

# DR. ROBERT C. SHEARMAN

## 2006 USGA Green Section Award Recipient

Robert C. Shearman, Ph.D., widely respected researcher, educator, and leader in many facets of the turfgrass industry, is the recipient of the 2006 USGA Green Section Award. The award is bestowed annually to persons who have made significant contributions to the game of golf through work with turfgrass. It was presented at the Golf Industry Show in Atlanta, Georgia, on February 10, 2006.

A native of Oregon, Bob began his career earning a B.S. degree in farm crops/agronomy at Oregon State University before moving on to receive both an M.S. and Ph.D. from Michigan State University. He worked as an industry research agronomist before joining the University of Nebraska staff in 1975. The rest, they say, is history.

"Bob has tremendous vision for the entire turfgrass industry," states Mike Kenna, Ph.D., director of research for the USGA Green Section. "He has helped build the University of Nebraska into one of the finest turfgrass research universities in the country." Under his direction at Nebraska, Bob has advised 10 Ph.D., 13 M.S., and many undergraduate students during his career. A prolific author in scientific journals and educational literature, his research has concentrated on issues of sustainability in turfgrass management systems, including water conservation, drought resistance, and reduced inputs, such as nutrients and pesti-

cides. His strength lies in his ability to develop a well-rounded, cooperative team approach for investigating a number of research subject areas.

Between 1994 and 2003, Bob served on the USGA's Turfgrass and Environmental Research Committee, which consists of ten university scientists along with several other specialists and USGA staff. During his 10-year stint on the committee, Bob was not just the most experienced and knowledgeable participant, but he also became the leader who carried great influence in determining which projects received funding. When the committee faced uncertainty with respect to particular projects, Bob's balanced, persuasive arguments were almost always decisive in determining the outcome.

Volunteering to serve on the USGA Research Committee carries with it the responsibility of a substantial time commitment. Each year the program receives grant requests consisting of 70 to 130 pre-proposals, followed by 25 to 40 full proposals, all of which are evaluated by committee members. In addition to the time spent in reviewing proposals on their own, committee participation includes two three-day meetings annually, along with the opportunity to attend monitoring visits to university sites each year. Bob played a significant role in helping administer the largest private turfgrass research program in the

Right: USGA Green Section Committee Chairman Lewis H. Blakey (left) presents Dr. Robert C. Shearman with the 2006 USGA Green Section Award. In recent years, Dr. Shearman's research has emphasized developing seeded and vegetatively established, turf-type buffalograss cultivars that are drought resistant, water conserving, and require minimal inputs of fertilizers and pesticides.

Opposite page: Studying turfgrass root growth can be a challenge! Scientists at the University of Nebraska work with minirhizotrons as a non-destructive technique to observe root growth. The front panel of the boxes opens to reveal a slanted plexiglass panel. As the roots grow down the panel, researchers can observe and monitor the growth patterns in response to various treatments.





world during his committee tenure, and the turfgrass industry is all the better for it.

Dr. Shearman is well known as a leader within the turfgrass industry. As executive director of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) from 1993 to 1998, he adopted a strategic long-term action plan for the program. He was instrumental in establishing the first cooperatively sponsored, on-site turfgrass evaluation program between the USGA, NTEP, and GCSAA. As a result, turfgrass managers nationwide have access to information about the grasses best suited to their particular region.

His leadership was invaluable in serving as president of the Crop Science Society of America and volunteering on numerous society and university committees. His visionary skills also led to the development of the first turfgrass Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program in the country. Over a short period of time, the Nebraska IPM program generated a number of publications and slide sets that are still the backbone of many IPM programs today. Much of the work was centered on educating golf course superintendents about this important concept and developing ways to put IPM into practice.

Numerous letters of support were submitted for Dr. Shearman's nomination for the Green Section Award. Repeatedly, the authors mentioned Bob's leadership and his aptitude as a skilled communicator. As one nominator stated, "Bob has the innate ability to consistently take the whole-picture view and identify the needs. He can carry the research results to the scientist, grower, and public in a manner so that each group understands the importance and implications of the work. Dr. Shearman's ability to place things in perspective has often focused the turf industry toward the future."

While Dr. Shearman has given so much of his time and commitment to the turfgrass industry, he keeps a strong devotion to his family, friends, and students outside of the university. He continues to mentor many of his former students, both professionally and personally, long beyond their years in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Bob Shearman is a vital and committed voice for the importance of turfgrass and turfgrass sustainability. His broad local, regional, and national turfgrass perspectives will be crucial in guiding the industry through the environmental issues facing the game of golf and the turfgrass industry in the years ahead.

