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*Pine straw mulch has good water retention for beds.*

# Much ado about Mulching

BY SHELLY FOY

Mulch is defined as any organic or inorganic material placed on the soil surface to modify the soil environment and enhance plant growth. What can you use as a mulch cover?

Cypress mulch, pine bark, pine straw, grass clippings, gravel, plastic, just to name a few.

What are the benefits of mulching?

- ◆ Prevents water loss by evaporation
  - ◆ Suppresses weeds
  - ◆ Maintains uniform soil temperatures
  - ◆ Prevents crusting of the soil surface
  - ◆ Organic mulches can improve soil structure by decaying and adding nutrients to the soil
  - ◆ Improves appearance
  - ◆ Mulched plants produce more roots
- So how do you know which mulches are better?

Let's compare a few of the most commonly used mulches. A survey by the University of Florida indicated that Cypress mulch is the favored material. It has a deep brown color and is known for its longevity.

Cypress mulch has a high water holding capacity which may reduce the amount of water reaching the plant. However, moist cypress mulch prevents loss by evaporation. In wind tests, 80 – 100% of cypress mulch remained intact.

In tests performed, *grass clippings* subsided more than any other mulch, they dry and decompose quickly, and are not good in terms of longevity. They change color rapidly, and in wind tests, only 20 – 40% of the grass clippings remained intact. While grass clippings may not make a good mulch for landscape plant beds, they are a good nitrogen source and can be used in out of play areas as a supple-

mental nutritional source.

Pine bark is another dark-colored mulch. The large size particles (1.5 to 3 inches in diameter) are more attractive and last longer. The larger material is also better for weed control than the smaller sized bark.

Pine straw has good water retention, holds color fairly well, and performed well in the wind tests. However, it decomposes rapidly and can contain weed seeds.

According to Florida's Solid Waste Management Act of 1988, yard trash (branches, leaves, or grass clippings) may not be disposed of in municipal landfills. Utilizing this material as a mulch is an alternative. One concern in using this yard trash however, is fungal contamination (mushrooms). Not only are these mushrooms not aesthetically acceptable, they may restrict water infiltration.

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## Mulches can be used through entire landscape beds or around trees and shrubs.

Those surveyed in the University of Florida tests were interested in using a combination of a layer of the expensive cypress mulch on top of this yard trash material. The combination of the two helps cut down on the cost and also provides an avenue for disposal of this yard trash material.

Perhaps some test areas of this combination can be tried on your golf course to see what the effects would be. Inorganic mulches such as gravel, pebbles and stone are occasionally used. They are permanent, fireproof and there are many colors available to pick from to better blend in with their surroundings.

The disadvantages would be that mowers could be damaged by this material or flying debris could possibly hurt someone. They also reflect solar radiation, and therefore would create a very hot environment during the summer.

Plastic films are good for weed control, however they don't allow water or air movement and therefore can deplete the soil over time. They would need to be covered with an organic mulch to make them aesthetically pleasing. They are not recommended for poorly draining areas because they would keep the soil too wet and might result in disease problems.

Can you restore color to mulches?



*This cypress mulch walkway suppresses weeds and keeps a high-traffic profile area looking neat.*

You can apply a thin (1-inch or less) layer of fresh mulch, however this can be costly. You can rake the existing mulch and restore its appearance. There is also a mulch colorant, which is a dye that is sprayed on to restore color. If a colorant is used, apply carefully because they can cause skin and eye irritations.

So now that we have familiarized ourselves with some different mulch materials, where, when and how do we use them?

Mulches can be used through entire landscape beds, or around trees and shrubs. For trees, create a circle of mulch 2 feet in diameter for each inch of trunk

diameter. Increase this area as the tree grows.

Keep mulch 1 to 2 inches away from stems and trunks of plants in order to minimize possible disease outbreaks. If using wood or bark mulches, do not exceed 2 or 3 inches in depth. Too much mulch can result in shallow rooted plants suffocating. Pine needles and pine bark can be as deep as 4 inches because they allow good air movement.

Mulches can be applied anytime. How often to mulch would depend on which material is used. Cypress mulch, pine bark and wood chips only need to be replenished every 1 - 2 years.



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# Applying for Certification Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program

The certification guidelines you receive when you become an ACSP member gives you an overview of water conservation and the information needed to apply for certification in this category. The following example will give you a feel for the level of detail required. Hopefully this will help and encourage you to apply.

