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New technologies have expanded the possibilities, but it takes homework to decide which one is best for you.

By Frank H. Andorka Jr., Associate Editor

George Frye, superintendent of the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island Golf & Tennis Resort in Kiawah Island, S.C., says fertility programs, like subtle legal differences between states, depend on where courses are located.

With all the new products coming on the market, Frye says careful consideration should take into account factors such as grass type, weather conditions — even water quality.

"Fertility programs are not one-size-fits-all propositions," Frye says. "When fertilizers fail, it's most likely because the superintendent didn't analyze the problems well enough and figure out which products were best for his or her course."

Stephen Ludwig, superintendent at Gettysburg CC, a private 9-hole course in Gettysburg, Pa., says there's a lot of trial and error involved in picking a fertility program, but the latest technologies have significant advantages if a superintendent can afford them.

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Here. There. Everywhere.

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"Slow-release products give you a good release value at a reasonable price," Ludwig says. "They're a little more expensive, but when you're looking to keep your course in the best shape possible, you have to be willing to spend the money."

Though computer technology reputedly changes every 18 months, fertilizer technology doesn't change nearly as quickly. Manufacturers of slow-release fertilizers work each day to improve the products similar to those that have been around since 1955. Their use, however, didn't expand rapidly until coated products reached the market in the late 1970s and early 1980s, says Jeff Higgins, director of marketing for Pursell Technologies. The products from that era, which consisted of urea and potassium coated with sulfur, worked fine, but they were unstable because sulfur is a brittle coating at best, Higgins says.

"The problem with that technology is that sulfur buckles under pressure too easily," Higgins says. "With strictly sulfur-coated products, there were too many instances where the fertilizer acted like a fast-release product, which didn't help the superintendents at all."

Their instability also increased costs for the fertilizers because brittle coatings made the fertilizers difficult to ship. Higgins adds. So developers returned to the labs and developed polymer coatings far more stable than sulfur. "It gives superintendents more control over the length of release," Higgins says of the coatings.

Pursell has worked hard to standardize its coating technology in its Polyon product to avoid the inconsistent release of the fertilizer. "We listened to the superintendents, who were telling us they needed 100 percent of the nutrients released when they wanted them released," Higgins says.

Charlie Ulevich, superintendent at Hayfields CC in Hunt Valley, Md., says inconsistent release was the problem he had with granular fertilizers in the past. He doesn't like the flush of top growth a sudden release of fertilizer creates.

"I've used synthetic granulars in the spring, and they were good products," Ulevich says. "The problem, however, is that when you depend on myriad environmental factors to produce a perfect release, you're asking for trouble if those factors don't appear at all or don't occur in the right order."

The Scotts Co. heard complaints such as Ulevich's before, so the Marysville, Ohio-based company unveiled a new line called Premier Fairway Fertilizer at last month's GCSAA show. The new line, which combines the technologies of the company's Poly-S and Extend fertilizers, offers superintendents new flexibility, says Don Brougher, Scotts' marketing manager. It will even-
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tually allow Scotts to customize fertil-
izers for the release characteristics that
superintendents need in specific regions
of North America.

“We discovered the two technologies
we had were complementary to each other
in a lot of ways,” says Andree-Anne Couil-
lard, Scotts’ turfgrass technical services
manager. “That’s why we decided to cre-
ate the new combined products to give
superintendents more flexibility.”

When the Poly-S and Extend tech-
nologies are combined, they produce a
more tailored release of nitrogen over
time to give superintendents the re-
results of both initial greening and
longevity of release, Couillard says. Al-
though both technologies are slow-re-
lease, Poly-S is used primarily for its early
green-up, while Extend’s main attribute
is its extended release of nitrogen.

Lange Professional Fertilizer Prod-
ucts has tried to stabilize the nitrogen in
its AgricoTurf fertilizer, arguing the volatil-
ity of the source produces uneven results.
Michael McCarthy, director of marketing
for Lange, says an enzyme in AgricoTurf
prevents the nitrogen from releasing be-
fore it’s actually necessary for plant growth.

“The plant gets the nitrogen in the
form it needs on an as-needed basis,”
McCarthy says. “It doesn’t evaporate the
way it would if you were to put straight
urea in the ground.”

McCarthy says AgricoTurf also pre-
vents plants from getting too much of a
good thing.

“Nitrogen is to plants what candy is to kids.”

MIKE MCCARTHY
Lange Professional
Fertilizer Products

McCarthy says AgricoTurf also pre-
vents plants from getting too much of a
good thing.

“Nitrogen is to plants what candy is to kids,” McCarthy says. “If it’s available,
the plants will use it. That doesn’t pro-
duce the healthiest plants and makes
them susceptible to disease and stress.”

AgricoTurf also locks itself to soil mol-
ecules, which reduces the environmen-
tal concerns that all golf courses face, says
McCarthy.

Ludwig says though it’s hard work
determining the best fertilizers for the
turf, picking the right product will pro-
duce better results in the long run.

