

# Overseeding 1991

## Trends, blends and methods

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

*Recently, a group of golf course superintendents of the Ridge Chapter got together to discuss the coming overseeding season and to share their thoughts on products and programs. Keep in mind that each course has its own set of goals, soil and environmental conditions, and budgets.*

*While this session was convened for the purpose of generating this article, similar exchanges of information take place whenever superintendents gather at monthly meetings, seminars, or just a friendly round of golf.*

*While listening to the tape of this session, it was interesting to note how often tips and ideas tried successfully by one individual gave another superintendent a potential solution to a problem he had been trying to solve at his own course.*

*Sometimes it was a discussion about timing of cultural practices, or maybe an application rate of seed or fertilizer, or mowing heights, but there was always something that one could consider and accept or reject as it met the needs of his course and his members or owners. That's one of the real benefits of belonging to the FGCSA and the reason we are successful.*

### TRENDS and BLENDS

**T**he Ridge Chapter members in this group prefer the traditional and successful ryegrass or blends of ryegrass and *poa trivialis*. The blends are usually at a ratio of 80-85% rye and 20-15% *poa trivialis*.

The primary reason cited for preference of the ryegrass or predominantly

ryegrass blend was its tolerance for wear from traffic and warm weather. All superintendents anticipated large numbers of golfers this winter and believe ryegrass gives them the best growing surface for heavy play. Only one private course in the area with low rounds of play uses bentgrass each year. A few others are using the finer-bladed *poa trivialis* as a monostand or in a blend with bentgrass.

Also cited as important from the members' and owners' point of view was the color and aesthetics during winter play. Ryegrass again is the grass of choice to meet those demands.

Another question is whether to overseed only the areas of most wear during the winter (greens and tees) or to seed the entire golf course. One or two superintendents mentioned that their clubs had considered the possibility of eliminating overseeding altogether. While the group conceded that might be a consideration along the southern coasts of the state, the central and northern parts of the state are almost always destined to undergo overseeding to guarantee acceptable playing conditions during the winter. One hard freeze combined with large numbers of golfers can spell disaster for the rest of the winter and early spring.

Most prefer not to overseed wall-to-wall in order to service and rebuild some of the large fairway and rough mowers. If the course is totally overseeded all mowers, blowers, and sweepers must remain in action to keep up with the prolific growth of the ryegrass. However, the group recognized that resorts and developments may want to impress the large numbers of winter golfers with lush green grass everywhere.

There is a price to pay for wear and

tear on equipment with continuous use. Courses in the North rebuild all their equipment every winter, a fact owners and managers should consider when southern superintendents request money for capital equipment more frequently than their northern counterparts.

The group also recalled the past few winters have been mild enough that bermudagrass never really went off color. In such cases, overseeding wall-to-wall might sometimes be expensive insurance. As we all know in this business, almost every decision with regards to overseeding is a gamble, with weather being the biggest and most unpredictable factor.

### METHODS

If you think there are many opinions on which seed or blends of seeds to use, or how much of the course to overseed, wait until you read how many ways there are to sow and cultivate overseeded grasses and the considerations associated with each choice. Everyone wants his course to be in excellent shape whenever he tees it up, but there are steps in the overseeding process that require patience and understanding on the part of the superintendent and players alike.

**Timing.** The most popular date for overseeding in the Ridge Chapter area is the week after Thanksgiving. The November dates have offered a good compromise to the warm weather that occurred the past few autumns. But other clubs have begun seeding the last week of October to have new grass growing and normal playing conditions by Thanksgiving. In either case it will take four to six weeks — maybe even eight weeks before the new grass matures — and unseason-



ably warm weather in the fall can stress and kill the new seedlings.

**Preparation.** Preparing the bermudagrass greens, tees, fairways, and roughs is the key step in a successful overseeding season. The main purpose is to provide a surface which will allow the seed to make good contact with the soil for germination and penetration by the embryonic root when it emerges from the seed hull.

On fairways and roughs, brushing up the turf with tractor-mounted brooms followed by close mowing has proved successful. On greens and tees, combinations of brushing or light verticutting help stand up the turf to receive the seed. If a course has been maintaining close heights of cut, the superintendent may raise the height or even stop mowing just prior to seeding so the seeds can be caught and held by the grass blades. After seeding, some prefer to apply a light top dressing to help the seed-to-soil contact. Dragging in the seed with

the backside of a carpet is standard procedure. Rolling the seed is gaining in popularity to help press the seed into contact with the soil.

Another part of preparation is protecting unseeded areas from contamination with stray seeds tracked about by foot traffic and equipment. This usually requires the application of pre-emergent herbicides (Kerb and Surflan are popular) in advance of the overseeding process.