## Water Conservation Irrigation System

**Goal:** Maintain the system to keep it as energy efficient and accurate as possible.

**A.** We have installed a computer controlled irrigation system which regulates the amount of water used on a daily basis. Use of this system has reduced the normal watering cycle from 12 to 8 hours. We are using low pressure irrigation heads which reduce drift and lower the volume of water used.

**B.** The system has a rain hold module which will shut the system off when the rain equals the evaporation transpiration rate.

## Water source

The source of irrigation water is primarily "effluent", which we receive from a nearby utility. If the effluent supply is reduced or is down, we can use canal water on a temporary permit from the water management district. When this is not available, we have a well we use in emergencies.

## Watered Areas and Frequency

Water will be distributed on an as needed basis with an emphasis on deep, infrequent watering to support healthy turf. We keep our turf on the dry side for playability and agronomics. We scout turf areas daily and use a soil probe and weather data to determine watering needs. Based on this information we water as needed, generally at about 70% of the ET rate.

Top priority is given to greens, then tees and fairways. Roughs are watered less often, and club-

house grounds are on a drip irrigation system to conserve water. out of play areas and environmentally sensitive areas do not receive irrigation.

Watering takes place between 3 a.m. and 8 a.m. to reduce evaporation and promote drying of the leaf blade.

## Water Recapture and Reuse

Special drains throughout the property capture runoff and pump it back into the irrigation pond, which is then reused through the irrigation system.

## Turfgrasses

Greens and collars are Tifdwarf bermudagrass. The fairways, roughs and tees are Tifway (419) bermuda. Most of the out of play areas are native plant beds, which require minimum water.

## Water Distribution

Our irrigation system uses smaller watering heads and requires less pressure to operate. Since the system is computerized, it is constantly being monitored. Irrigation heads are checked daily to insure that the correct amount of water is being placed in the correct areas.

## Mulches

We use cypress mulch in all plant beds to conserve water. We have a chipper which we use periodically when we lose trees and use this chipped material in out of play areas as well.

## Water reduction

We have reduced our water consumption by 10% over the last 2 years. We hand water when needed in dry areas. We have eliminated 2 acres of turf by returning this area to native plant materials. All landscape material planted on the golf course is native and therefore requires less water. We do everything in our power to limit our usage because it makes good agronomic and environmental sense.

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Here's all you have to do. It's as simple as A, B, C.



Correctly identify the Lofts' varieties described in the following statements. Choose your answers from the "answer box" below and fill in the six blanks.

Checking our ads in some of the professional publications you read will help! The first 250 entries with the six blanks completed correctly will receive a sleeve of three Titleist golf balls.

**1** This variety of grass, developed by Dr. Richard Hurley, is played and putted on each winter and spring at many famous professional tournament sites throughout the Southern U.S. When winter overseeding dormant Bermudagrass, use it either alone, with a chewing fescue, with a creeping bentgrass or to enhance the performance of perennial ryegrasses in creating smoother spring transitions.

**2** It's a relatively new creeping bentgrass variety that's gaining popularity. Its performance is so successful that many new courses are being seeded with this variety. At Shinnecock Hills Golf Course it has

been used to interseed the greens in preparation for the 1995 US Open while Congressional Country Club is preparing for the '95 Senior US Open by overseeding their fairways with this new bentgrass.

**3** Many famous Scottish golf courses have natural populations of this type of grass. U.S. courses now use this species to create the "Scottish links" look. Name this most popular variety developed by Dr. Skogley at the University of Rhode Island.

**4** This is a cool season grass that satisfies some environmental concerns since it requires almost no fertilization or mowing and contains endophytes for natural control

of insects. This grass creates a very attractive, natural look for out-of-play roughs or wherever a low-maintenance grass is desired.

**5** What turf-type perennial ryegrass is named after the "King" of all professional golfers and is used as a fairway grass on many of "the highest-rated golf courses in the world"?

**6** Named after a famous professional golfer, this new "heat-tolerant" creeping bentgrass was developed by Drs. Engelke and Lehman at Texas A&M. The Atlanta Athletic Club is in the process of renovating all 18 greens and seeding with \_\_\_\_\_ in order to maintain the high standards members have come to expect.