“You have to try certain things to see
how they work on your course because
your course is not a test plot,” Ludwig
says. “Do your research. With all the
products available to you today, there
will be one out there designed to meet
your needs.”
Case Study #2

Sand on Steroids

Soil amendment bulks up sand-green drainage capacity

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR. ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Problem
Sand-based greens wouldn't stand up to the high traffic expected on Capitol Hill GC, and the drainage capacity needed to be maximized.

Solution
Adding Profile to the sand underpinning the greens resisted compaction from foot traffic, increased green drainage and inhibited the creation of a thatch layer.

John Yancey, who would soon become the superintendent of Capitol Hill GC, a 54-hole facility in Prattville, Ala., surveyed the site of his future golf course in the fall of 1997. The construction crew had just started clearing the site, and the course slowly took shape.

The course planned USGA specified sand-based greens, but Yancey wanted to ensure the greens drained well. He was skeptical that sand-based greens alone would fit the bill.

"Sand by itself doesn't hold moisture well over time, and it compacts pretty easily, which hurts the overall health of the greens," Yancey says. "We were looking for something that would accentuate the positives of a sand base while adding desirable characteristics such as nutrient and water retention."

Yancey says he had read about a product called Profile a couple of years before the first greens were grown at Capitol Hill in 1998. He thought it might be an appropriate soil amendment that would meet his needs. He researched the product and called upon fellow members of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trails' group of eight courses in Alabama to see if any of them used the product. He found several of the other courses were using Profile as a topdressing. The superintendents at those courses were impressed with the results.

The problem
Yancey hoped supplementing the greens' sand with Profile would increase the drainage potential and nutrient retention, which would not only increase root mass, but would also maintain better overall turf health. Concerns about compaction and thatch also drove Yancey to supplement the sand for the greens.

"My experience has always been to take a long-term approach, and we were projecting that Capitol Hill would be a high-traffic course," Yancey says. "The owners wanted greens that would stand up to the traffic."

Yancey says he also installed a Sub-Air drainage system.

Profile was added to the greens at Capitol Hill GC to improve drainage, withstand heavy traffic and prevent the development of a thatch layer.

Profile was added to the greens at Capitol Hill GC to improve drainage, withstand heavy traffic and prevent the development of a thatch layer.

Profile was added to the greens at Capitol Hill GC to improve drainage, withstand heavy traffic and prevent the development of a thatch layer.
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GOLF COURSES
01 O 10 Daily Fee/Public
02 O 20 Semi-Private
03 O 30 Private
04 O 40 Resort
05 O 50 City/State/Municipal
06 O 55 Other Golf Courses (please specify)
07 O 60 Golf Course Architect
08 O 70 Golf Course Developer
09 O 80 Golf Course Builder
10 O 90 University/College
11 O 100 Others Allied to the Field (please specify)

2. Which of the following best describes your title? (fill in ONE only)
13 O 10 Golf Course Superintendent
14 O 15 Assistant Superintendent
16 O 20 General Manager
17 O 30 Director of Golf
18 O 40 Resort
19 O 50 City/State/Municipal
20 O 60 University/College
21 O 70 Green Chairman
22 O 80 Others Allied to the Field (please specify)

3. What are the types of turf on your:
A. GREENS
25 O 1 Bent
26 O 2 Bermuda
27 O 3 Rye
28 O 4 Other (please specify)_________________________
B. TEES
29 O 1 Bent
30 O 2 Bermuda
31 O 3 Rye
32 O 4 Fescue
33 O 5 Other (please specify)_________________________
C. FAIRWAYS
34 O 1 Bent
35 O 2 Bermuda
36 O 3 Rye
37 O 4 Fescue
38 O 5 Zoysia
39 O 6 Other (please specify)_________________________

4. What is your facility's annual maintenance budget?
40 O 1 $2 Million or less
41 O 2 $1,000,001-$2 Million
42 O 3 $750,001-$1 Million
43 O 4 $500,001-$750,000
44 O 5 $300,001-$500,000
45 O 6 $150,001-$300,000
46 O 7 Less than $150,000

5. If you work for a golf course, how many holes are on your course?
47 O 1 9 Holes
48 O 2 18 Holes
49 O 3 27 Holes
50 O 4 36 Holes
51 O 5 54 Holes
52 O 6 72 Holes
53 O 7 90 Holes
54 O 8 108 Holes
55 O 9 135 Holes
56 O 10 156 Holes
57 O 11 180 Holes
58 O 12 202 Holes
59 O 13 225 Holes
60 O 14 248 Holes
61 O 15 270 Holes
62 O 16 292 Holes
63 O 17 314 Holes
64 O 18 336 Holes
65 O 19 357 Holes
66 O 20 379 Holes
67 O 21 398 Holes
68 O 22 417 Holes
69 O 23 436 Holes
70 O 24 456 Holes

6. Are you responsible for purchasing/leasing?
O 1 A Yes O 2 B No

7. Are you directly involved in purchasing decisions for your facility?
O 3 A Yes O 4 B No

7A. If yes, which of these products do you specify, buy or approve?
2. Which of the following best describes your title? (fill in ONE only)
13 O 10 Golf Course Superintendent
14 O 15 Assistant Superintendent
16 O 20 General Manager
17 O 30 Director of Golf
18 O 40 Resort
19 O 50 City/State/Municipal
20 O 60 University/College
21 O 70 Green Chairman
22 O 80 Others Allied to the Field (please specify)

