

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

JUST DO IT!

by **JAMES FRANCIS MOORE**
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THE RECENT annual conference of the American Society of Agronomy reinforced several themes that golf course superintendents should keep in mind.

First, the entire meeting focused on the effects of agriculture (including turfgrass maintenance) on the environment. Believe it or not, there are still superintendents who feel this whole issue is being blown out of proportion and will eventually fade away. They are badly mistaken.

Second, every researcher I spoke with feels efforts should be made to reduce chemical usage. Scientists, better than anyone else, recognize the futility of attaining a 100% understanding of how chemicals (fertilizers and pesticides) interact with the environment. The

general consensus is that we cannot completely eliminate the use of these products now or in the near future without severely affecting turfgrass quality. However, from a practical standpoint (both environmentally and politically), reductions should begin immediately.

We all hear a lot of vague references to "organic" methods and "natural" products. (Try to find a cereal on the shelf that does not use "natural" somewhere in the product description.) Thus far, many of these products have not proven very well suited to large areas subjected to environmental pressures from nature and humans — the golf course. While such options are worth trying, in my opinion most are not capable of achieving a large-scale

reduction in chemical use at this time. Many superintendents have taken a wait-and-see position, perhaps in the hope that researchers and industry will develop products that are viewed by all as safe and will support the goal of perfection on the golf course. This is an unrealistic view of the present state of affairs.

So what is a superintendent to do? This brings me to my third point. You have to start somewhere. How many of you have honestly made an attempt to reduce chemical use?

The most common excuse for not reducing chemical use on the golf course is that the membership will not tolerate less than what they have now. How do you know? You are their industry expert. Have you prepared and presented to them a reduced chemical usage plan? Have you given them the chance to accept less than perfection in terms of weed, insect, or disease control? Backing away from perfection will allow you to use less chemicals and save money in the process. Your membership is not oblivious to the issues confronting the turf industry and society in general. Have you given them options to consider, or have you already decided for them?

Just do it. Prepare a maintenance plan that relies as little as possible on fertilizer and pesticides. Include the removal of trees that limit air movement to greens and tees. Include the reconstruction of greens that drain so poorly they require constant attention to keep them alive. Include tolerating weeds that may be an eyesore but do not threaten the course agronomically. Include a reduction in fertilization done strictly for color. Include the additional people necessary to scout the course for disease and insect problems. Early diagnosis will allow you to use lower rates and perhaps eliminate a few preventative applications. Include better cart traffic control so the turf does not become thin and subject to weed invasion. Include higher cutting heights on greens (yes, slower greens) to facilitate developing stronger, healthier plants that are less prone to stress of all types.

Your membership may well say no to all or part of such a plan. At least give them the opportunity. Just do it.

USGA Green Section Educational Conference

in conjunction with the 62nd

GCSAA International Conference and Show

Las Vegas, Nevada — Tuesday, February 12, 1991



ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE 1990s

- 8:00 - 8:15** **Welcome**
Raymond B. Anderson, Chairman, Green Section Committee, and Member, USGA Executive Committee
- 8:15 - 8:30** **The Best Turf Tips from the Green Section Staff**
Larry Gilhuly, Director, Western Region
John Foy, Director, State of Florida Region
Dave Oatis, Director, Northeastern Region
- 8:30 - 9:30** **Looking at the Environment from Three Angles**
Richard Klein, President, Community and Environmental Defense Associates
Rees Jones, Golf Course Architect
James T. Snow, National Director, USGA Green Section
- 9:30 - 9:45** **Canada Geese — Waterfowl or Just Plain Foul?**
George Thompson, CGCS, Country Club of North Carolina, Pinehurst, North Carolina
- 9:45 - 10:05** **Issues in Golf in the 1990s**
C. Grant Spaeth, President, United States Golf Association
- 10:05 - 10:25** **More Top Turf Tips from the Green Section Staff**
Jim Latham, Director, Great Lakes Region
Jim Skorulski, Agronomist, Northeastern Region
Tim Moraghan, Agronomist for Championships
Jim Moore, Director, Mid-Continent Region
- 10:25 - 10:40** **Responsible Stewards of the Land — An Opportunity**
Gerald Faubel, CGCS, Saginaw Country Club, Saginaw, Michigan, and President,
Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
- 10:40 - 11:10** **The Story of Shadow Creek**
Steve Wynn, Chairman of the Board of the Mirage Hotel
- 11:10 - 11:30** **More Top Turf Tips from the Green Section Staff**
Pat O'Brien, Director, Southeastern Region
Paul Vermeulen, Agronomist, Western Region
Jim Connolly, Agronomist, Northeastern Region
Stan Zontek, Director, Mid-Atlantic Region
- 11:30** **Closing Remarks**
Mr. Anderson