

# News Notes for Early Summer



*Iris at Cornell Plantations.*

## David Oatis Joins Green Section Staff

The Green Section is pleased to announce the appointment of David A. Oatis as Mid-Atlantic Region Agronomist. He will assist Stan Zontek, Mid-Atlantic Region Director, with responsibilities for visiting Turf Advisory Service courses in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio.

Dave comes to his new position from the Rio Hondo Country Club, in Downey, California, where he was the golf course superintendent for three years. Rio Hondo Country Club accommodates 300 golf tournaments and 115,000 rounds of golf annually, making Dave the Green Section's staff specialist for dealing with traffic effects on golf courses. Prior to his work at Rio Hondo, Dave was assistant superintendent at the Mesa Verde Country Club, Mesa, California, and the Pebble Brook Golf and Country Club, Noblesville, Indiana. He also served for two years as chief arborist at the Industry Hills Conference and Exhibit Center, City of Industry, California.

Dave is a native of Indiana, but he received his Bachelor of Science degree from the California Polytechnic Institute, majoring in ornamental horticulture, with a specialization in turfgrass science.

He began his duties with the Green Section on May 1, was married on May 14, and spent his honeymoon with his wife, Cindy, looking for housing in the West Chester, Pennsylvania, area. We are delighted to welcome to the Green Section staff an agronomist with Dave's broad experience and obvious dedication to his work.

## Paul Vermeulen Becomes Western Region Agronomist

After an extensive season of travel in 1987, visiting golf courses from coast to coast with other Green Section staff members, Paul Vermeulen officially joined the staff on April 1, 1988, as Western Region Agronomist. He joins Larry Gilhuly, Western Region Director, serving Turf Advisory Service courses in Arizona, California, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, Oregon, and Washington.

Paul recently completed the requirements for a Master of Science degree from Texas A&M University, working under the guidance of Dr. James Beard. His thesis work involved the identification of 24 bermudagrass cultivars, using isoenzyme electrophoretic patterns. He received his undergraduate degree from Michigan State University, majoring in agronomy with a specialization in turfgrass science.

In addition to undergoing the most extensive in-house training experience

of anyone ever to join the Green Section staff, Paul brings significant golf course work experience to his new position. He spent two summers as a worker at the Olympia Fields Country Club, in Olympia Fields, Illinois, and was involved in an extensive course renovation program there. He also spent two seasons helping to build greens and performing other maintenance tasks at the Industry Hills Golf Course, City of Industry, California. The Green Section is pleased to have Paul Vermeulen as an addition to the staff.

## Turfgrass Research Committee Meets at Golf House

The USGA Turfgrass Research Committee met at the USGA's headquarters in Far Hills, New Jersey, from March 21 through 24.

Activities during the three days of intensive work included a review of current research supported by the Committee and discussions concerning the proposals for future research work. The Committee is distributing \$450,000 this year to research projects designed to develop grasses significantly more drought tolerant and pest resistant than those used today.

Chairman Bill Bengeyfield announced the recent release of two improved grasses from breeding programs supported by the Committee. From the work of Dr. Arden Baltensperger, of New Mexico State University, comes a seeded bermudagrass that is superior in several ways to common bermudagrass. The other grass, a fine-textured strain of buffalograss, is the product of research by Dr. Terrance Riordan, of the University of Nebraska. Bengeyfield also noted that several exceptional *Poa annua* strains are being distributed to certain golf courses and experiment stations from the program of Dr. Don White, at the University of Minnesota. *Poa annua* may not be "that weed grass" much longer.

## "All Things Considered," a New Editorial Forum, Debuts in the GREEN SECTION RECORD

With this issue the Green Section is initiating a new editorial column entitled "All Things Considered." It will feature



*David Oatis*



*Paul Vermeulen*

individuals on the Green Section staff expressing their views on a variety of topics concerned with turfgrass science and golf course management. The subject matter will be intentionally stimulating and controversial, popular or not. It is designed to provoke the reader to consider and analyze new ideas and approaches, or to reconsider old truths that may have been forgotten in our fast-paced, high-tech world. Opinions will be those of the authors and not necessarily reflective of those of the USGA or Green Section. Depending on reader reaction to the editorials, selected responses may be published in future issues.

All things considered, we believe that establishing this column offers an excellent opportunity to clear the air on issues heretofore considered too controversial for the written word (or nearly so).



Attending the USGA Turfgrass Research Committee meeting at Golf House — Back row, left to right: Dr. Howard Kaerwar, F. Morgan Taylor, Charles Smith, Dr. Victor Gibeault, Gerald Faubel. Middle row: Tom Burton, Stanley Zontek, William Bengeyfield, James Snow. Front row: Bill Roberts, Dr. Paul Rieke, Dr. James Watson, Dr. Michael Kenna, Gary Watschke.

## ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

### Snake Oils

by JAMES FRANCIS MOORE

Director, Mid-Continent Region, USGA Green Section

THEY USED to call them snake oil salesmen, gypsy-like peddlers who traveled the country hawking a magic elixir that could cure everything from saddle sores to tuberculosis. Most often, these compounds were either highly alcoholic or contained opium derivatives. The relief experienced by the gullible client was at best temporary, but always long enough to allow the snake oil salesman to move on to the next town full of suckers.

We believe times have certainly changed. But have they? Regretfully, a tremendous amount of snake oil is still being hawked to turfgrass managers. A catchy name and a glossy brochure always accompany the peddler's claim that the new product can eliminate disease, insects, and weeds, and at the same time make the bunkers drain. A favorite technique is to spread the word around a state turf conference that "although the product is not labeled for use on greens, old Joe over at the country



James Francis Moore

club reduced his *Poa annua* by 20 percent during the first year." Even if this claim is completely without merit, sales of the product will temporarily skyrocket — at least long enough for the peddler to pocket some quick cash and move on to the next conference.

How do we protect ourselves against snake oils without unfairly discouraging

the introduction of new and beneficial ideas and products? Easy. Do not buy any new product sold by individuals whose claims cannot be substantiated by extensive university research. Good research is expensive and time consuming. Manufacturers of products claiming mystical powers simply cannot afford to submit their elixir to testing if they know it will fail.

Demanding evidence of good university research, however, will not completely eliminate the snake oils or the unscrupulous peddlers who sell them. Unfortunately, they are kept in business by those superintendents looking for an easy chemical solution to all of their turf management problems. In the words of the comedian George Carlin, "If you nail two things together that have never been nailed together before, some fool will buy it." All things considered, P. T. Barnum was probably right when he said, "There's a sucker born every minute."