

The Assistant Superintendent: Gaining in Stature

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Application of chemicals should be a prime duty of a good assistant superintendent.



Many superintendents must, at some time, face the decision of whether to hire a young assistant superintendent, or make the foreman the second in command. Certainly, both job classifications have merit under today's operating procedures.

The scope of the green superintendent's responsibilities is on the rise. Today, he is asked to oversee maintenance procedures for tennis and paddle tennis courts, swimming pools, skeet shooting ranges, boating facilities, and various other operations, as well as the golf course itself. These expanded duties are demanding more and more of his time and ability to see that all operations are maintained adequately. This is the area, I feel, where the role of the assistant superintendent or foreman is gaining in stature. The assistant or foreman can be of tremendous help in ensuring that the varied facilities of a club are maintained properly.

The question of whether to hire a young assistant superintendent, who may only be with you a few years, or a permanent foreman is not an easy one to answer. Personal preference on the part of the superintendent and the type of maintenance performed will, to some degree, determine the type of individual needed.

If yours is a small club with a limited budget, a foreman who can also double as a mechanic may be most advantageous. However,

if your operation has numerous facilities that require day to day checking, an assistant superintendent plus a mechanic may be the wisest choice. Today, many clubs are beginning to use their own mechanics for maintenance of clubhouse facilities rather than calling on outside servicemen. Minor electrical, plumbing, and other repairs can successfully be handled by the golf course mechanic at a big saving to the club. It may be too much to ask of a mechanic to also double as a foreman. Under this type of situation, both an assistant and a mechanic seem highly desirable.

There are certainly advantages and disadvantages for both the assistant and foreman. Some of the common disadvantages of hiring an assistant are:

- 1) They will be with you only a few years and then leave for their own head job.
- 2) They are inexperienced and unsure of themselves.
- 3) They are out after your job.

While some of these may be valid reasons, I feel they are not true in the majority of cases. Personally, I have had two assistants and one foreman and have been more rewarded by hiring the young assistant.

The superintendent must carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of both job classifications, and then, based on the club's needs, decide which is the best classification under the

circumstances.

When hiring an assistant superintendent, certain qualifications should be considered. Following are those I have found to be most desirable:

1) Education and experience: Some formal college training is helpful. There are many colleges today with two-year and four-year programs in turf management. Many fine young men are available each year from this source. These individuals have had technical training in practically all phases of turf management and they can be almost of instant help.

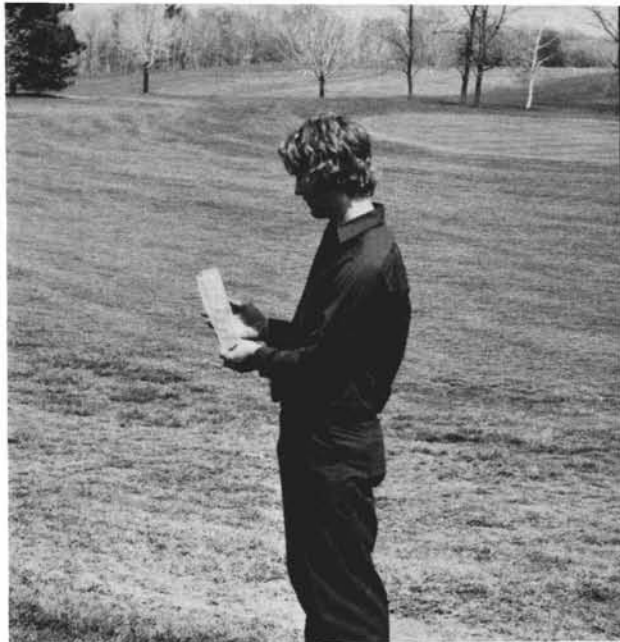
Experience is also essential. Many of these students have worked on golf courses as part of their training programs and are familiar with the management problems faced by the superintendent. Many have also worked on university turf research plots and have benefitted greatly from this type of experience. The more experience a young man has the better, but this should not be the deciding factor if the individual considered has other outstanding abilities.

2) Enthusiasm and interest: These two qualities can go a long way toward making up for what a young man may lack in experience. More has been accomplished by people who show enthusiasm and interest in their work than by paying high salaries to other people with less interest. It has always been a pleasure for me to see how much my assistant gets done just because he is enthusiastic about what he is doing.

3) Self-confidence: An individual must have self-confidence if he is to succeed. Your assistant will be asked to supervise men older than he and make decisions when you're not around. If he lacks the confidence to do so, he will be of little help to you. Even though he may not always be correct, he should possess the ability to act on his own.

4) Self-control: As any good superintendent knows, there are many daily frustrations and interruptions that must be faced. Furthermore, there are personnel problems with members, crew, and other department heads that can be very taxing. A superintendent must be able to control his temper and think things through when difficulties arise. A good assistant must also exhibit these qualities.

I'm sure one could list many more qualities, but these are the ones I find to be the most beneficial. Once you have decided to hire an assistant superintendent, what should his duties be? The most obvious one is that he is in control when you are not there. It should be



Checking rainfall and recording weather observations is valuable experience for the assistant superintendent.

made clear to the crew that he has the authority as well as the responsibility when you are gone.

Following is a list of the most helpful duties my assistant performs that has eased my load greatly:

- 1) Trains part-time summer help in the art of grooming the golf course.
- 2) Keeps records on weather, gasoline consumption, and other critical areas.
- 3) Applies all fertilizers and sprays all chemicals.
- 4) Attends Green Committee meetings and takes the minutes.
- 5) Assists the mechanic in repairs and maintenance of equipment.
- 6) Aids in the planning and implementation of all major construction and renovation projects.

I would like to stress two additional points that cause me to favor an assistant superintendent over a foreman. The first is that these young men are eager to learn. They are full of questions about turf management and their questions force me to keep current. Consequently, my interest in turf is constantly stimulated.

Finally, we superintendents of today have an obligation to train the superintendents of tomorrow. They may receive the basics in college, but we must teach the practical application of what they learn. There are many intricacies about this profession and the future superintendent can only learn about them through experience. They can learn about them with our help, and, in so doing, be of tremendous assistance to our operation.

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3—A subscription to the USGA *Green Section Record*, dealing with golf turf affairs, six times a year, addressed to the Golf Course Superintendent. (This is in addition to the subscription sent to the Green Committee Chairman in connection with USGA Membership.)

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(Open to USGA Members only)

Date _____, 19____

Full Name of Club or Course _____

Permanent Mail Address (street or box) _____

Post office _____, State _____ Zip _____

Application authorized by: _____ Title _____

Course Superintendent _____

We hereby apply for the Turfgrass Service of the United States Golf Association Green Section and certify that we are eligible for the class checked below.

We enclose the fee (see schedule below) for the current year ending December 31. The USGA *Green Section Record* is to be addressed to our Golf Course Superintendent (this is in addition to the subscription sent to our Green Committee Chairman in connection with USGA Membership).

This application is automatically continuous from year to year unless interrupted by advance resignation.

Check Proper Class:

_____ Less than 18 holes \$250
_____ 18 to 27 holes \$300

More than 27 holes:

_____ 36 holes \$325
_____ Per regulation course in
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Please send receipted invoice

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