Philadelphia CC regrassing

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said. "The greens have already come in. We've just started to mow and they look beautiful."

WHITFORD CC ALSO REGRASSED

After experiencing a similar situation at Whitford Country Club, in Exton, Pa., head superintendent Chris Givens is satisfied with their regrassing last year. Using the L-93, Crenshaw, and Southshore bentgrass fairway mixture instead of the previously laid perennial ryegrass, Givens claims the bentgrass has "performed better than I ever thought it would."

The 1998 outbreak of gray leaf spot damaged roughly 75 percent of the turf at Whitford, but the new bentgrass fairways, Givens said, "are perfect – a little brown patch earlier in the season and some dollar spot just starting to show now. But with the type of weather conditions we've had this year, it has worked out well."

Philadelphia's warm, humid summer created ideal conditions for the gray leaf disease to explode, disseminating spores by wind, water, animals, shoes and equipment. Other factors contributing to gray leaf development, typically, are new turf, shaded areas, high nitrogen levels from fertilizers and any other general strain on the grass. The gray leaf spot, also known as "blast," often strikes with an unusual outbreak cycle of every two to three years. It may attack one year, be dormant or mild for the next couple of years, and then destructive the next.

Remembering the 1998 outbreak, courses in the Philadelphia area aren't likely to take any chances with another overwhelming eruption of the blast disease in 2001. They also don't relish the prospect of draining their maintenance budgets in the future with multiple applications of fungicides.

For its conversion to bentgrass, Philadelphia CC brought in Joe Duich, Ph.D., former head of the Penn State turf grass program. Duich also developed some of the most disease-resistant new bentgrasses available in the turf industry, such as the Penn 'A' and 'G' series for greens. Using grass seed mixtures typically provides some defense against turf disease. Three varieties – L-93, Crenshaw and Southshore – seem to work effectively together in the Pennsylvania area. Disease resistance is the L-93's most distinctive feature, whereas the Crenshaw provides a strong heat tolerance and the Southshore rounds out the mixture for balance.

Though creeping bentgrass is not completely invulnerable to gray leaf spot, it is more resistant to the disease. Using bentgrass in Pennsylvania will also be environmentally beneficial – smaller amounts of fungicide will be required to maintain the attractiveness and health of the course.

Enough is enough for superintendent Michael McNulty at Philadelphia Country Club, who hopes to match the success that Givens has had at Whitford. ■

Laser mower debuts in Europe

COLOGNE, Germany — Makers of traditional lawnmowers, Wolf, have developed a mower that makes the use of blades obsolete. Chopping the grass into a fine mulch, maintenance workers will simply be wiping off the "eye" of the laser after each mowing.

The designer has attached the new laser mower onto the chassis of a Mercedes Smart Cabriolet, a two-seat convertible. The machine, powerful enough to be registered for road use, is estimated to cost $30,000. The price is expected to go down as the models go into production, starting in 2002.

AGRONOMIST JIM BAIRD JOINS USGA GREEN SECTION IN NORTHEAST

EASTON, Pa. — Jim Baird, a Ph.D. agronomist, has joined the Green Section of the U.S. Golf Association. He will be taking over for Matt Nelson in the Pennsylvania office and visiting golf courses in the New York and New Jersey area. Nelson will remain with the Green Section as the agronomist for the Northwest Region. This year Nelson will be visiting courses in the Northwest, Northeast, Midwest, and Southwest.

Baird received his undergraduate degree from Colorado State University and his M.S. and Ph.D. from Auburn University. He spent four years on the Oklahoma State University faculty staff and the past three years on the faculty staff at Michigan State University.