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Pesticides on Golf Courses - Hazards and Remedies

A pocket sized (8.25 x 4.25 in.), 36 page, full color brochure

Today, turf management practices on most U.S. golf courses could use a healthy dose of sunlight. Community planners, children's advocates, environmentalists, and golfers need access to accurate, up-to-date material from the U.S. and abroad. *Golf at a Crossroads* provides this information.

The prevailing policy in our own country involves treating golf course turf with hazardous chemical pesticides to obtain picture perfect standards set by TV tournament broadcasting. Many of the chemicals used have been associated with health problems in humans, wildlife, and the environment.

Golf at a Crossroads addresses these and related topics in a head-on, sensitive and thoughtful manner. It presents the case against chemical pesticide use on golf courses and examines alternatives including the option of toxic-free turf.

A golfer handing out the *Crossroads* brochures noted that almost everyone immediately wanted to know who "had the guts" to publicly discuss these issues.

The people of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts opted for ecologically "greener" golf when they demanded that the only conditions acceptable for a proposed new course would be to have it maintained without use of chemicals - under organic conditions. The resulting Vineyard Golf Club, as well as the Wawona Golf Course in California - both highly successful organic golf courses - are profiled in *Crossroads*.

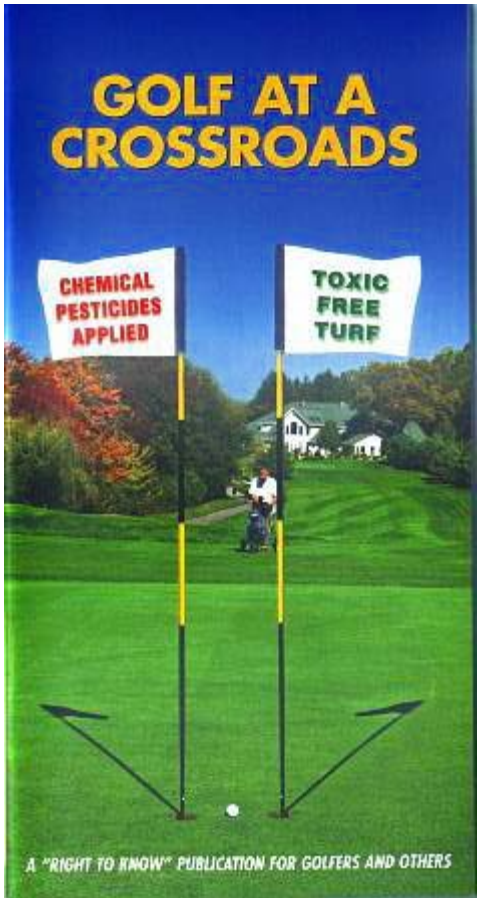
While playing on such organic courses, men don't have to worry about the association of prostate cancer with pesticides, and women of child-bearing age don't need to wonder if a chemical applied might contribute to developmental disorders of unborn children.

Although *Golf at a Crossroads* is written primarily for a non-technical audience, its sources are thoroughly documented in an appropriate scientific fashion - with footnotes, references, and a list of recommended resources. It was written with input from golfers, golf course superintendents, toxicologists, engineers, regulators, and ecologists.

Unsolicited Comments about *Golf at a Crossroads*

A Professor: *Nicely done! Model publication for environmental issues.*

An Environmental Advocate and Artist: *It's fantastic; really amazing; you're to be*



congratulated!

A Scientist: *Great brochure; such a nice balance between pretty and technical.*

A Biologist / Toxicologist: *I found it both interesting and enlightening.*

A Golfer: *...Thank you for creating this wonderful booklet. It is effective. People get the message immediately from the picture on the cover. Almost everyone has immediately responded "who put this out?" And they automatically turn to the back cover to look at who had the guts to publicly address this issue.*

Additional Feedback: *Keep up the great work! - Great brochure. Thank you! - Compact compendium! - Excellent!*



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301-593-7507 .

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copies are \$2.50.

A Concerned Letter

A long-time golfing fan sent us a copy of this letter directed to Golfing Associations and Golf Clubs. We hope that RCC website readers will send his and our message to those in charge of turf management at their own golf courses.

August 1, 2008

Dear Fellow Golfers,

It is inspiring to see national golf magazines, environmental organizations and governmental entities cultivating environmental awareness and ecological concern under the umbrella of the green movement. I believe we have a moral obligation to protect the environment and our Mother Earth from which we are all nourished and sustained.

Being green in golf is not the same as being green ecologically. There is a golf course maintenance issue that is sometimes brushed under the table within the mantras of Environmental Stewardship and Integrated Pest Management. That issue is the PEOPLE who play golf and the PEOPLE who work on golf courses and the extensive use of herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides.

