



## A Superintendent's Journal

# FloraDwarf's a Serious Contender

One-year-old FloraDwarf green at the Lake Region Y. & C.C. in Winter Haven. Photo by Joel Jackson.

(Part 2 in a series on management of the new ultradwarf bermudagrasses)

In the summer issue, Matt Taylor kicked off the discussion of management practices for the new ultradwarf bermudagrasses with an article on his experiences with Champion at Bonita Bay East Golf Club in Naples. In this issue Jay Reister, Ponte Vedra Inn & Club in Ponte Vedra Beach; Alan Puckett, Lake Region Y. & C.C., Winter Haven; and John Lammrish, CGCS, Orange Lake Resort, Kissimmee answered the "Call for Articles" to tell you about what they are doing to grow in, cultivate and manage greens with FloraDwarf.

### Ponte Vedra Inn & Club

#### Turfgrass Density

The density in FloraDwarf is far greater than any dwarf on the market today.

The density is equal to the density of Champion ultradwarf. I just returned from playing bentgrass greens in Las Vegas.

I would say that FloraDwarf is equal to the density I saw on those greens. I am sure if you compared the two under a microscope, the bentgrass would have more density. But that is only because the bentgrass leaf blade is smaller. To the naked eye you could not tell the difference.

The density is so great, you will never have to worry about replacing greens every 10 to 12 years because they have been encroached upon so severely. Weed infestation will also be very difficult in this turf due to its density.

#### Low Growing

Obviously this grass has a low-growth habit. I have been on some fields that had not been mowed in over six months. The height of that grass could not have been more than a quarter inch. You would not

want to maintain this turf at .187 inches or higher. I don't believe it would be a good turf for tees, fairways or collars and approaches.

#### Purity

From what I have seen so far, this turf is as pure as it gets. It has been two years now and I have not found any off types.

#### Mowing Heights

I have never cut this turf above .155, including grow-in. This is very important. You can't treat this turf like Tifdwarf. You need to start mowing it low and continue to a point you feel comfortable with. Normally I keep my greens at .110 to .125. During stress situations, I go up to .155. If you have severely sloped greens you need to invest in some training wheels for your walk mowers or you will not be able to go as low as you want without scalping the slopes.

### Type of Equipment

I use Toro 1000 walk mowers. I highly recommend the use of walk mowers on the new ultradwarfs. I also believe you need to use a direct-suspension walk mower, not a floating-head mower like the Series 5 Toro unit. By using the floating head mower, you are promoting a biomass buildup that will eventually cause you problems.

### Top Dressing

When the turf is actively growing, I topdress lightly every other week. If the turf is not actively growing — and by that I mean, when nighttime temperatures drop below 55 degrees — I would not topdress. If you do topdress when the turf is not actively growing, all you will do is pick the sand up with your mowers even if you mow without buckets for a couple of days.

Equipment I recommend for topdressing: Either the Terra Topper or the new Meter Matic light topdressing unit. These two units seem to distribute the sand at the rate you need for these new grasses, which

is very light.

### Verticutting

I verticut once every two weeks when the turf is actively growing. I verticut at a depth of 1/32 inch. Sometimes, depending upon the amount of growth I am receiving, I go two directions at the same depth: 1/32. If you don't use verticutting as a tool with these new varieties, you're dead. The biomass will overtake you.

While you are growing in this turf, you need to be on an aggressive verticutting program. In my grow-in, I verticut once a week after we reached 50 percent coverage. This turf really likes to be verticut lightly and often.

### Fertility

For grow-in, we incorporated the following pre-plant materials: 50 lbs. of Milorganite/1,000 sq. ft.; calcium carbonate CEC at 25 lbs/1000 sq. ft.; 0-0-59 Polyon at 5 lbs. of K/1000 sq. ft.

After one week, apply Bio-Pro 12/3/9 at

1 lb. N/1000 sq. ft.; Apply .75 lbs. of K From Sul-Po-Mag weekly. Apply 1 lb. N from ammonium sulfate/1000 sq. ft. once every two weeks. Grow-in should be accomplished in six to eight weeks.

For established turf, we foliar-apply 1/8 lb. N, 1/16 lb. P, and 1/2 lb. K per 1,000 sq. ft. We add a micronutrient package as indicated by tissue sample analysis. I apply this every five to seven days year round. I do tissue samples once every two weeks to establish the needs of my turf. I think this is very important. Once a week I also apply .75 lbs K/1000 sq. ft. in granular form. I prefer a 0-0-28 from Lesco.

During the winter, the only granular fertilizers I use are Potash and it needs to be a material that will break down with one night's irrigation or you will end up picking it up with your mowers even if you go without buckets for a day or so.

### Water

I irrigate as needed. Presently it seems we need to irrigate every other night 10

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minutes per station.

## Overseed programs

I have never overseeded.

