Superintendents overcoming fertigation learning curve

By ANDREW OVERBECK

While fertigation and injection systems have been available for many years, more superintendents are tuning into the benefits of applying liquid fertilizers and other nutrients through their irrigation systems.

Once overcoming the initial learning curve, superintendents are finding that fertigation units not only save time, labor and fertilizer costs, but also can improve playing conditions by constantly providing low levels of nutrients to turfgrass.

"Once I let the technology take over, I can go back on the course and know that I’m doing it right," said Peter George on the value of fertigation.

Our owner was actually the one who pushed the fertigation system on me," said Hollof. "Once I saw the results of how fast the greens came in using the fertigation system, I started using it more during the grow-in. Now that we are fully operational, we use it for 60 percent of our fertilization."

George doesn’t see that level going any higher, however, because his first application in the spring must be made before he can turn on his irrigation system.

"I go out in the spring and put a half-pound of nitrogen on the fairways with a low-quality granular and then I spoon-feed with the fertigation system all summer long," he said. "As a result I don’t have peaks and valleys like other courses in the area. With the constant feed, I get good color and quality."

Down the road at Innderquoit Country Club in Rochester, N.Y., superintendent Rick Hollof also is learning how to best use his new fertigation system that was installed as part of a $1.5 million golf course and irrigation system renovation.

"I have been moving more toward using liquid fertilizers and plant growth regulators," said Hollof. "When it came time for a new irrigation system, this was my chance to add fertigation. So far in our first season, we are using it for 70 percent of our fertilization."

As George and Hollof sort out their fertigation programs, other superintendents, like Ryan Porter at Old Ranch Country Club in Seal Beach, Calif., depend on their systems to keep their courses up and running.

Porter uses a fertigation system to distribute eight tons of gypsum monthly onto the 18-hole layout to help fight the water-phobic, high-sodium soils. Using liquid fertilizer for foliar feeding also helps him

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Seeded bermudas are narrowing the quality gap

By ANDREW OVERBECK

After nearly a decade and a half of work, turfgrass breeders have introduced seeded bermudagrasses that are getting closer to the quality of the best vegetative varieties. Beyond the obvious cost savings associated with using seed versus sod, some seeded varieties also require less water and have better cold tolerance.

"In the past seeded bermudagrass was pretty far away from vegetative varieties but the gap is closing," said Kevin Morris, executive director of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program based in Belleville, Md. "Seed is cheaper to use, and it has better cold hardness. If you want to establish something quickly they are a good choice."

Seeds West’s Princess seeded bermudagrass has topped the NTGP quality rating in recent trials for seeded varieties.

According to Seeds West director

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Audubon Int’l certifies 500th sanctuary

SELKIRK, N.Y. — Audubon International has certified its 500th Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.

"In an era where we see increasingly complex environmental problems, Audubon International has dedicated itself to helping people from all walks of life be part of the solution," said Audubon International president Ronald Dodson. "Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries exemplify what can be done when people make a commitment to good environmental stewardship and sustainable resource management. We applaud the many golf courses that are participating in this crucial effort."

Certified properties account for more than 173,000 acres of land that is managed to protect wildlife and environmental quality and includes backyards, schools, golf courses, cemeteries and a variety of corporate sites.