It seems to me that we're playing chemical Russian roulette with human lives and our ecology rather than enjoying golf under the natural imperfect conditions it was intended to be played on.

I believe your Golf Association could be an inspiring example by bringing the PEOPLE factor and the ECOLOGY factor to the FOREfront of Environmental Stewardship through education, example, and promotion of healthy and natural golf course playing conditions.

The PEOPLE issue is the continual exposure of golf course superintendents, workers, and golfers to pesticides, fertilizer, and chemicals in the name of achieving television golf perfection. Golf did not originate, nor was it intended to be played on, perfectly manicured turf free of every weed, bug and bare spot. Golf was meant to be played as it lies, so that the game can be both fun and appreciated in helping us develop character to deal with the realities of life. To deal with the divots, uneven lies, and the unfair

bounces that life brings to us in this imperfect world. We are designed to cooperate and learn from nature instead of trying to dominate and control it.

The ECOLOGY factor is the fact that a healthy earth's ecology is required for human sustainability.

Golf course superintendents are caught in a conundrum, a *Catch 22*, even a moral dilemma when it comes to the insanity of trying to maintain perfect turf and the practicality of protecting their jobs. They are supposed to be the guardians of a healthy outdoor environment for the game of golf. Instead we're forcing them to turn to artificial and temporary chemical solutions which bring us the antithesis of healthy natural conditions.

I believe there needs to be an awakening of awareness of golfers and club management through education, leadership, and example by independent and innovative golf organizations not subject to the influence of the chemical industry, and who are willing to question the health, safety, and sustainability of current conventional golf course maintenance practices.



It's easy to ignore the PEOPLE issue because we have no quantifiable measurement of the effects of pesticides and chemicals on golfers from the golf course. But common sense and intuitively quantifiable human observation and reasoning tells us that pesticides are made to kill living organisms. Yes, they are made to target specific organisms such as fungus, weeds, and insects. But if and when we get past our ignorance for convenience, we'll awaken and consciously realize that Pesticides Don't Know When To Stop Killing!

The conscious or unconscious choice of ignorance for convenience lulls us into accepting what has become "conventional" golf course turf management without enough consideration for the ecological and human effects.

Through my own personal health experience, talking with people, and by human observation and reasoning, I've felt and seen the effects of pesticides and chemicals on people on the golf course. They include, but are not limited to, eye and throat irritation, severe skin rashes, slurred speech, flu-like symptoms, and probably a higher rate of prostate cancer in men. There are more and more like me who have become physically (and ethically) sensitive to the toxic nature of pesticides on the golf course. Women and children tend to be even more sensitive.

It's convenient to remain ignorant. Then we don't have to change and don't have to question what has become, but never intended to be, conventional turf management practices. Current conventional golf course maintenance has been influenced by the unrealistic demands for perfection brought about by televised golf and the chemical industry.

The demand for the bragging rights of green television golf perfection leads superintendents to overwater to maintain lush green turf requiring the use of chemicals to manage the self-inflicted problems of fungus, insects, and weeds. It's a non-sustainable merry-go-round with deleterious short and long term effects. We create our own problems by working AGAINST nature.

"Natural and sustainable" should be the new golf course maintenance mantra. Links-type golf courses have been sustainable for centuries, requiring less water, low fertilization and chemicals, and low maintenance costs. Links-inspired golf is the principle of working with nature, not against it.

The fact that golf growth is stagnant (as many people leave the game each year as those who take it up) requires FOREsight to help grow the game. But first we must focus on sustaining the game. Society's consciousness is being awakened out of necessity to go green ecologically. We are at the FOREfront of a new environmental awareness.

A younger generation is especially becoming more aware of the environmental hazards and detrimental



health effects of chemicals and pesticides. Will a younger generation choose to play golf on a chemically-sustained toxic golf course, or will they choose more natural environments for healthy outdoor exercise? Will they be able to afford the future costs of the current artificial maintenance? Do we not have a responsibility to ensure that the game of golf is sustainable so that future generations can enjoy it? Do we not have a responsibility to the game of golf to begin to return it to being played as it was intended, under natural rather than artificial conditions?

I believe your Golf Association could be in a leadership position to promote education and awareness, to have the FOREsight to promote ecologically green golf courses, to emphasize the human protection factor, and to help redefine golf course maintenance to healthy and natural golf course playing conditions.



I believe we are being FOREwarned by people like me who have become sensitive to the chemicals and pesticides on the golf course similar to the canaries in the coal mine. The canaries in the coal mine are yelling FORE! My hope is that the golf industry pays attention to the canaries and begins to promote natural, affordable, and sustainable golf course maintenance emphasizing human protection in order to preserve and sustain the game we've loved.

Sincerely, a Fellow Golfer

You can see samples of Pesticides commonly used at golf courses on our [Pesticides & Chemicals page](#).

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