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A LOOK AT ... FROM AN INDEPENDENT PERSPECTIVE from
National Organization Responding Against HUJE that seek to harm the Green Space Industry (NORAHG)

Golf Course Maintenance

A Look At Managing Turfgrasses

Tips to Reduce Golf Course Maintenance Costs

May 21st, 2011

Kansas State University

Selected and adapted excerpts

The turf faculty at Kentucky State University (Jack Fry, Steve Keeley, Rodney St. John, Megan Kennelly) brain-stormed some ideas that could be used to reduce golf course maintenance costs.

In addition, members at a meeting of the Kentucky Golf Course Superintendents Association provided additional ideas.

Design Management

- Convert out of play bunkers into « *waste* » bunkers (no raking ... maybe naturalize by adding some rocks and driftwood) — eliminate bunkers if you can ... they're expensive to maintain and no fun for the golfers.

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- Cut down trees to improve air-flow and provide better turf quality — grass needs light to grow — this MAY also reduce fungicide inputs.
- Eliminate collars around putting greens.
- Incorporate more natural areas on areas not used for play.

Fertilization Practices

- Find the minimum amount of nitrogen your course requires to maintain quality and minimize mowing.
- If you're applying phosphorus, potassium, and/or lime, make sure your soil tests indicate that they are needed.
- To offset shipping and labour expenses, consider the use of more slow-release nitrogen with a relative high nitrogen content.

Labour Management

- Allow the crew to go home on rainy days.
- Eliminate hourly employee over-time.
- Hire retired folks to help.
- Use member volunteers for some labour.
- Use split shifts for labour and, again, eliminate over-time.

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Mowing Practices

- Eliminate the intermediate rough.
- Make fairways narrower.
- Mow fairways twice per week instead of three times.
- Raise mowing heights (We know it's been said, before but it's true).
- Raise mowing heights and apply appropriate amount of nitrogen to avoid stress which can lead to some diseases (and therefore costly fungicide applications).
- Reduce mowing frequency.
- Spray Primo, or other growth regulators, to reduce mowing expenses and to make equipment last longer.
- Use efficient mowing patterns.

Pest Management

- Calibrate sprayers and check/replace nozzles — if your nozzles are worn, you might be spraying 10 per cent more product than you think you are, which is 10 per cent more money than you need to be spending on spraying — a failed spray due to poor calibration means you must go spray again.
- If you have used pre-emergent herbicides for years, and crabgrass levels are low, consider reducing the application rate next year — have a post-emergent product on hand as a back-up.

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- Send a sample to friendly local pathologist before resorting to the spray-everything-on-the-shelf option.
- Think carefully about the fungicide program, tolerable levels, weather — generic products may be an option as components of a spray program.
- Use lower spray volumes when applying pesticides — this results in less mixing, less fuel use, and reduced labour.

Seed Selection

- Select pest-resistant grasses for newly established areas or for over-seeding.

Water Management

- Audit the irrigation system to check for uniformity of application.
- Find the minimum amount of irrigation your golf course requires to maintain quality.
- Keep the course « *dry* » (save water, fungicide, and the golfers will like it, or at least they should).
- Let turf go dormant by using less water — Kentucky bluegrass should not be under-estimated.

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- Use wetting agents where needed.
- Water less frequently and to the depth of the root system, and allow wilt to just begin before watering again — use soil water sensors or evapo-transpiration estimates to help guide irrigation.

Miscellaneous Practices

- Instead of performing wall-to-wall soil aeration, focus on areas that really need it, e.g., exit areas from cart paths, entry and exit points of green surrounds — maybe other cultural practices could be approached the same way.
- Know fuel consumption of equipment before purchasing.
- On putting greens, change cup locations based upon the number of rounds played, and not the calendar.
- Roll, roll, roll the putting greens.
- Use early order programs to reduce costs of purchases.
- Use test plots before you buy new and untested products.
- Whatever changes you make, COMMUNICATE to the membership what it is you are doing and why.

A LOOK AT is a Report presented by National Organization Responding Against Huje that seek to harm or misinform the Green Space Industry (NORAHG). It is a series of Reports destined for the Green Space Industry, nationwide across Canada, the United States, and overseas. This Report has been developed for the education and entertainment of the reader by providing TECHNICAL INFORMATION WITH COMMENTARY.

A LOOK AT is TOTALLY INDEPENDENT of any trade association or business operating within the Green Space Industry. Don't thank us. It's a public service. And we are glad to do it.

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The information presented in this Report is for preliminary planning only. Before making a final decision, the turf manager is expected to obtain trusted expert advice from extension specialists, local distributors and/or agronomists. All decisions must take into account the prevailing growing conditions, the time of year, and the established management practices.

All products mentioned in this Report should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's directions, and according to provincial, state, or federal law. For the official advantages, benefits, features, precautions, and restrictions concerning any product, the turf manager must rely only on the information furnished by the manufacturer. The mention of trade names does not constitute a guarantee or a warranty.

A LOOK AT, and its various incarnations, is the brainchild of William H. Gathercole and his entourage. Mr. Gathercole is a principal founder of the Modern Professional Lawn Care Industry in both Ontario and Quebec. He holds a degree in Horticulture from the University of Guelph, and another pure and applied science degree from McGill University. He has worked in virtually all aspects of the Green Space Industry, including golf, professional lawn care, and distribution. Mr. Gathercole has supervised, consulted, programmed, and/or overseen the successful execution of hundreds of thousands of management operations in the urban landscape. He has trained, instructed, and advised thousands of turf managers and technicians. Mr. Gathercole has also been an agricultural agronomist. Mr. Gathercole is personally credited for crafting the Exception Status that has allowed the Golf Industry to avoid being subjected to the PROHIBITION-TERRORISM policies of pest control products. He is also the creator of the signs that are now used for posting after application.

Mr. Gathercole is now retired, although his name continues to appear as the founder of A LOOK AT.



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