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26 O 2 Bermuda
27 O 3 Rye
28 O 4 Other (please specify)_________________________
B. TEES
29 O 1 Bent
30 O 2 Bermuda
31 O 3 Rye
32 O 4 Fescue
33 O 5 Other (please specify)_________________________
C. FAIRWAYS
34 O 1 Bent
35 O 2 Bermuda
36 O 3 Rye
37 O 4 Fescue
38 O 5 Zoysia
39 O 6 Other (please specify)_________________________

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43 O 4 $500,001-$750,000
44 O 5 $300,001-$500,000
45 O 6 $150,001-$300,000
46 O 7 Less than $150,000

5. If you work for a golf course, how many holes are on your course?
47 O 1 9 Holes
48 O 2 18 Holes
49 O 3 27 Holes
50 O 4 36 Holes
51 O 5 54 Holes
52 O 6 72 Holes
53 O 7 90 Holes
54 O 8 108 Holes
55 O 9 135 Holes
56 O 10 156 Holes
57 O 11 180 Holes
58 O 12 202 Holes
59 O 13 225 Holes
60 O 14 248 Holes
61 O 15 270 Holes
62 O 16 292 Holes
63 O 17 314 Holes
64 O 18 336 Holes
65 O 19 357 Holes
66 O 20 379 Holes
67 O 21 398 Holes
68 O 22 417 Holes
69 O 23 436 Holes
70 O 24 456 Holes

6. Are you responsible for purchasing/leasing?
O 1 A Yes O 2 B No

7. Are you directly involved in purchasing decisions for your facility?
O 3 A Yes O 4 B No

7A. If yes, which of these products do you specify, buy or approve?
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   A. GOLF COURSES   O 10 Daily Fee/Public
   O 20 Semi-Private O 30 Private
   O 40 Resort O 50 City/State/Municipal
   O 60 State/Others
   O 55 Other Golf Courses (please specify) ______________________________

2. Which of the following best describes your title? (fill in ONE only)
   O 10 Golf Course Superintendent
   O 15 Assistant Superintendent
   O 25 Owner/CEO
   O 30 General Manager
   O 35 Director of Golf
   O 40 Research Professional
   O 45 Club President
   O 50 Vice President
   O 55 Architect/Engineer
   O 60 Superintendent
   O 65 Others Allied to the Field (please specify) ______________________

3. What are the types of turf on your:
   A. GREENS
   O 1 Bent
   O 2 Bermuda
   O 3 Fescue
   O 4 Other (please specify) ____________________________

   B. TEES
   O 1 Bent
   O 2 Bermuda
   O 3 Fescue
   O 4 Other (please specify) ____________________________

   C. FAIRWAYS
   O 1 Bent
   O 2 Bermuda
   O 3 Rye
   O 4 Fescue
   O 5 Zoysia
   O 6 Other (please specify) ____________________________

4. What is your facility's annual maintenance budget?
   O More than $2 Million
   O $1,000,001-$2 Million
   O $750,001-$1 Million
   O $500,001-$750,000
   O $300,001-$500,000
   O $150,001-$300,000
   O Less than $150,000

5. If you work for a golf course, how many holes are on your course?
   O 9 Holes
   O 18 Holes
   O 27 Holes
   O 36+ Holes

6. Are you the person responsible for golf car purchasing/leasing?
   O Yes
   O No

7. Are you directly involved in purchasing decisions for your facility?
   O Yes
   O No

7A. If yes, which of these products do you specify, buy or approve?
   A. FAIRWAYS
   O 1 Aeration
   O 2 Architectural Services
   O 3 Batteries
   O 4 Biostimulants
   O 5 Construction Services
   O 6 Course Accessories
   O 7 Drainage Supplies
   O 8 Erosion Control
   O 9 Fertilizers
   O 10 Generators
   O 11 Golf Cars
   O 12 Grinders/Sharpeners
   O 13 Insecticides
   O 14 Irrigation Equipment
   O 15 Irrigation Systems
   O 16 Irrigation Parts
   O 17 Landscaping
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   O 20 Mowers
   O 21 Nematicides
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   O 23 Pumps/Stations
   O 24 Rakes
   O 25 Range Supplies
   O 26 Safety Supplies
   O 27 Sand
   O 28 Seed
   O 29 Snow Equipment

101 113 125 137 149 151 163 173 185 197 209 221 233 245 257 269 281 293 305
102 114 126 138 152 164 176 188 200 212 224 236 248 260 272 284 296 308
103 115 127 139 153 165 177 189 201 213 225 237 249 261 273 285 297 309
104 116 128 140 154 166 178 190 202 214 226 238 250 262 274 286 298 310
105 117 129 141 155 167 179 191 203 215 227 239 251 263 275 287 299 311
106 118 130 142 154 166 178 190 202 214 226 238 250 262 274 286 298 300
107 119 131 143 155 167 179 191 203 215 227 239 251 263 275 287 299 312
108 120 132 144 156 168 180 192 204 216 228 240 252 264 276 288 300 313
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