TEAR HEAR

## ANSWER BOX

Reliant Hard Fescue

Laser *Poa trivialis*

Southshore Creeping Bentgrass

Pinto Wildflower Mix

Crenshaw Creeping Bentgrass

Rebel 3D Tall Fescue

Nassau Kentucky Bluegrass

Jamestown II Chewing Fescue

Palmer II Perennial Ryegrass

Repell II Perennial Ryegrass

Salty Alkaligrass

Prelude II Perennial Ryegrass

Azure Sheep Fescue

Baron Kentucky Bluegrass

Yorktown III Perennial Ryegrass

Preakness Kentucky Bluegrass

Of these Lofts' varieties, choose the six that correctly answer questions 1-6 above.



Now, a correct answer to the following question qualifies you for the grand prize — the all-expense-paid trip to the US Open, June 1995. In the event of ties (all seven questions answered correctly), a winner will be selected by a random drawing.

Which professional golfer won the Vardon Trophy twice in his tour career and finished second behind Jack Nicklaus in four major championships?

Chi Chi Rodriguez  Bruce Crampton  Tom Weiskopf



After answering all seven questions, complete coupon below and sign. Tear out complete ad and send to:

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Entries must be postmarked by April 15, 1995. In event of ties, a random drawing will be held May 1, 1995 and the grand prize winner will be notified via the mail by May 10, 1995. This advertisement may be copied in the event more than one individual wants to enter. Contest limited to persons employed as turfgrass professionals in the golf course, sod, lawn or landscape industries. One entry per person. Grand prize will include airfare (coach) for two with a voucher for 3-day car rental\*, accommodations for two persons (3 nights), 2 tickets to '95 US Open and \$300.00 spending money. Contest open to residents of continental US and Canada. Employees of Lofts Seed and their families, or employees and their families of any affiliate, subsidiary or distributor are ineligible. All entries become the property of Lofts Seed Inc. \* Or mileage allowance in the event air travel is inappropriate. (\$.30/mile to a maximum allowance of \$300.00)

# Our Watered-Down Game

## Turn Off the Sprinklers and Play Some Real Golf

BY BRAD FAXON

Golf in America is too green.

I'm serious. What American golf needs is a good old-fashioned water shortage. Green is pretty. It's beautiful. It's pleasing to look at. I like green. But it doesn't make golf courses play the way they should — the way they were meant to play.

Green means lush. Green equals soft. And soft isn't good. Over-watered golf courses have become standard in America. The word "roll" isn't even in an American player's vocabulary anymore. I think that's unfortunate. The scope of the problem, however, goes way beyond the setup of PGA Tour courses.

America's obsession with green has changed golf. The way American courses are maintained has changed the way equipment is made, the way courses are designed and the way people swing.

Look at the courses. All of a sudden, we're playing courses where you've got to hit the ball up in the air and stop it. Architecture went from Tillinghast, Mackenzie and Ross to Nicklaus and Dye. The game went from horizontal to vertical.

Look in your bag. Perimeter-weighted clubs make the ball go higher. (The better to play those new courses.) Square grooves make the ball spin and stop quicker out of the rough. And then there's the lob wedge. (The better to escape Pete Dye death-bunkers.) The old Brits never had an L-wedge. They never needed one off those tight lies.

Look at the swings. We went from swings like Ben Hogan and Byron Nelson to more upright swings like Tom Watson and Jack Nicklaus, guys who hit the ball real high. The current popular swing has become more upright.

Go back to the history of golf in Scotland. Courses were just laid out on the ground somewhere near the coast. They had no irrigation. They relied totally on the weather. Golf was played along the ground. The elements made the conditions tough. And you had a sand-based soil that was easy to keep firm. There were a lot of tight, hard fairway lies and you had to bump the ball along the ground and allow for roll.

I'm not blaming American superintendents. If there's a brown spot on a country club these days, the greens committee calls an emergency meeting. I think club members see the Bob Hope Classic or the Masters on television and say, "That's what we ought to have."

So their courses look great but they don't play the way they should. I grew up on a classic old Donald Ross course, Rhode Island CC. The first hole is a short par 4, open in front of the green. When I started out as a caddie, the members would hit a 5- or 6-iron, land it 10 or 15 yards short of the green and let it bounce onto the putting surface. That's how you played. You used the contours and allowed for them.

