

FROM THE PUBLISHER



In other parts of the world, such as in Japan and Europe, the grounds manager and the gardener are held on a level of esteem we have yet to see in our country. They are treated with the respect worthy of their position. Although I feel we are heading in that direction in the U.S., it seems to be taking an awfully long time.

In my travels abroad I have seen some great landscaping, but I truly feel nothing compares to the U.S. Although I have only seen a few golf courses outside of this country I feel they don't hold a candle to ours. I am not talking about how difficult it is to play them, but rather about the condition of the turf. The use of color around the clubhouse, etc.

It takes real dedication and a commitment to quality and to strive to meet the high goals we set for ourselves. It also takes a discipline to put into practice what they first have to learn in school. More importantly they will gain practical experience that school could never teach them.

A good professional must have a working knowledge of turf: the different varieties, how each stands up to wear, what the best cutting height is, what diseases each is susceptible to and how to treat them. He must know about insects, fertilization, and irrigation. And now new words keep popping up...effluent or recycled water, water audits, water management, etc. He must also know about hardscapes, waterscapes, nightscapes, grading, drainage, etc.

Recently I had an opportunity to play golf on either a brand new golf course or one that was more established. It was a hot day and I asked the person who was making the arrangements which one he thought I should play. He remarked that although the new course was nice, I should play the other course because it had trees and would be cooler.

At the Golf Course Show in February, I spoke with Dr. Alex Shigo, a noted tree expert and former U.S. Forest Service biologist, who gave some seminars on the care of trees. His comment to me was that most golf course superintendents look down to see the turf. He suggested that they look up every once in a while. He expressed shock at the health of trees on some of the golf courses he toured.

One begins to realize how important a role trees play on a golf course or in a landscaped environment. Take a moment to think how many years it takes for a tree to grow. And because trees can take more abuse than turfgrass, we have a tendency to take them for granted. So take a page out of Al Shigo's book--look up once in a while and inspect the trees.

During the playing season, whether it's baseball, football or golf, the professional is at work seven days a week, sometimes putting in 15 hour days. It would be nice to know he is appreciated and recognized by professional athletes and broadcasters once in a while.

If the pros were playing on a golf course not up to par, they would complain like heck. If a professional baseball player goes after a ground ball and doesn't make the play, he'll sometimes blame it on the condition of the field: The grass is too high so the ball slows down, the grass is too short so the ball goes faster. If a football player misses a pass, he'll complain that the field is bumpy and he was afraid he was going to trip. This may sometimes be true, but it would be nice to hear an announcer say, "The field is in great condition--thanks to so and so and his ground crew."

With all the telecasts of sporting events these days, the work load has increased. The burden of keeping the fields and courses looking good at all times, in addition to being healthy, has also increased. To entice good young ambitious people to enter this field we must upgrade the image. To keep the professional we must upgrade the compensation package. We can't expect the professional ball player or golf pro to earn upwards of \$1 million and have the professional grounds manager earn \$40,000 or less.

I will continue to cry out on behalf of our professionals until they get the recognition and compensation they so truly deserve. I look forward to the day when the profession of a grounds manager is held in even higher esteem in the U.S. than it is in Europe.