



# Seeds of Wisdom

*Written by Mark Hagedorn, Superintendent/Property Manager, Legacy Ridge GC.*

Having been in the turfgrass industry for a number of years now, I realize that a few people have, at various times, planted “seeds of wisdom” in my head. I’m not talking about nuggets like “pink in the morning” or “hire slow, fire fast” or “don’t plant flowers before Mother’s Day.” I mean small ideas that visit me in certain circumstances, thoughts that guide my actions.

Growing up on a farm, my father, a fellow Aggie, had a big influence on me. I watched him build our house, put in a stone fireplace, rebuild tractor engines, build numerous barns, and put in many lane ways, to name just a few things. He often said that “if you want it, figure out how to build it, and then do it.” That taught me to educate myself on what I needed to know, learn the skills to do it, and then tackle it. That desire to learn how to build and create has not left me. I’ve learned many skills, from laying concrete, welding, timber framing, operating excavating equipment, to building bridges. All have contributed to my success in beginning and completing a vast number of projects during my time in the turf industry.

The first superintendent I worked for was Al German at Scenic City Golf Course in Owen Sound. Al was great. His approach to completing tasks was straight forward. For my introduction to the golf industry, it was an enjoyable time. Long hours, long days,

lots of smiles. He tried to teach me patience; I’m still learning. One day, after he grabbed a cigarette wrapper that was floating by, he remarked that “if you can’t be bothered to stop and pick it up, might be time to get out of the business.” It was a very sad day when he told me that he was too tired to pick up anything anymore. Whenever I see some trash on the ground and I’m tempted to drive by it, his words come back to me. Of course, I turn around and pick it up.

I also spent a few years working with Bernd Von Cube at Cambridge Golf Club. Blessed with push-up greens in some low-lying areas, we often had to deal with dollar spot. At the first sign of an outbreak, Bernd would go out and topdress the affected areas. His wisdom was “change the micro-climate,” at the crown level. This was back in 1985-86, long before IPM. Now when I see dollar spot on our fairways, I try to head out with some sand as soon as possible.

I was fortunate to work at Guelph Lakes alongside John Bladon during its construction and grow-in period. One of the best experiences I have had, a great fellow to work with. His take on a lot of it was to give the golfer more than they expected, to “under-commit and over-deliver.” Whenever we do a project, I always try to just polish it up just a little bit more. Maybe someone will appreciate it.

Ray Duke, long serving superintendent at Springfield GC, made a comment in the dressing room one day after a hockey game. He said

that “if you’re going to blame Mother Nature for some of the issues in your life, then you had better be sure to give her credit for some of your successes.” A wise and humble man is Mr. Duke. He may have heard that from someone else, and it stuck with him as well.

Having spent a lot of time working on turf equipment, I’ve come to know Mike Slack, the Godfather to a lot of turf mechanics. Mike always has time to answer questions and to offer various solutions to problems. One of the first things he taught me was to just “grease it and change the oil!” It’s as simple as that. I have saved a lot of down time and money by that simple and low-cost advice.

A turf industry veteran, Greg Aljoe, worked at a neighbouring course in Kitchener. We shared aerators one summer to get our jobs done quicker. Shortly after doing my tees, I noticed them looking a bit off, a bit brown. I was talking with him, and he commented his turf looked off as well. So, to us that meant we were likely just seeing some mechanical damage. He asked if I did anything to them, to speed up recovery. I said no. I’ll just wait it out. He said good, “sometimes the best thing to do is do nothing.” It’s very true, but also hard to do.

Recently, I had the pleasure and experience of working with Marc Brooks, one of the hardest working people I know. He taught me so much just by example, always explaining if I had questions. I loved his thirst for knowledge, always wanting to learn. What I’ve tried to remember from him was “to do the right thing first, all the time.” Especially when interacting with staff, golfers, and people in general. Integrity is a very good trait to have. In the heat of the moment, I try to remember that.

Last summer I had a discussion with one of our beverage cart operators. I explained that their choice of traveling along the inside corner of a dog-legged fairway which meant heading towards play, down a steep grassed slope, where the golfers couldn’t see them

when teeing off, wasn’t the best choice, and that the cart path on the far side of the fairway, out of the landing zone, was a much safer option. Our President, Director of Operations, and Leader by Example, and part of the most forward thinking and conscientious ownership I have ever had the pleasure to work with, Michael Todd, having heard about it, termed it a “disciplinary criticism.” I learned a new term that day, I like it. Low key and effective.

I have noticed that after completing a project at a 100-year-old course like Legacy, the finished project doesn’t always blend right in right away and it can look out of place. My seed of wisdom to those around me is don’t worry about it, it will look perfect this time next year. And I’m usually right, it does.

There are times when I’m faced with a lot of issues all at once. Thoughts start swirling around in the brain as I try to figure out which task is more important, and what situation has the potential to spiral out of control. I try not to let any pressure get to me, but it can be challenging at times. Our guests only see the results of our decisions that we make, not the choices made along the way.

These little “seeds of wisdom” seem to keep popping up in my head more and more as I deal with new staff and all the little challenges that arise every day. I try to pass on some wisdom that I have learned. Maybe it will provide some guidance to others later in life, just as it did in mine. If I can face challenges and adversity with those “seeds of wisdom” I have gained from others, then life will be better for me and all those in my life.

None of these seeds may seem earth-shattering, and they may not even be new learnings to many in the turf industry. These seeds have been around for a long time and will always be relevant. I just thought I’d pause and give some thought and thanks to those people who have helped shape me, and to try to remember how I got to where I am in our world. ■

*These seeds have been around for a long time  
and will always be relevant.*



## CONTROLLED-RELEASE FERTILIZER YOU CAN COUNT ON.



**PREDICTABLE**  
Using our proprietary POLYGRAPH® software, your Harrell's Golf Specialist can help you dial in just the right prescription for your turf's POLYON® controlled-release fertilizer needs



**RELIABLE SPACE**  
POLYON® fertilizer's durable prill preserves the nutrients within the substrate and ensures a proper rate of release, providing consistent greening all season long.



**DURABLE**  
POLYON® fertilizer's original reactive layers coating process creates a durable, uniform adhesion between the polymer coating and the heated urea substrate.

**SUSTAINABLE**  
POLYON® fertilizer offers a reduced environmental impact. With more efficient nutrient uptake, significantly less environmental loss and fewer applications required, you get more with less!

For more information about POLYON® Fertilizer and the POLYON® Guarantee, visit [nutrite.com](http://nutrite.com) and [oscturf.com](http://oscturf.com)  
Nutrite Toll Free 1-800-265-8865  
OSC Toll Free 1-800-465-5849  
Contact your OSC or Nutrite Sales representative today!



### THE ORIGINAL REACTIVE LAYERS COATING

Providing consistent, reliable predictable results for 30 years

*A cross-section of POLYON® 41-0-0 prill with polymer coating adhered to urea substrate*