



*The game of golf is enhanced by and dependent upon the natural surroundings. Superintendents take the responsibility of managing these natural areas very seriously. Oakdale Golf & Country Club, Downsview, Ontario, Canada.*

# Developing Environmental Guidelines for Canadian Golf Courses

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by **TERI YAMADA**

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**T**HE TURFGRASS INDUSTRY has improved its management practices in the past few decades to reflect the increasing awareness of the general population to environmental issues. Many superintendents employ Integrated Plant Management (IPM) techniques to ensure water, fertilizer, and pesticides are applied only as needed, reducing loss from runoff and leaching. But if turfgrass managers are such good stewards of the environment, why do we continue to read and hear reports criticizing our industry?

Let's face it — we have been preaching to the converted. We have developed edu-

cational programs for turf managers without letting the general public, including the average golfer, know about our advancements. As an industry, we know the type of management we strive for, but we have failed to document our goals.

It was for this reason, in the fall of 1991, that the Royal Canadian Golf Association (RCGA) decided to develop a set of environmental guidelines for Canadian golf clubs. The intent was to summarize turf management practices that current research has shown to be the most environmentally responsible. The guidelines would provide RCGA member clubs with

a point of reference from which they could compare and improve their own turf management operations.

We consulted other industries that had developed similar guidelines, as well as a federal agency involved in sustainable development issues. We were advised to consult with groups that may be considered to be on the other side of the issue.

This was perhaps the most daunting aspect of the project. Environmental interest groups and government agencies had been seen as adversarial in the past, and some golf industry groups were concerned their involvement would only provoke further



## GUIDELINES FOR GOLFERS

The game of golf is enhanced by and, indeed, is dependent upon the natural surroundings. The quality of golf and life is enhanced by the preservation and conservation of our natural resources. The Royal Canadian Golf Association and the Canadian golf industry have developed a code of practice to ensure that the golf course continues to afford us the same natural experience for future generations. You can help to continue to provide the highest quality golfing experience by considering the following guidelines.

1. Enjoy the natural environment and help to enhance and protect it by respecting all local regulations.
2. Avoid activities which endanger plant, fish, and wildlife populations or can potentially threaten their habitat.
3. Assist in our conservation efforts by the efficient use of all water and energy resources.
4. Work with the management and directorship of your golf club to develop and implement environmental enhancement programs.
5. Golf was meant to be played in a natural environment. A natural environment is by definition imperfect. Support your club's efforts to balance course conditioning with environmental enhancement and conservation strategies.

problems. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

**Phase I** involved interviews and surveys of federal and provincial government environmental agencies and environmental interest groups. They were asked to articulate what specifically concerned them about golf courses. All of the concerns were listed in preparation for **Phase II**.

**Phase II** entailed sending the summarized list of concerns to a group of Canadian golf course architects, superintendents, and club managers. They were asked to respond to each concern by outlining what they were currently doing, or were willing to do, at their properties to allay the fears of the person expressing the concern.

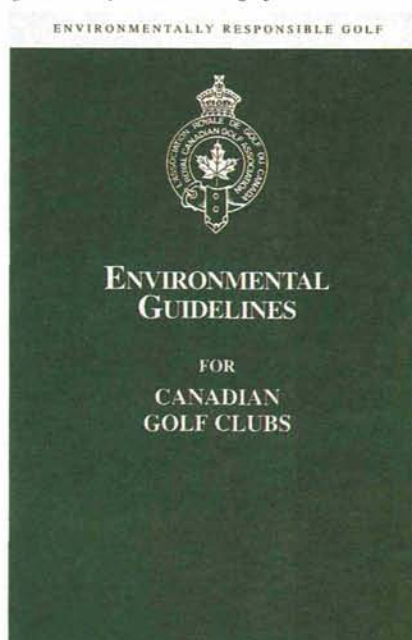
Initially, a few superintendents were apprehensive about being governed by a set of guidelines, but once it was understood that superintendents would not only be consulted, but were, in effect, helping to compose the guidelines, they remained cautious but more willing to cooperate.

All responses from architects, superintendents, and club managers were compiled and divided into the following three broad categories:

- **Guidelines for Golfers**, dealing with the responsibilities of all golfers while on the property.
- **Guidelines for Golf Designers and Developers**, dealing with issues related to:
  1. Site Selection
  2. Design Considerations
  3. Construction
- **Guidelines for Golf Club Directors, Managers, and Superintendents**, dealing with management of existing facilities.

The Guidelines were sent for comment in draft form to all participants from both **Phases I & II** of the project. After many rewrites and 18 months of consultations, in April 1993 we published the booklet *Environmentally Responsible Golf — Environmental Guidelines for Canadian Golf Clubs*. We acknowledge that this document

*In 1991, the Royal Canadian Golf Association (RCGA) began the process of developing a set of environmental guidelines for Canadian golf courses.*



is subject to change. As more research is conducted, and more knowledge gained, the document will be amended to include new information.

The RCGA is a national association, but environmental regulations vary among provinces. We therefore have referred to local regulations in some cases and encourage other provincial groups to use the guidelines as a starting point to develop documents more specific to their regions. So far one group, the Alberta Golf Course Superintendents, has developed a comprehensive set of position statements for their membership.

The Guidelines for Golfers were enlarged and printed on card stock and sent to all RCGA member clubs to be placed in the pro shop or clubhouse. Golfers have often been forgotten when environmental responsibilities are discussed. Although they may not be involved in the everyday operations of the club, members do place demands upon club management.

Some of the most avid conservationists who may have been responsible for the implementation of a recycling program in their own neighborhoods, or diligently compost all organic wastes at home, may be the first to complain about naturalized areas on the golf course because they lost a golf ball.

We still have a communications and education job ahead of us. The guidelines have initiated positive discussions with our member clubs as well as many environmental agencies and interest groups.

Some groups have asked how we plan to enforce our guidelines. Our intention is to take a positive position of encouragement rather than enforcement. We therefore intend to provide tools for our member clubs to help them adhere to the Guidelines.

The first such tool has been the introduction of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses into Canada. The Audubon program provides good ecological information and further incentive for our member clubs to adhere to the Guidelines. As of February 1995, 96 Canadian golf clubs have registered with the Audubon program.

It is our hope that by raising the environmental awareness of our members, we have started down the road to changing their attitudes about golf course conditioning, away from the pristine images seen on television each weekend to a more natural look.

*A copy of the Canadian Environmental Guidelines may be obtained by contacting:*  
*Royal Canadian Golf Association*  
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