

Spring Growth is in Full Gear

By Todd Lowe

Bermudagrass growth has sprung into action throughout the Florida Region. The rains that occurred over the past few months flushed salts from the rootzone and, with the recent increase in soil temperatures, bermudagrass growth has increased significantly. The increased growth provides a welcomed improvement on tees, fairways, and roughs that became beaten down over the winter season from continual play. These areas are now actively growing and recovering from stress.

Putting greens have become slower and less consistent with the recent growth flush. Surface grooming, brushing, light verticutting

and sand topdressing can be implemented on a more frequent basis to improve playing conditions on putting greens at this time.

Also, plant growth regulators can be applied to curb bermudagrass growth and improve overall turf quality. These chemicals suppress a growth hormone within the grass, decreasing vertical growth and encouraging turf density. On putting greens, PGRs improve turf density and consistency when applied on a continual basis.



Todd Lowe

Recent research from Clemson University also reveals that the PGR Primo (trinexapac-ethyl) improves turf quality on shaded bermudagrass putting greens as well. PGRs are also applied to fairways from late spring through the fall to reduce clipping production,

thereby reducing mowing frequency and clipping removal.

Golf courses that overseeded this past

winter are experiencing a slower transition back to the bermudagrass base. Cool spring temperatures favored overseeding growth over bermudagrass and this may encourage additional turf thinning when the overseeding finally dies off.

Smoother transitions generally occur when cultural practices are implemented throughout late winter and spring. Such practices include frequent grooming, brushing or light verticutting in winter, when the overseed is healthy. Then, as temperatures increase in spring, mowing heights should be lowered to increase sunlight penetration to the base bermudagrass. When temperatures warm substantially and sustained bermudagrass growth occurs, the turf should be fertilized more frequently with readily-available nitrogen to encourage bermudagrass recovery.

Some clubs are experimenting with herbicides to remove the overseeding and encourage bermudagrass recovery. These chemicals are effective, and can completely remove the overseeding in a few weeks. So, it is important to apply them during periods of active bermudagrass recovery and to communicate the possibility of unsightliness to the membership.

Plants of the Year

The Florida Nursery Growers and Lawn Care Association has announced the 2005 Plants of the Year. The plants selected for this program have been found to be good performers in the Florida environment and require less maintenance and fewer inputs. Here are two specimens for your consideration.



Nun's Orchid

Common name: Nun's Orchid
Botanical name: *Phaius tankervilleiae*
Hardiness: Zones 8-11
Mature height and spread: 3 ft. x 1.5 ft.
Classification: Orchid-ground cover
Landscape use: Perennial for mass use or as specimen in part shade. It is also good used as a potted plant
Characteristics: Sword-shaped leaves develop as the tall inflorescence of white, rose and brown flowers reaches full bloom in the late spring. The Nun's Orchid goes dormant in North Florida.



'Mona Lavender' Plectranthus

Common name: 'Mona Lavender' Plectranthus
Botanical name: *Plectranthus 'Mona Lavender'*
Hardiness: Zones 9-11
Mature height and spread: 2 ft. x 2 ft.
Classification: Perennial, annual in North Florida
Landscape use: Massed for color in a low border in full sun to part shade
Characteristics: The 'Mona Lavender' is compact, everblooming with handsome purple-backed leaves and produces multitudes of short stalks of lavender flowers.