Backers, skeptics assess mesh-grid technology

By Hal Phillips

Imagine, if you will, a bucket firmly packed with sandy soil. Turn the bucket over and stand atop the resulting "castle" of a dirt. Impossible, right? Not necessarily. If the soil has been mixed with soil reinforcement meshing, the sandy soil will support your weight — or so say advocates of this fledgling technology, designed to alleviate direct damage and increase load-bearing capability while resisting compaction. Its official moniker goes something like this randomly oriented, interlocking mesh, high-sand root zone system (for mesh system, for short). And studies from Dr. James Beard and Samuel Silers at Texas A&M vouch for its performance in a wide range of golf course applications.

Mesh systems are fairly simple. Thousands of mesh rectangles (50mm by 100mm) are mixed into soil which occupies the upper four to six inches of a high-sand root zone. For their experimentation, Beard and Silers used Tifway Bermuda grass. Assessments were conducted four times during each growing season starting in 1985.

"The evidence suggests that mesh elements have an interlocking, three-dimensional aspect that imparts a flexing action," wrote Beard and Silers in a paper presented at this year's GCSAA conference in New Orleans.

Mind you: This is not a one-piece, horizontal..
Environmental awareness campaign
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Agri-Diagnostics' larger campaign, co-sponsored by Ciba-Geigy, the manufacturer of plant protection products, including Exhibit biological herbicide, is already underway. Superintendents purchasing a case of Exhibit by Aug. 15, 1992, will receive a donation toward a nationwide environmental awareness campaign. The advertisement, entitled "Caring For The Earth," will appear in selected golf publications. A promotional kit containing posters, excerpts of the advertisement, and a press release will be sent to participating superintendents for use in club mailings and other promotions.

"Golfers may not be aware of the efforts golf course superintendents put into meeting the twin challenges of keeping golf courses green and protecting the environment," said Jim Donovan, manager of sales and marketing for Agri-Diagnostics. "Through this campaign, we hope to create public understanding and recognition of the scientific practices and technologies superintendents are applying to safeguard the environment.

The Reveal Kit is a turf management system that uses immunoassay technology (a process proven effective in medical diagnostics) in a non-traditional way to detect the presence of three widespread turf diseases: brown patch, Pythium blight, and dollar spot. For more information on the campaign, call Donovan at 609-727-4858.

Label changes for atrazine
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The label changes for atrazine are warranted because atrazine "tends to move in the soil." However, concerns surrounding golf course application of atrazine are limited, said Dr. B.J. Johnson, a research weed scientist at the University of Georgia. "This could be a problem, but not as much with turf," said Johnson. "There's not quite so much runoff in a golf application. And besides, it's a regional thing.

Ciba-Geigy markets an atrazine-based herbicide under the product name, Aatrex. According to Steve Spain, Ciba-Geigy's product manager for atrazine, the label changes focus on two areas. "The new label will result in a reduction in the total amount of atrazine used, and will address conditions which increase the chance of surface-water runoff from treated fields," he said. "As a result of these efforts, we are more confident than ever that atrazine use, when managed properly, can continue to be a viable weed control option for growers without compromising water quality.

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