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THE LONGER LASTING NITROGEN SOURCE FOR LESS.
Foliar Fertilizer in the Fold

Superintendent finds that amino acid-based product is just what his course's faltering greens needed

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

Charlie Fultz is a turf medicine man who says he has a reputation for "bring- ing back greens from the dead." For that reason, Fultz says he was hired as superintendent of the Country Club of Culpeper in Culpeper, Va., in 1996. While the greens weren't dead at the golf course, they weren't thriving. "They were in bad shape," Fultz says.

The problem
Nine of the 18 greens at the Country Club of Culpeper are push-up greens and 50 years old. The other nine are sand-based greens and 7 years old. But the greens had at least one thing in common about three years ago: In the mid-to-late summer, their turf thinned and root depth diminished, thanks to heat and mowing stress.

Fultz couldn't place his greens on an Augusta-like fertilizer program because his modest budget couldn't afford it. Still, he says he was using biostimulants and soluble fertilizers that were highly regarded and expensive. "But I was paying too much and not getting everything from the products that I should have," Fultz contends.

Fultz says it was difficult for his greens to maintain healthy root structures during the torrid summers in the transition zone.

"In this area, roots are going to shrink during the summer," Fultz acknowledges. "But my greens were barely holding half-inch roots through thatch."

The bottom line is maintaining healthy greens, the most important component of the course, Charlie Fultz says.

The solution
In early summer 1999, Fultz received a flyer from Grigg Brothers, which described the Albion, Idaho-based company's line of foliar fertilizers.

"I read it, and it piqued my interest," Fultz says. "I was impressed with the research the company conducted to back its products."

Much of the research was done by plant nutrition expert Gene W. Miller, a professor at Utah State University and Grigg Brothers' director of product development. To develop efficient foliar fertilizers, Miller has studied natural nutrient chelation, uptake, absorption and translocation processes in plants for many years.

Fultz was also impressed that Gary Grigg, a co-founder of the company with his brother, Mark, was a long-time superintendent. "The company's products are developed by a superintendent with the superintendent in mind," Fultz says.

Fultz decided to give Grigg Brothers' products a three-month trial. He used the company's Gary's Green product on his greens and was impressed. The amino acid-based product is 18 percent nitrogen and designed to be completely absorbed foliarly. Complexing and chelating agents prevent it from burning turf. "The course's greens were better the second half of 1999 than they had been since I'd come here," Fultz says.

Fultz was pleased with the product's impact on the greens' root mass. He also liked that Gary's Green provided a strong greenup without rapid growth.

The product also helped prolong poa annua on the
budget is a little more than $18,000. He spends about $950 monthly on Grigg Brothers' products from April through October, less than 35 percent of his budget. The bottom line is maintaining healthy greens, by far the most important component of the course, Fultz says. On a recent day, Fultz stared at his newly cut greens with pride. They were at one-eighth inch and stimping at about 10.

"It wasn't possible [to mow them that short] three years ago," he says. "But they look as good as ever, and the roots aren't hindered because we lowered the cutting height."

The products aren't inexpensive, Fultz says, but they're worth it — even with the course's low budget.

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Outlook
Interestingly, Fultz says the bentgrass is overtaking the poa on the older greens. This has only been happening since he's used Gary's Green, which isn't billed to perform such a function.

"While the poa isn't stressing out, it's also not spreading," Fultz says. He notes the greens at Culpeper were 60-40 poa before he started using the product, and now they're 50-50.

Fultz uses Gary's Green with Sili-Kal B and Tuff Turf, two other Grigg Brothers' products, every two weeks. He supplements the greens as needed with the company's Carbo-Plex, a stress reliever, and UltraPlex, a biostimulant complex.

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The Lowdown on Low-impact Pesticides

They're environmentally friendly, but they add dollars to the budget

BY PETER BLAIS

Times have changed in the chemical business. Just ask Kyle Miller, a market development specialist with BASF.

"Ten years ago, you would have never seen a sign on the first tee reading: 'Pesticides are applied routinely on this golf course.'""Ten years ago, you would have never seen a sign on the first tee reading: 'Pesticides are applied routinely on this golf course.'"

If you have any questions, call the superintendent," Miller says. "But superintendents today are learning to be much more up front about such things to head off potential problems."

One of the main ways superintendents are demonstrating more environmental awareness is the use of low-impact pesticides. These environmentally friendly products include a variety of recently developed fungicides, herbicides and insecticides that provide preventive and curative activities while requiring low use rates and extended application intervals.

The EPA is a driving force behind the development of low-impact pesticides. It eliminated the use of certain products like Diazinon, which was banned several years ago on golf courses and sod farms because of concerns over bird kills, according to Rick Brandenburg, professor and turf entomologist at North Carolina State University. The federal agency also severely limited the use of other traditional course chemicals, like Dursban, reducing maximum use rates of the insecticide from 4 pounds per acre to 1 pound per acre.

