



The USGA agronomist can help the superintendent and club bypass the politics of an issue and get directly to the agronomic basis for a problem.

Make the Most of a Great Resource — USGA Green Section Visits

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OUR PROFESSION could be described in the following manner: "Providing the best possible playing conditions for the game of golf by carefully managing the resources made available for this purpose." What resources? The irrigation system, equipment, supplies, and labor are some of the physical resources needed to produce good playing conditions. But perhaps the most important asset we have at our disposal is knowledge.

We might think of knowledge in terms of how much we know. For the sake of this discussion, though, let's

define it as the information to which we have access before we make a decision. Why do I make this distinction? Well, let me explain. There may be plenty of information stored away in your brain, but if it can't be remembered, it is of no use in making a decision. On the other hand, if you have no experience in solving a particular problem but have access to someone who does, you can make use of information necessary to make the proper decision.

The point is, your informational resources are vitally important to your success in this profession. These resources include your peers, seminars,

professional journals, educators, researchers, suppliers, and the USGA Green Section agronomists.

We all have had experiences in this business we would rather forget, like days when the grass wants to die and we can't for the life of us figure out why. We try everything that worked before, but without positive results. Whom do we call for help? We may call on our neighboring superintendents, who usually make themselves available on short notice to visit and share their knowledge concerning the problem.

If the problem is not resolved with their assistance, we may be in some

pretty tough circumstances with our golfers. They want answers and improvements now! Often this is the time we call on the USGA Green Section agronomists.

How do you feel about the Green Section agronomists? Are they the guys you call only after you have serious problems? Do you feel comfortable knowing that they are there, or does their presence give you "willies"? Do you have annual visits so they can gain a better understanding of your course and its problems, or do you call on them only at the behest of the boss?

It has been my experience that superintendents have a black-and-white approach to the USGA Green Section services. They either look forward to the annual visit or they have no use for them. For some reason, many of us feel that we don't need someone poking a core sampler into our greens. "What do they know about my problems anyway?"

How do you get the most out of this source of information? Is it possible that by proper management of this resource, your job performance could improve?

To make the most of a Green Section visit, you have to look on it as an opportunity. You are the customer; they're there to help you. An "inspection" is the last thing you want. It is an inspection only if you abdicate your responsibility to manage the visit.

How do you do this?

First of all, know your needs. What are your problems — on the course, with your physical resources, with the management above you, or the membership? Be sure to take full advantage of the service.

Secondly, you must manage the time so that all areas you need addressed are given attention. You are abdicating your responsibility if you allow others to decide what is to be evaluated and discussed without leaving time for the subjects you feel are most important. Take control! A Green Section visit should not be simply a social call. The potential for accessing knowledge and information that can benefit you is too great.

Third, involve your supervisors, green chairman, or other interested members in most of the Green Section visits. These people have a vested interest in the success of the golf course maintenance program. They will be more sympathetic to your problems when they hear them discussed with the agronomist. The support you receive for your programs from the agronomist

will add weight to them, helping you sell your supervisors on the need for physical resources such as equipment, labor, a new irrigation system or a larger budget. Plan some time alone with the agronomist to discuss technical matters or other concerns.

Fourth, have the necessary information available to answer questions about your current maintenance programs. How much fertilizer have you applied? What chemical applications have been made and at what rates? What size are your greens and tees? These are all questions you need to know for yourself. Recent soil test reports should also be available.

Finally, what should be your course of action after the visit? After receiving the Turf Advisory Service (TAS) report, use the information for club newsletters and green committee meetings. Make copies of the report for the entire green committee, the board of directors and, in some cases, the entire membership. Above all, carefully consider those

portions of the report that may improve your program and fall within your budgetary guidelines. Review past reports to see how much progress you've made.

USGA Green Section visits can be one of your most important resources. If you take the initiative and use the service properly, you will be more successful in obtaining the resources you need from your club as well as receiving timely tips or problem diagnosis. The agronomist is best able to serve your needs if you take the time to manage the visit.

Remember: (1) Know what you want to accomplish with the visit, (2) Organize your time so that attention is paid to all problem areas, (3) Involve your supervisors, (4) Have the necessary technical information regarding your course and your maintenance program ready, and afterward follow up by using the TAS report to educate the entire membership.

Make the most of a wonderful resource.

Golf course maintenance today requires modern equipment. The USGA agronomist can be invaluable in securing effective new equipment.

