Can compost actually fight snow mold?

By PETER BLAIS

GLENVIEW, ILL. — Superintendent Dan Dinelli is experimenting with yard compost this fall to see if the organic alternative will help suppress snow mold here at North Shore Country Club.

"There’s some data that supports the idea that a top dressing of compost injected with certain bacteria can help prevent snow mold," Dinelli said. "It’s pretty preliminary data. But since they’ve taken away the mercury-containing products we’ve always used to combat snow mold, we’ve got to find an alternative.

"There are several other fungicides out there, but none that work as well as the mercury products. Compost is a natural alternative. Hopefully it works."

Laying down snow mold treatments to prevent snow mold is one of the main winter preparation projects at Northern courses. Snow mold is particularly prevalent where snow remains on the ground for three months or more without a thaw. It is characterized by the springtime appearance of grayish to dark brown-colored areas ranging from 3 to 24 inches in diameter.

Dinelli plans to test a compost mix containing products we’ve always used to combat snow mold, we’ve got to find an alternative.

Fertilize & overseed: All at once

By PETER BLAIS

MARIETTA, Ga. — It’s mid-fall, the summer help has returned to school and superintendent Tracy Meeks is looking at overseeding Canterbury Golf Club with a "bare bones" crew.

Until a couple of years ago, Meeks’ crew did the time-consuming job itself with the limited equipment available at the course. That’s when O.M. Scott representatives approached him about putting their custom fertilizing trucks to a new use, i.e. overseeding Meeks’ course.

“It’s worked very well,” Meeks said. “There are some skips because the trucks act as giant drop spreaders. The little that doesn’t get covered we can go back and do ourselves. Overall, though, it’s the quickest way I’ve seen to get the course green for winter.”

Scott first introduced its fleet of fertilizer trucks in 1992, according to Dale Lybarger, agronomic services director of Scott’s Professional Business Group.

The single-axle, dump truck-like vehicles carry a giant hopper that stores materials before feeding them to a dispenser in the back of the truck. A large shroud stops fluffy, lightweight materials from blowing around as they are placed on the ground. Radar monitors the vehicle’s speed and direction, relaying the information to an on-board computer that adjusts application rates as the vehicle speeds up or slows down.

Scott technician Dale Hanna is credited with first proposing using the vehicles to overseed Northern courses with ryegrass, Lybarger said. Scott began offering the additional service in 1993.

“It takes us eight hours to overseed a typical course, something it normally takes a grounds crew days to do,” Lybarger said. "The key is seed placement. You have to apply it at a consistent rate with little overlap. For example, the truck travels through the center of the fairway at 11 to 12 miles per hour. It slows significantly as it approaches the green. The radar tells the computer the green is ahead, the vehicle slows and the computer slows the application rate.

“The technician operating the vehicle is the key to the operation, however. We hire trained golf course personnel, many assistant superintendents, who understand the placement of seed.”

Meeks was impressed with the operators. "I don’t even send someone to ride with them anymore," he said. It cost Meeks $12,000 to overseed Canterbury’s 20 acres of fairway.

Two years ago, Scott realized it could also help Northern courses prepare for winter by using the same vehicles to seed and a high-quality fertilizer application in early winter.

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That included three visits: an initial starter fertilizer, the actual placement of seed.

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Top-dresser turned overseeder

With a few minor modifications and two special covers, the Turfco F-12 Top Dresser will overseed fairways, repair areas, tees and greens with a tow-behind topdresser. As an overseeder, the modified top dresser requires 75 percent less labor than broadcast spreaders, according to company literature. The F-12 spot seeds in two days to accomplish.

The ability to use the Turfco F-12 top dresser as an overseeder is made possible by its patented chevron belt. It allows the user to apply a wide variety of materials—in top-dressing mixtures of sand, peat, mosses and humus as well as crumb rubber and calcine clays. Turfco discovered the top dresser could also apply grass seed.

The F-12 handles all ryegrass blends and other large-seed grasses used for overseeding. These seeds are used predominantly in Southern parts of the country and intermittently in the North. The F-12 can spread rye seed at a minimum rate 7 pounds per 1,000 square feet or 300 pounds per acre.

The F-12 does not apply very small seeds at lower rates. Turfco developed a special-fitting hopper cover to prevent lightweight grass seed from blowing out of the hopper. To prevent wind drift during overseeding, a wind screen covers the rear panel and seeding zone from the hopper to a few inches above the turf. A hand-controlled clutch actuator lets the operator start and stop overseeding without ever getting off the seat of the tractor.

For more information call Turfco at 612-785-1000.

CIRCLE #307

Verti-Drain offers aeration alternative: Narrow-needle tines

Verti-Drain, developer of a diverse line of soil aeration systems, has introduced a series of multi-tine aluminum holders that utilize narrow-needle tines for effective golf course and sports field aeration during the hot, high-traffic summer months. The new equipment, with tines divided into two rows, enables turf professionals to aerate faster with the same amount of holes per square foot, or at the same ground speed with more holes per square foot.

The solid needle tines (each 5/16 of an inch by 9-1/4 inches) used in Verti-Drain’s multi-tine heads can penetrate the soil and deliver air and other nutrients to the roots up to a depth of 7 inches with virtually no surface disruption. Follow-up topdressing isn’t necessary. Multi-tine heads developed for the Verti-Drain 005.120 Model (7 inch by 2 inch by 1-3/16 inch) incorporates 7 needle tines and offers two 3/4-inch by 2-3/16-inch adapters which fit directly into the 3/4-inch holes of the tine holder. A separate multi-tine holder for the Verti-Drain 165.145 Model (8 3/4 inch by 2 inch by 1-3/16 inch) fits 8 needle tines symmetrically into two rows. It also comes with two adapters.

For more information, contact Verti-Drain at 717-298-9390.