"That virtually eliminated its use for soil-insect pests like grubs and mole crickets," Brandenburg says. "The 1-pound rate isn't high enough to be effective. You can still use it for things like cutworms, but [the ruling] took it out of the use pattern for many soil pests."

To replace these and other traditional products, many of which controlled a broad spectrum of pests and required wide applications, manufacturers have developed more pest-specific products requiring lower application rates in more limited areas.

For example, Bayer's Merit works well against white grubs and mole crickets, Brandenburg says. "But you can't use it against cutworms or army worms," he adds.

MACH 2, developed by Rohmid, is effective against grubs and will kill some caterpillars. "But it won't get mole crickets," Brandenburg notes.

There has been a shift in thinking, Brandenburg notes.

"In obtaining a more favorable environmental profile, we give up a little in terms of broad-spectrum application," he says. "That means a superintendent may need a larger product inventory because there's no such thing as one product that gets them all."

Kevin Downing, director of grounds at Willoughby GC in Stuart, Fla., says a larger in-
ventory translates into higher costs. "You have more items to take care of specific problems," he adds. "We have one herbicide we would like to combine with two or three others and make a single application. But the directions say you can't combine it with anything else. You can't tank mix it with anything because the mode of action of the chemical is different. So that means more labor and man-hours per application than you would use with a broad-spectrum herbicide."

Reduced-risk registration
To get a product registered as reduced-risk, a manufacturer must prove it's safer than the product it's replacing, says Mike Daly, brand manager of the Turf and Ornamental Division with Bayer Professional Care. "If you can demonstrate that you have such a product, EPA will shepherd it through the process on an accelerated schedule," Daly says. "You can get a label much quicker with a reduced-risk pesticide."

Bayer's Compass fungicide took roughly a year to register, Daly says. It was developed from a substance mushrooms produce that inhibits other fungi from invading the area where the mushrooms grow. It's specific to fungi and doesn't affect mammals. The use rate is low — 0.15 ounces per 1,000 square feet. "In some cases that represented a 95-percent reduction in pesticide load compared to the older contact fungicides it replaced in the marketplace," Daly says. "So the total amount of product placed in the environment was greatly reduced, and it was developed from substances that don't have a direct effect on mammals. That's reduced risk."

The high cost of bringing low-impact chemicals to market, however, has increased the final bills to golf courses. "New products are going up in price largely because of the cost of obtaining EPA registration," says David Ross, technical manager with Syngenta's Turf and Ornamental Division. "It generally costs $50 million to $60 million to get a new product registered."

Adds Miller, "Bringing a new product to market is more expensive than ever because it must have reduced environmental impact and yet give good control."

That higher price tag can ultimately affect whether a course decides to go forward with a given treatment.

Downing mentions a particular insecticide that controls only mole crickets and costs $325 per acre to apply. Another nematicide he'd like to use costs $400 per acre. "At $400 per acre, how many acres can you do without jacking the green fees up to $150," he asks. "You can't do it, so you don't do it."

Blais is a free-lance writer from North Yarmouth, Maine.
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07 ○ 70 Golf Course Architect

08 ○ 80 Golf Course Developer

09 ○ 90 Golf Course Builder

10 ○ 105 University/College

11 ○ 100 Others Allied to the Field (please specify)

2. Which of the following best describes your title? (fill in ONE only)

12 ○ 10 Golf Course Superintendent

13 ○ 15 Assistant Superintendent

14 ○ 25 Owner/Management Company Executive

15 ○ 30 General Manager

16 ○ 35 Director of Golf

17 ○ 70 Green Chairman

18 ○ 45 Club President

19 ○ 75 Builder/Developer

20 ○ 55 Architect/Engineer

21 ○ 60 Research Professional

22 ○ 65 Other Titled Personnel (please specify)

3. What is your facility’s annual maintenance budget?

23 ○ A More than $2 Million

24 ○ B $1,000,001-$2 Million

25 ○ C $750,001-$1 Million

26 ○ D $500,001-$750,000

27 ○ E $300,001-$500,000

28 ○ F $150,001-$300,000

29 ○ G Less than $150,000

30 ○ H $75,001-$150,000

31 ○ I $40,000-$75,000

32 ○ J $25,000-$40,000

33 ○ K $10,000-$25,000

34 ○ L $5,000-$10,000

35 ○ M $1,000-$5,000

36 ○ N Less than $1,000

4. If you work for a golf course, how many holes are on your course?

30 ○ A 9

31 ○ B 18

32 ○ C 27

33 ○ D 36+

34 ○ E Other (please specify)

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4. If you work for a golf course, how many holes are on your course?  
30 O A  9  
31 O B  18  
32 O C  27  
33 O D  36+  
34 O E Other (please specify)_______________________________________  

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Name_________________________ Title_________________________  
Name_________________________ Title_________________________  
Name_________________________ Title_________________________  
Name_________________________ Title_________________________  
Name_________________________ Title_________________________  

3. What is your facility's annual maintenance budget?  
23 O A More than $2 Million  
24 O B $1,000,000-$2 Million  
25 O C $750,001-$1 Million  
26 O D $500,001-$750,000  
27 O E $300,001-$500,000  
28 O F $150,001-$300,000  
29 O G Less than $150,000  

