

# Clark Talks Turf

■ TIMELY TURF ADVICE



## → Act Now for Better Fairways

BY CLARK THROSSELL, PH.D.

Zac Reicher, Ph.D., is a professor of turfgrass science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and develops strategies to re-establish a desired turfgrass species to replace annual bluegrass and keep it out. He can be reached at zreicher2@unl.edu.

**Q** The heat this summer is taking its toll on annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) in fairways across the country. What do you suggest as a recovery strategy?

Take advantage of Mother Nature removing the annual bluegrass and seed the dead and thin areas with perennial ryegrass, creeping bentgrass or possibly low-mow Kentucky bluegrass. Seed as soon as you see the annual bluegrass turning yellow. Once the annual bluegrass turns yellow, it is not likely to recover.

**Q** When should superintendents seed their fairways?

Today. Even if it is early August, you want the seed of the desired turf to get a head start when there is no competition from annual bluegrass and annual bluegrass seed has not started to germinate. And in many locations the annual bluegrass won't begin to germinate for another month.

A superintendent's goal should be to get the perennial ryegrass or creeping bentgrass seed in the ground, germinating and growing as soon as possible. This gives the desired turf a huge head start on annual bluegrass. And follow that with an aggressive program to keep annual bluegrass

from becoming re-established.

Not only is seeding with a desired turf in early August a sound agronomic idea, the golfers will see an aggressive effort to improve the golf course.

**Q** You emphasized that it is critical for a superintendent to act aggressively to keep annual bluegrass from coming back and dominating the stand. What are your recommendations to achieve this?

If a superintendent seeds perennial ryegrass or Kentucky bluegrass, one strategy we have had good success with is applying Tenacity (mesotrione) at seeding. Make a second Tenacity application after two mowings or 28 days after seedling emergence, whichever is later.

After the perennial ryegrass is established, a superintendent could use Progress (ethofumesate) to control any annual bluegrass. A fall application of a



Overseeding bare areas will be successful in the short-term. But by spring, visible rows of the desired turf (above) often will be crowded out by annual bluegrass.

pre-emergence herbicide on an established perennial ryegrass or Kentucky bluegrass turf is another option to control annual bluegrass.

If a superintendent seeds creeping bentgrass, a strategy that has worked for us is applying Velocity (bispyribac-sodium) after the creeping bentgrass has been mowed at least twice. A second application of Velocity 28 days after the first application will help control annual bluegrass.

**Q** Please provide a little background on pre-emergence herbicide applications in the fall to control annual bluegrass seed as it germinates.

Several pre-emergence herbicides are labeled for use on established golf course fairways to control annual bluegrass, and they are effective when applied at the proper time. Apply a pre-emergence herbicide in late August or early September, depending on location, prior to peak annual bluegrass seed germination.

With mild fall and winter weather we have noticed annual bluegrass germinating late in fall, and this past February, we saw a big flush of annual bluegrass seed germinate. This year has been abnormally mild. We wouldn't expect annual bluegrass to germinate in February most years, but a pre-emergence herbicide applied in late summer would likely control annual bluegrass germinating throughout the fall. An additional pre-emergence application may be needed for control throughout the winter and spring depending on your location.

Clark Throssell, Ph.D., loves to talk turf. He can be reached at clarkthrossell@bresnan.net.