcon's Fire is earning a reputation of being able to play shortly after heavy rains while other courses in central Florida stay closed with water-logged fairways.