Walking booms or Spray Hawks are used immediately around the greens and tee surfaces, then Cushman-mounted 100-gallon tanks and booms tie in the rest of the slopes. Large 300-gallon tanks with flood jets pulled by tractors can be used in the fairways and roughs. Pre-emergent controls are also used on greens to prevent the germination of the dreaded annual bluegrass, *poa annua*, with its white seed heads disrupting the putting surfaces. In recent years the fungicide Rubigan has been a popular choice to

combat *poa annua*. These pre-emergent applications are also a function of timing and are very dependent on weather conditions.

**Sowing the seed.** A combination of walking rotary and drop-type spreaders is used on the greens and tees, while large tractor-mounted or pulled versions of the same can be used in the fairways and roughs. Calm days are a requirement so that an even distribution of seed can be achieved. The decision to seed should take into account the probability of rainfall and that no imminent storms are on the way to wash away all the hard work.

The amount of seed to be sown is a matter of choice and experience. Amounts of ryegrass seed to be used this year in the Ridge Chapter area range from 25-36 pounds per 1,000 square feet on the greens and 12-18 pounds per 1,000 square feet on the tees. Most of the superintendents will withhold a portion of the seed from the initial application to use as backup for thin areas that may develop.

# CYPRESS MULCH

Economical Bulk Loads  
or  
Convenient Bags

Wood Stakes  
• SURVEYING  
• CONSTRUCTION  
• LANDSCAPING  
• FARMING

## DELRAY STAKE AND SHAVINGS INC.

9500 W. Atlantic Ave.  
Delray Beach, Florida 33446  
(407) 737-6458

## We work at ground level...

## so you can play on top!



The fact is, **Central Florida Turf** is working hard to provide you with superior workmanship in construction of new golf facilities, irrigation with all turf installations or renovation of existing golf courses... *and* all at a competitive price!

**Jeff Harstine**  
President/Vice President

**Rodney Davis**  
Secretary/Treasurer

**Dennis Crews**  
Sales Manager

## Central Florida Turf, Inc.

4516 East Kinsey Road  
Avon Park, FL 33825  
(813) 452-2215 • 800-422-1187

# Overseeding 1991

Fairway and rough rates were not discussed.

**Fertility.** Starter fertilizers with high percentages of phosphorus and potassium are applied to the prepared greens and tees just prior to or just after seeding. Some stay with this starter blend for several applications, but all tended to shift eventually to blends containing slow-release nitrogen in a 1:1 ratio with potassium. Everyone in the group supplements their fertilizer with some form of micronutrients (iron, sulfur, etc.) either in direct applications of Tracite or potassium nitrate or other micronutrient blends in his tanks with their fungicide spray programs.

**Mowing.** Of all the topics this is the one that causes the most problems and the most discussion. Deciding when to cut and how high to cut places the super-

intendent between the rock and the hard place. He walks the line every day between aggravating players who want ideal playing conditions, and giving the seedlings a chance to survive. Individual course conditions, assessed by the superintendent, and playing conditions required by the players will dictate what heights of cut will be used.

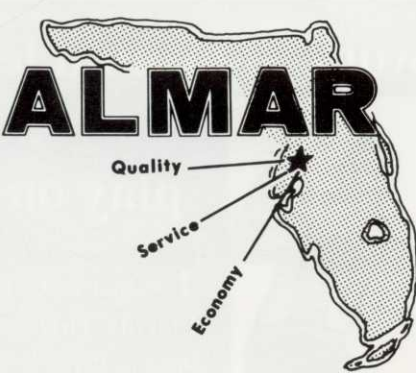
This area has been one where the most experimentation and gambling takes place. Some courses have acceded to the wishes of their members or management and heights of cut are kept low throughout the establishment period. This can be risky and re-seeding may be necessary.

The mowing methods favored by the group included raising the height of cut above normal, mowing when the grass was dry to avoid seed pickup on the rollers and tires, and then dropping the height

of cut progressively as the grass matures and can tolerate the lower cut. It seems every year that superintendents are forced to bring the greens closer and closer to the edge of disaster during the establishment period by the demand for perfect greens every day. This is one of those areas where a little patience by the players pays off with successful greens during the winter.

**Disease Control.** No preventive programs were discussed. One superintendent said he had not had to spray in the three years he had been at his course. Everyone uses treated seed on the greens and tees to protect the seedlings during germination. Products kept on hand for curative treatments if needed were Koban and Subdue for pythium, and Bayleton, Chipco 26019, Daconil, Dyrene, and Manzate for the spot and patch diseases.