When I went back to play there during college, maintenance had changed the course. I hit 5-irons out of the rough that backed up. Balls stuck on the greens. The course was so much softer and easier. People at the club said, "Brad, this is the best this course has ever been." I said, "No, this is the greenest it's ever been." And they didn't know what I was talking about.

Green is OK if it's firm. That isn't usually the case in the U.S., where over-watering reigns. Warwick Hills, home of the Buick Open, is one of the longest courses we play and always gives up some

of the lowest scores. I played there Monday after the tournament and talked to the head pro. He told me the superintendent is scared to death the tour will starve his course and he won't be able to keep it green after the tournament. So he drenches it for two weeks before, but we had rain this year, our drives plugged and we played preferred lies the first few rounds.

You want to know why foreign players are dominating professional golf? Because they play firm courses in the wind and still play bump-and-run shots and have a lot of imagination. American players have had those shots taken from them. The courses are too lush.

Remember what Jose Maria Olazabal did at the final hole of the Masters? He pulled his iron shot and it ran down the slope. He was past the hump in the middle of the green. He played what I think was the shot of the tournament, a bump-and-run down the hill, and saved par. It was an incredible shot. If that had been the Buick Open, say, he would've just pulled out a sand wedge, flipped it up and stuck it next to the flagstick. Where's the challenge in that?

The United States GA has the right idea. When it was deciding whether to go back to Newport CC, a true links, for the 100th anniversary of the U.S. Amateur, the club's membership was in favor of the idea and said, "Don't worry, we'll make sure you get a sprinkler system in by 1995." The USGA told them, "If you put in a sprinkler system, we're not going to hold the event there."

That's the way golf was meant to be. Now, what do you say we turn off the sprinklers and play some real golf?



LETTER

# Senator Answers on Biological Diversity

Dear Mr. Jackson:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Convention on Biological Diversity.

As you know, this treaty is the product of formal multilateral negotiations designed to encourage global conservation of genetic resources. While this treaty is well intended, I am concerned about several provisions, most notably its potential implications for U.S. domestic law and environmental policies.

I recently signed a letter, along with 34 of my Senate colleagues, urging (former) Majority Leader (George) Mitchell to postpone consideration of the treaty until these concerns are appropriately addressed. You can be assured, I will closely monitor this legislation and will keep your thoughts in mind.

Again, thank you for sharing your views with me.

Sincerely,

Connie Mack, United States Senator

**Editor's Note:** Write your legislators urging defeat of this treaty.



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The sedges seem to be the #1 weed control problem today.

# Weed Control

## Preemergent & Post Emergent Programs

Some very obvious themes and trends emerged from the contributions of our peers on this topic. Wall-to-wall treatments of herbicides are declining in frequency in response to environmental stewardship initiatives. "Spot treatment" is the new wave. It is environmentally sound and cost effective. Planning, timing, and mapping reduce the number of applications needed to eliminate a problem. Manual removal of weeds is making a comeback. Healthy turf is still the best deterrent to weed encroachment. It seems sedge has replaced goosegrass as the #1 weed problem. And last but not least - Mother Nature still rules! – *Joel Jackson, CGCS*

### Staying on Schedule is a Must!

Thirty holes at Grand Cypress Golf Club are overseeded wall to wall. We used to apply 1/2 rates (two applications about ten days apart) of Ronstar in late February to control primarily goose grass in the early summer. We never thought we had much of a problem, so we decided to try a year without any preemergent type herbicides. The experiment worked for us and now we are on a weekly spot treatment post-emergence program only

(after the ryegrass has transitioned).

Our weekly rotation includes MSMA, 2+2, Basagran, Image and Illoxan. Illoxan is the main reason why we no longer worry about goose grass. By staying on a rigid schedule, weeds may appear, but we get them when they are extremely young, so most of our guests do not see them.

In mid-April we apply 1/4 ounce of Simazine per 1,000 square feet over our ryegrass on roughs, fairways and bunker faces. At the 1/4 ounce rate, we will eliminate our overseeding in two to four weeks, depending mostly on temperatures.

Higher rates of Simazine will take the grass out faster. We like the slow transition so again our guests do not see it happening.

In the early summer, we will pre-emerge along the base of our grassy mounds. The mounds generate most of our problems and the pre-emerge along them helps keep us clean. Surflan and Barricade are the two products we have used in these areas.

Lastly on the overseeded courses, we have to stop all herbicide applications at a minimum of 30 days in advance of our