

## **2011 AGCSA Claude Crockford Environmental Award Presented in partnership with Syngenta Troy MacLaren, Kabi Organic Golf Course, QLD**

You would be hard pressed to find a more fitting winner of the AGCSA's prestigious Claude Crockford Environmental Award than Troy MacLaren. Since starting as superintendent of Kabi Organic Golf Course near Noosa back in 2001, MacLaren has helped to develop this one-of-a-kind facility which is literally at the cutting edge of environmental sustainability.



Abiding completely by organic principles, every facet of MacLaren's course maintenance operations is unique and over the past decade he has helped to promote the cause of organics and the role it can play in turf management. Through ongoing research and development at Kabi, MacLaren has proven that maintaining a golf course in such an environmentally sustainable manner is more than achievable. In fact, MacLaren sees it as a viable way in which golf courses should be maintained now and into the future.

Organics is often a misunderstood topic, but in its simplest form means doing everything the way it was done traditionally. In relation to golf course management, that means that no synthetic chemicals or fertilisers are used at Kabi, with groundstaff hand-weeding turf surfaces and spraying only things that are made naturally, such as daisy extracts and worm-based fertilisers.

Kabi has adopted a unique method of changing the mindset of golfer's that play the game by educating them on how the facility is different and why they have gone down the organic path. Kabi has higher thresholds in managing pest and disease problems than equivalent 'normal' courses, but the golf course is definitely of a standard that is acceptable.

The Kabi property measures 120 hectares, with 48 hectares of forest forming a buffer zone. The whole facility is designed to be a Land for Wildlife site, providing a home for various species including black cockatoos, forest kingfishers, whistling kites, king parrots, kangaroos and wallabies which all inhabit the golf course. Having the buffer zone protects the land from future development and ensures that it can continue to be used to provide an organic sanctuary.

Synthetic pesticides are prohibited and any major outbreaks have to be treated with organic products. There are very few traditional course management products MacLaren can use but the market is slowly formulating more environmentally friendly products. The resident pest controllers – sacred ibis, magpies, plovers, butcher birds and even kookaburras – keep insect pressures at bay with some assistance from greenkeeping staff using bio-dynamic practices and various organic inputs.

Weeds on the greens are controlled by seasonal organic strategies as well as hand-weeding. Notably, disease outbreaks at Kabi are minimal which suggests that inoculating the soil with beneficial biology is helping to keep the pathogens that cause disease at bay.

In regards to water management, the course design incorporates natural watercourses, nutrient stripping ponds and dams which allow Kabi the privilege of water self sufficiency. All liquids from the clubhouse/restaurant are processed through the waste water programme and eventually returned to buffer zones for nutrient uptake. In addition the machinery shed has a dedicated wash down bay that separates oil and diesel, grass clippings and other organic matter. Water from this facility is recycled for further use on machinery, again reducing water consumption.

In recognition of its unique set-up, Kabi is certified under the Australian National Organic and Bio-dynamic Standard. Certification is by Australian Certified Organic (ACO) and Biological Farmers Association making Kabi the only golf course in Australia, if not the world, that conforms to organic standards. To achieve and retain this, ACO requires stringent audit trails of all inputs (organic of course), soil and water analysis, organic management reports and integrated pest records.

**For the full story on Kabi Organic Golf Course, see Troy MacLaren's article which appeared in Volume 12.4 (July-August 2010) of Australian Turfgrass Management Journal.**

