



# Report on The Green Section Survey

by HENRY H. RUSSELL, Chairman, USGA Green Section Committee

Early in 1966 the USGA Executive Committee authorized a comprehensive survey of the Association's Member Clubs to assist in evaluating the services of the Green Section's Visiting Service program.

The substantial operating deficits incurred by the Green Section (\$50,564 in 1966) prompted the Executive Committee to decide in the interest of prudent management to explore all possibilities for reducing the amount of the deficit short of impairing the quality of the services to the subscribing member clubs.

Three questionnaires were prepared and mailed to:

1. Subscribers to the Visiting Service.
2. Non-subscribers.
3. Committee Personnel.

The results in condensed form are as follows:

## 1. Subscribers:

Over 25 per cent of our Subscribers replied: 95% stated the Visiting Service was "useful" and suitable for their needs; 5 per cent rated the Service as "fair"; 3 per cent wanted more consultative visits; and 7 per cent preferred visits on an "if and when we want them" basis at a fee-plus-travel expense.

Thirty-three clubs indicated they were availing themselves of other consulting services, of which 21 were public agencies and 12 were private consultants.

## 2. Non-subscribers

The number of replies was approximately 2 per cent. This percentage, while disappointing, is comparable to the rate of replies experienced by professional opinion samplers. Twenty-eight

per cent indicated they could not afford to subscribe; 14 per cent indicated they would subscribe in the future; 28 per cent stated they were availing themselves of private and public consultants in lieu of the Visiting Service. The remaining 30 per cent gave various reasons for not subscribing, but the following reply from one superintendent was particularly memorable: "I have found that there is very little to do on a golf course that wasn't covered in my Superintendent's course at college."

### 3. *Committee Personnel:*

Approximately 30 per cent replied. All rated the service as "good"; 84 per cent thought more USGA Clubs would subscribe to the Visiting Service if convinced of the benefits; 15 per cent indicated the service is "too costly"; 35 per cent stated that member clubs do not subscribe because of consulting services offered by public institutions and private consultants.

The survey demonstrated conclusively that:

1. 95 per cent of the subscribers are satisfied with the Visiting Service as presently operated.

2. A more effective job of selling member clubs on the advantages of the Visiting Service is necessary if more subscribers are to be obtained.

3. A substantial number of member clubs are relying on the consulting services of various private and public agencies.

With respect to the problem of selling its services, the Green Section is faced with the dilemma of encouraging Member Clubs to subscribe, knowing in advance that each new subscriber adds to the increase in the annual operating deficit. Measured in terms of fees charged, the Visiting Service offers real value if recognition is given to the fact that the USGA sub-

sidizes the Visiting Service to the extent of \$39 per visit.

Almost without exception, the comments contained in the replies were constructive. Some of the suggestions have already been adopted and many others are being studied to determine the extent of their usefulness. Some of the more noteworthy suggestions, paraphrased, are as follows:

Provide emergency visits as well as service on a when-and-if-desired basis.

Print and disseminate articles and reports on turf and turf management published in previous editions of the **Green Section Record**.

Distribute newsletters on a regional basis.

Increase the number of articles and reports on turf and turf management authored by the Green Section Staff.

Provide more frequent USGA Green Section-sponsored meetings on local levels for Club Committeemen and their Superintendents.

Analyze products, supplies, and provide member clubs with recommendations pertaining to same.

Provide recommendations for the most effective use of labor and equipment; emphasize preventive instead of corrective advice.

Change the name of the Committee from "Green Section" to "Golf Course Section."

In retrospect, we believe the time and money expended in preparing the survey and evaluating the replies were more than offset by the information received.

Whether it be called Green Section, Golf Course Committee or The Weed and Seed Division, your Committee and its Staff pledge their continued efforts to provide our Subscribers and Member Clubs with a thoroughly professional and effective turf and turf management consulting service on the most economical basis possible.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Henry H. Russell has been a member of the USGA Executive Committee and Chairman of its Green Section Committee since 1960. He is also a member of the Board of the Southern Golf Association, the Florida State Golf Association and former President of the Metropolitan Amateur Golf Association of Miami, Florida.