•TURF TRACER • FOAM GARD • RUST BUSTER • BEAUTY  
 GREEN • PENETROL • KICK IN THE GRASS • TURF IRON • SUPER WET • EV R GREEN



**ALMAR**  
 Quality  
 Service  
 Economy

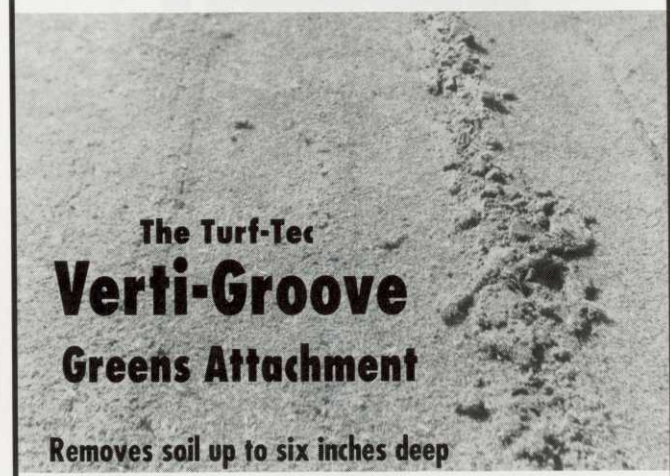
**CHEMICAL CO. INC.**  
 P.O. BOX 18101  
 TAMPA, FL 33679

**CALL COLLECT:  
 813-839-3363**

**STUART COHEN**  
 EAST FLA.

**RUSS VARNEY**  
 WEST FLA.

•TURF KOTE • WATER PENN • GREEN MASTER • SCRAM II  
 •KNOCK M' DED • GRIME OFF • GREEN LAPPING SOAP • RUST BAN • GREEN MAGIC



The Turf-Tec  
**Verti-Groove**  
**Greens Attachment**

Removes soil up to six inches deep  
*Don't rebuild that bad green... Verti-Groove it!*

**Turf-Tec International**  
 4740 NE 12th Avenue  
 Oakland Park, FL 33334  
**1-800-258-7477**



# Overseeding 1991

**Transition.** Five to six months after we have agonized over establishing the overseeding, it is time to monitor the transition back to a bermudagrass playing surface. The old method of spraying out the winter grass has lost favor because it also weakens the reviving bermudagrass. Most everyone favors a combination of frequent but light verticutting, gradual lowering of cutting heights, slight increases in nitrogen rates in the scheduled fertilizer applications, and slight cutbacks in moisture amounts where possible. These procedures in combination with the natural increases in air and soil temperature and competition from the bermudagrass should enhance a smooth transition. Spring renovation, usually in April or May for most courses in this area, should complete the transition process.

The following members of the Ridge Chapter contributed to this article: Kent Boggs, C.C. of Sebring; Jim Higgins, City of

Sebring; Mark Hopkins, Sun & Lake G.C.; Alan Puckett, Lake Region Yacht & Country Club and Al Simms, Spring Lake C.C.

## TURFGRASS QUIZ

**Answer:** Ponded water caused by poor subsurface, internal and surface drainage.

**Solutions:** Install tile drains, improve internal drainage with more porous soil, remove sod in ponded areas, fill hollows to grade and replace sod.

**Second best solution:** Drill French drains to water level using pea gravel for backfill to surface. Avoid covering stone with soil. Slit trenches backfilled with pea gravel will also help. Drain to a non-use area.

# RegalStar™

IS THE  
**NOXIOUS  
WEED  
GANG**  
STEALING YOUR  
TURF QUALITY?



Goosegrass, Crabgrass, Crowfoot, Spurges and Knotweed are just a few of a band of desperados out to steal the nutrients away from your turfgrass. Not only are they an ugly bunch, but they destroy turfgrass quality.

One pre-emerge application of RegalStar™ will get all the noxious weed gang while providing season-long, uniform Nitroform® nitrogen feeding. Turfgrass managers everywhere are obtaining superior quality turfgrass from a single RegalStar™ application. No costly multiple applications are needed. Get RegalStar™ for the very best results.



Regal Chemical Company  
P.O. BOX 900 / ALPHARETTA, GA 30239  
PHONE 404-475-4837 / 800-621-5208

NITROFORM® (Nitrogen) is a registered trademark of Nor-Am Chemical Co.

## TAKE THE HAZARD OUT OF GOLF COURSE LAKE MANAGEMENT.



### LET US SHOW YOU HOW!

Aquatic Systems, Inc. provides:

- Algae & Aquatic Weed Control
- Floating Fountains & Aerators
- Wetland Mitigation & Aquascaping
- State Permitting & Reporting
- Water Testing & Lab Analysis
- Grass Carp & Sport Fishing Stocking
- Clarification Treatments

### LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT FLORIDA:

St. Petersburg • Ft. Pierce • Ft. Myers • Longwood • Miami  
Pompano Beach (Corporate Office)

Call 1-800-432-4302 for a free evaluation of your lake management needs.

 **Aquatic Systems, Inc.**  
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES & PRODUCTS