

greens that came back with the best soil tests. Some of the thin areas were problematic since they were on shady greens to begin with. Others thin spots tended to occur in hydrophobic areas. To address this we are going to aerify with 3/4" hollow tines and topdress with a sand and Profile mix for more uniform moisture control along with a program of using Cascade and other wetting agent materials."

Stuart Taylor

Central-Northeast Programs Haven't Responded to Milder Winters



"This year reminded me of the winters of the 70s and 80s."

- Butch Singo, Harrell's, Inc.

Butch Singo is a sales representative for the Harrell's Fertilizer Company, and his territory runs from Kissimmee to

Jacksonville. I asked Butch his take on this year's overseeding challenges.

"Overseeding programs have not changed much in my territory in response to the mild winters," he said. "As usual, some courses experienced rougher transitions than others. Most of my customers know that the weather can be unpredictable and cause havoc to playing conditions in the winter without the insurance of overseeding."

"Successful establishment was very weather dependent as usual. Those who tended to go early in the fall had better luck than those who were scheduled later and got caught when the rainy weather hit and washed a lot of seed away. Mild weather early belied the density of the overseeding and when the severe cold weather hit and the bermudagrass went dormant, people found out much or how little seed they really had established."

This year really reminded me of the winters I experienced as a superintendent in the 70s and 80s when we would typically have 20-30 frosts a year. A lot of superintendents and golfers haven't seen those kinds of winters in a long time and golfers often have short memories. Now since the second week in May, we've had high temperatures and low humidity, causing the overseeding to check

out too quickly and everyone is scrambling to push the bermudagrass to fill in as quickly as possible."

Butch Singo

West-Northwest Down Time is Nice; Preparation is Real Key To Success



"Preparation is the key to success."

- John Cunningham, GCS

John Cunningham, GCS at Black Diamond Ranch in Lecanto had the luxury of closing his course for two weeks to prepare and

overseed his courses. Black Diamond isn't the only club to recognize the importance of providing proper agronomic conditions to manage the turf, but it is rare. Some public-access courses and resorts simply can't shut down for more than a day or two, but clubs need to take a hard look at short-term convenience versus

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long-term success.

Cunningham reports that he had a good year and did not experience the problems some courses faced this year. He beat the rainy weather by getting the seed down in the second week of October and he had those two weeks to manage the seedlings properly so that he maximized their establishment.

Cunningham says, "I know we are fortunate to have the down time, but preparation is the key to success. We verticut the greens two ways and lowered the height of cut slightly to enhance seed-to-soil contact. After spreading the seed we dragged it in with a carpet drag and top-dressed heavily. I feel the heavier topdressing helps to trap the moisture and prevent the seed from drying out. With the closed time, we are able to properly irrigate and syringe to maximize germination without interfering with play."

"We only apply 8 pounds total of *Poa trivialis*. You can always add, but you can't subtract. It's more of an inter-seeding than overseeding. We contract out seeding of the fairways. I know for budgetary reasons many clubs do things in-house. We just feel that as part of a thorough preparation for the busy winter season, we want to maximize success

"I feel more comfortable with a contractor on a new tractor with a computerized spreader who does this every day, than one of our operators who may only do this once a year if we're lucky. At 400 pounds per acre, I don't want skips, misses and big overlaps which wastes money and seed and can cause transition misery if over applied in the shady roughs."

"I believe in the old saying, 'As you go in, so you come out', so we always try to manage the base bermudagrass first. If the bermudagrass is healthy and prepared properly it will survive and remain playable no matter what happens to the seed. We bump up our potassium levels to help with cold hardness and we solid-tine aerify high traffic areas in January before they wear out. We don't wait for a problem to become visible, and then it's too late. We all know where these areas are on

our courses, so why wait? Stay ahead of the curve and prevent a problem before it happens."

"Transition has gone smoothly also. We haven't used any herbicides to take out the overseeding. The greens were seeded lightly enough that light verticutting, a lower height of cut and the warmer weather have taken out the *Poa trivialis* without any problems. The fairways are also transitioning smoothly with just a slight lowering of the height of cut."

John Cunningham

Southeast Too Much Seed Can Be as Harmful As Too Little



"My rule of thumb is to go with what's growing."

- Paul Crawford, CGCS

Paul Crawford, CGCS, the 23-year veteran at the Palm Beach Country Club, hasn't altered his program very much at all over the years. While some may think overseeding this far south is overkill, Crawford says winters like 2002-03 show why he still overseeds to protect the turf and maintain good playing conditions in the always-unpredictable Florida winters.

Crawford says, "Every once in awhile, when we get a string of mild winters people begin to talk about backing off their seeding programs to save a few bucks, and then winters like this come along and they provide a big reality check. People are seeing purple and brown bermudagrass for the first time in a long time. I think overseeding is a pretty cheap insurance policy to guarantee good turf in the winter.

"I subscribe to John Foy's theory of

overseeding for south Florida, and that's inter-seeding not overseeding. We apply a blend of 3 lbs of Pennlinks bentgrass and 3 lbs of *Poa trivialis* at a rate of 6 lbs per 1,000 sq. ft. to our greens. One time. No repeated dusting applications at 2 lbs/1,000 sq. ft. as some folks do. I think most transition problems are caused by too much seed and not too little. In our fairways and roughs we apply 300 lbs/acre.

"I will qualify that by saying you really should have a checklist that tells you what type of club and golfers do you have and what do they want? Some just want fast greens and to heck with the color. Other clubs may want a park with beautiful stripes. Depending on your club and your budget, you will then have to apply different techniques to produce what is desired. Grass selection is important also. Some tolerate heat more than others. It all depends on what you are looking to accomplish and when.

"My rule of thumb is to go with what's growing. If it turns out to be a mild winter, the bermuda may take over. That's fine. Just let it go. Our preparations for seeding are pretty tame. We verticut the greens lightly and do nothing to the fairways before seeding. We take two days to do the front nine and two for the back nine. We open on Friday. It seems to me that the courses having problems in transition tended to go heavy on the seed rates.

"When spring comes early as it often does in south Florida, keep in mind we are managing very immature plants. They are at best only five months old by the time transition comes along. That's when superintendents walk a fine line with hot days and still cool nights. We have to be very vigilant and syringe and hand-water as needed to avoid losing the overseeding too quickly. Once the soil temperatures are up, then it's time to favor the bermudagrass with verticutting and fertility. You can never go by the calendar with overseeding. It's all visual and a feel for what's happening.

Paul Crawford, CGCS

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