

TURF TWISTERS

COMMUNICATE

Question: I note increased awareness by members, employees, and even our neighbors in our use of pesticides on the golf course. What can I do to address their concern? (Illinois)

Answer: Communicate! Few people realize that it is the agriculturalist who is the leader in awareness, testing, training, and safely managing farm chemicals. Few golf club members realize their own superintendent is now licensed (and periodically retested) by State authorities in the use and care of pesticides on the golf course. (See Gary Watschke's "Pesticides — Changing An Image" in this issue). Today, agricultural chemicals are routinely applied with great precision; many at the rate of one pound or less per acre. By comparison, one heaping teaspoon of sugar on a bowl of cereal is equal to 2½ tons of sugar per acre! Six shakes of salt on a salad comes to about 36 pounds per acre. Agricultural chemicals are being managed very well!

THE TRUTH

Question: Could you please set me straight on the truth about gypsum as a soil conditioner and its use on a golf course? (Arkansas)

Answer: There is no scientific proof that gypsum is a soil conditioner nor is it a miracle panacea that is going to solve all drainage and other soil problems. It has been oversold in this sense. However, it does have some very beneficial uses under very specific circumstances. If you need a good source of calcium that will not significantly affect soil pH, gypsum is a good choice. If you have high sodium salts in your soil that are adversely affecting plant growth, gypsum will break up the sodium radical, thus allowing it to be leached from the root zone. But don't expect gypsum to take the place of a couple of good tile lines. It doesn't work that way!

DON'T ADD ON!

Question: We plan to enlarge a putting green next spring. Is it better to rebuild the entire green or just add on a new section only?

Answer: Overall, you will probably be ahead by redoing the entire green. This will insure uniform soils and drainage throughout, a more uniform turfgrass cover (especially if you seed or use a good, uniform sod nursery), and the contours of the new putting surface will blend and flow much more easily. And the irrigation system can be redone to insure coverage for the entire green. It's not impossible to do a good add-on job, but in the long run, the complete re-do usually works out best.