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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 90 Golf Course Builder  
10 O 105 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) 
12 O 10 Golf Course Superintendent  
13 O 15 Assistant Superintendent  
14 O 25 Owner/Management Company Executive  
15 O 30 General Manager  
16 O 35 Director of Golf  
17 O 70 Green Chairman  
18 O 45 Club President  
19 O 75 Builder/Developer  
20 O 55 Architect/Engineer  
21 O 60 Research Professional  
22 O 65 Other Titled Personnel (please specify)--------------------------  

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Send Leaders information/color photos to Golfdom's Frank Andorka at 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, 44130. Fax information to 440-891-2675 or e-mail to fandorka@advanstar.com.

The American Society of Irrigation Consultants named its officers at a recent meeting: Brian Vinchesi, Irrigation Consulting, Pepperell, Mass., president; Jim Barrett, James Barrett Associates, Montclair, N.J., vice president; Dan Benner, Hydro Environmental, Marietta, Ga., secretary; and David Davis, David D. Davis and Associates, Crestline, Calif., treasurer. The association also awarded Orlando DiRienzo its lifetime achievement award.

Chipco Professional Products, a division of Aventis Environmental Science, named Joseph Grippi (left) and Scott Parker as sales representatives. Grippi oversees western Michigan and northern Indiana, while Parker oversees southern Indiana northern Kentucky and central Illinois.


Dan Cunningham was appointed vice president of development and construction of KemperSports Management.

Vince Gillis will retire from his post as executive director of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association early next year.

Scott Pinkerton joined Precision Laboratories as district manager for the South-Central region.

John Brader joined Landmark Seed Co. as a sales and marketing representative.

ProSource One named Jay McCord as turf seed development manager. The company also added Jeff Schmalz as sales representative for eastern Pennsylvania, Philadelphia and New Jersey.

Fred Anderson (left) and Scott Adams joined Reinders as turf specialists. Anderson oversees northwest Wisconsin, and Adams oversees northern Illinois.

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Given the considerable power the Global Positioning System (GPS) can offer superintendents, it's a wonder more of them aren't using it.

According to the 2001 GCSAA Leadership Survey, only 4 percent of superintendents believe the GPS has had a significant impact on the game. It ranks last (1 percent) on the list of what superintendents consider the most important technology to help them do their jobs better.

Those statistics baffle me. The only explanation I have is that maybe it's because people haven't yet experienced GPS firsthand.

My initial experience didn't come until last year. Although I'd read about the system (and casually thrown its name around in stories about futuristic greens mowers), I never understood the power of the system until I observed it firsthand on a wintery Boy Scout campout last year.

While I waited for the feeling to return to my feet after a hike through a forest, I saw two fathers a few feet away, their heads close together. Each periodically pointed at what looked to be a cellular phone.

"See, that's where we are right now," said the scout leader, a doctor when he wasn't tramping around in the woods.

The other father, a photographer, nodded. "Let's see if we can calculate the shortest path back to the parking lot from here," he said.

My experience taught me one thing: A personal GPS system (which I later learned was the technological toy these fathers were playing with) sure beats the traditional Boy Scout method of mapping, which involves moss on trees and a compass. These two guys plotted their positions in the campground with frightening accuracy. I thought about what the GPS could do for someone who has a large piece of property to care for — like a superintendent.

Think about the implications of having an accurate, digitized map of your course. It would allow you to communicate maintenance tasks more specifically to your crew. With the help of irrigation controller software, you could turn on irrigation heads with the touch of a stylus or the click of a mouse. Renovations would be a breeze because the maps would show the course as it really is.

Despite these advantages, however, many superintendents are reluctant to jump on the GPS bandwagon.

Bruce Jasurda, president of Elwood, Ill.-based Tyler Enterprises, is betting on the power of the GPS to increase revenues for his company's custom-fertilizer business. It added a customized GPS mapping option in August 1999 to go with its fertilizer business. The list of courses taking advantage of it grows daily. Jasurda says.

"When people ask us to map their courses, we routinely find their estimated acreage is off by as much as 20 percent," Jasurda says.

"When you're buying chemicals or applying water, a 20-percent mistake can cost thousands of dollars. If there's an accurate map, you don't waste that money."

One Midwest course overestimated its total acreage by five acres. Jasurda says that after Tyler's mapping discovered the disparity, the superintendent calculated how much extra money he had spent in the previous year on chemical applications. He found he'd wasted $9,870.

With that kind of bottom-line impact, it shouldn't be hard sell to your owner or green committee on purchasing a map. The initial outlay for the map may be expensive, but it pays for itself within a year if used properly.

It's time to stop standing on the sidelines and embrace GPS technology as the powerful tool it is. To do otherwise is to miss the forest for the trees.

Frank H. Andorka Jr., managing editor of Golfdom, can be reached at 440-891-2708 or fandorka@advanstar.com.