## Summary

If treated properly this turf is far and above the quality of Tifdwarf. It will definitely be the turf of the future. If you are not growing it now, you will be in the next three to five years.

JAY REISTER

*Golf Course Superintendent*

## Lake Region Y. & C.C.

### Establishment/Grow-In Program

**A**t Lake Region we reconstructed our green surfaces during the summer of 1998. We started the project on June 22 and opened the greens Oct. 1. We cored them out to a depth of 6 inches and put in a No.1 sand greens mix. We filled in the 6 inches with the new mix and rototilled them to a depth of 13 to 14 inches. We basically created an 85/15 mix.

We also made a few changes to some greens' contours but mostly just rebuilt them as they were. As to the establishment of the new greens, we first wanted to grow them in as fast as possible. We had a very tight window to pull this off. We planted the front nine July 23 and the back nine on Aug. 3. We upped the sprigging rates on the front nine to almost 30 bushels per acre with the norm being 20 bushels.

When we got to the back nine, our grow-in window was getting smaller so we used almost 35 bushels back there. This helped us get to the date we needed. Prior to the last floating of the new surfaces, we prepped them with Triple-Super-Phosphate, Milorganite, and Dol-Lime. Then we made our final tilling and leveling while working in these three products. Then we sprigged them and cut them in two different ways.

From this point on we poured the water to them. We started running 20-minute programs per green throughout the entire day.

We wanted to keep the soil profile as wet as we could. We ran this program for two to three weeks and then started to back off some. We went to 10-minute cycles

eight times a day. This seemed to keep them with good moisture throughout.

Now we started to get into the fertility. We put at least a pound of N out per week. We used ammonium sulfate one week, a complete 10-10-10 one week, and ammonium nitrate one week. We continued this throughout the majority of the grow-in.

As we got closer to our opening date the last three to four weeks, we began hitting them twice a week with ammonium nitrate to push them really hard. This helped close up some thin spots. We were able to redo 21 greens and get them opened on time.

We started to roll them after four to five weeks. We put a large 7-foot-wide roller with water in the cylinders on them to begin the smoothing phase. We would roll three times a week in different directions. This worked really well and from there we started to topdress them.

We would open the topdresser wide open and cover them thoroughly. We began our topdress regime about five weeks into the grow-in. We continued this throughout the grow-in and with the rolling and topdress together we ended up with some very nice surfaces.

When we were 70 percent grown in, we began to mow them. We used solid rollers and a mowing height of .170. We continued to mow every couple of days for a week or two, and then began mowing almost daily.

We were still topdressing and rolling as we continued mowing. All three operations went well and the surfaces started to look pretty good.

After a couple of weeks at that height, we went to .150 and at opening we were at .125 using Wiehle rollers with tournament bedknives, which we were using anyway.

### Routine Cultural Practices

#### A. Mowing

Our mowing program today uses Toro triplexes. We keep them at .120 with Wiehle rollers and we use tournament bedknives. We spin grind our reels weekly. We use 11-bladed reels and we're getting eight to ten weeks out our bedknives. We use a greens roller twice a week and we also use Primo at a rate of 1-1/2 ounces per acre every two weeks.

This helps on a daily basis in two areas: It seems to minimize clippings and keeps good speed in the late afternoon. We are able to provide a quality surface for our membership with triplexes and will continue to use them as long as we are able to do so. We add one new mower to our fleet each year and rotate the older mower out.

#### B. Verticutting

We use a Toro mower with their standard verticut reels. We verticut our surfaces biweekly. With each application we are set to go at 1/4 inch in two different directions. We adjust those two directions on each verticut cycle. We make a cleanup mowing and follow that with a light topdressing. We also plan to use verti-groomers this season.

#### C. Topdressing

We use a 90/10 mix with Canadian peat. We topdress behind the verticutter twice a month. We use a Ransome topdresser which we set at just over 1/2 inch. We drag it in with a triplex and we pull a carpet. This drags in the light sand and is easier on the green surface than a golf cart. We will do this operation on a Monday morning and play is held to a noon start. We have never interfered with play. We feel light and frequent is the best for us.

#### D. Fertility Program

We apply a granular mix every two weeks. We also put out a tank of liquid each month. For granular blends, we use a 17-1-10 and rotate with a 9-3-9 mini prill through the growing season and will use IBDU through the winter. During the season we apply almost 3/4 lb. every two weeks. We also spray weekly with a minor package. The liquid normally is a 32-0-0 and at times we will put out 8-0-8. We try to keep them pumped up and very healthy.

#### E. Aerification

We start to aerify greens as early in the season as we can. We will come in with 1/4 inch solid tines in February to March depending on the weather and temperatures. We will punch them monthly with 1/4 tines til the middle of May when we will bring in an outside service to do a deep-tine aerification. They use a 5/8-inch-di-