

KIRKLAND, Wash. — OB Sports has formed a new consulting division under the direction of agronomist Tom Christy, director of golf course maintenance for the company.

OB Sports, headquartered in Kirkland, owns eight courses and manages facilities in Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington and Texas.

As part of the new service,

OB Sports forms agronomy consulting division

Christy will visit each property on a regular basis and will establish a customized golf course maintenance program. If necessary, he identifies and hires a first-class golf course superintendent to implement the program. Weekly updates and periodic visits to the property ensure that quality turf

conditions and cultural practices are established.

Christy, who joined OB Sports in 1998, previously worked as a superintendent at courses in California, Washington and Oregon. He is the recipient of the Golf Course Superintendents Association Environmental Stewardship Award and was the Or-

egon Golf Course Superintendent Association's Superintendent of the Year in 1995. He is a two-time president of the Northwest Turfgrass Association, a charitable trust that raises money for turfgrass research.

Ironwood Country Club in Palm Desert, Calif. and The Reserve, a 36-hole facility near Port-

land, Oregon, are among the first two clients to sign maintenance contracts. In addition, the courses already on the OB Sports Trail will continue to receive the benefit of Christy's expertise.

Members of golf courses under contract with OB Sports also enjoy the privilege of membership in the OB Sports Trail, which allows preferred starting times and discounted fees at all OB Sports-managed facilities.

Take-all patch

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patch, according to Clarke, who shared his findings at the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference and Show here.

Under Clarke's regime, the first step is evaluating the health of the affected soil. "The symptoms occur when the soil has a high pH between 6.5-8.0," he said.

Therefore, in order to control the disease, you must first control the pH of the soil, said Clarke. Over three years, Clarke found best results when using acidifying fertilizers. The optimum pH, he said, is around 6.0.

This approach works even better in combination with a sub-surface application of magnesium sulfate, according to Clarke. In the study, magnesium was applied in April-May at a rate of 1-2 tenths of a pound and then repeated every six weeks. This was found to be extremely effective in reducing disease and strengthening turf.

"Reducing the pH and adding magnesium goes hand in hand with combating take-all patch," said Clarke. "It enhances the plant's natural defenses against the disease and the magnesium is toxic to the fungus."

Compaction must also be controlled since shallow rooting and stressed turf leave the plant wide open to the disease. Therefore, Clarke recommended that the turf be aerified in the spring and fall, but emphasized that it should not be done when symptoms are evident on the turf.

As the aerifying method suggests, timing is key in controlling take-all patch. According to Clarke, the best time to attack the disease is from October to November—before the disease goes into dormancy but after the symptoms have shown themselves—and in the spring before the disease begins to take hold again.

"You can affect potential infections that may develop in the winter or early spring by doing two fall applications and one spring application," said Clarke.

In tandem, these approaches have proven to reduce the impact of take-all patch. Clarke expects that new fungicides using strobilurin chemistry and new turf injection equipment will increase the superintendent's ability to fight take-all patch.

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