Turfgrass Trends Live!

October 16-17, 2006
2200 FarmLinks Blvd. • Sylacauga, AL 35151

Golf course superintendents rely on the technical information they receive every month in the pages of TurfGrass Trends. So we’re taking TGT on the road. On October 16-17, superintendents will hear in person from professionals and experts on the latest turfgrass trends, and enjoy a golf outing at the legendary FarmLinks Golf Club. FarmLinks is the world’s first research and demonstration golf course. It was created to showcase turf and product performance through the course’s ability to serve as a living laboratory and an ongoing focus group for industry leaders. What a great opportunity for your company to take part in an innovative program!

TGT Live! session topics include:
• ball marks, patch and other bentgrass afflictions;
• use of compost on the golf course;
• disease control and the new products in the market;
• Merion: where playability is first and aesthetics are second; and
• fertilizer trends in the golf course industry.

For more information and to register, go to www.golfdom.com/registertgtlive

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We have known for some time that grasses forming a contiguous ground cover are very effective for reducing runoff and sediment losses from agricultural areas. Managed turfgrasses tend to prevent runoff extremely well because they form a dense cover near ground level due to regular mowing. In fact, researchers at the University of Maryland found that tall fescue sod was more effective for reducing runoff than manmade materials designed specifically for that purpose (Krenitsky et al, 1998).

Although turf makes an excellent surface for runoff reduction, it does not prevent runoff entirely. A small portion of the nutrients and pesticides applied to turf for general maintenance are occasionally lost in runoff and end up in streams, lakes and other surface water. These chemical losses help to contaminate drinking water and to form the “dead zones” that occur in the Chesapeake Bay, Mississippi Delta and many other water features throughout the world. By using sound chemical application practices and an effective runoff management plan, most of these runoff losses from turf can be prevented.

Management practices as simple as mowing height can improve our environment and reduce our losses of nutrients and pesticides. Practicing environmentally sound management can improve our environment and help prevent criticism of our industry.

As turfgrass managers, we have a responsibility to our environment as well as to our clients and colleagues. We should be aware of management techniques that help reduce runoff and environmental contamination.

A good runoff prevention program is a combination of common-sense practices, management experience and attention to research results. For instance, applications of fertilizers or pesticides to saturated soil, frozen soil or non-target surfaces such as concrete or plastic are likely to increase chemical runoff.

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Runoff from bermuda-grass bordered by a single-height buffer compared with runoff from a multiple-height buffer during 70 minutes of precipitation.

**QUICK TIP**
Superintendents must adapt their moisture management practices for varying rainfall. In addition, there are soil physics and hydrology, not to mention irrigation water chemistry. Floratine representatives can help diagnose and suggest effective water management approaches for your circumstances. We understand that one product or a single approach won’t solve all challenges and that prescription without diagnosis is malpractice.

Continued from page 43ing subsequent rainfall events.

Maintaining dense turf inhibits runoff, but maintaining dense turf through a program of over-fertilization or unnecessary pesticide applications not only wastes money but encourages chemical losses to runoff. Soil tests and growing conditions determine when fertilizer is required. Environmental conditions or symptoms determine when pesticide applications are necessary. Application timing is critical to environmentally sound management.

Good planning can result in application windows that allow us to apply chemicals when weather conditions are most suitable for chemical activity and runoff losses are least likely to occur. Post-application weather forecasts should not be overlooked. A major rainstorm following a chemical application is quite likely to result in chemical losses to runoff.

The use of slow-release nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers and aeration should be part of the runoff prevention program. Slow-release nitrogen and phosphorus sources only provide a small amount of soluble nutrient at any given time, reducing the potential for nutrient runoff.

Aeration helps to increase the surface infiltration rate and slows soil saturation that results in runoff. It could be argued, however, that aeration results in a greater leaching potential by moving chemicals through the soil more quickly. However, the soil is a great filter and can provide some resistance to nutrient or pesticide losses.

One of the most effective management practices for reducing runoff is mowing. As long as the mowing height remains in the range of species adaptability, turf tends to increase in density as the mowing height is lowered.

A dense turf provides a complex system of shoots and stems that slow runoff and allow more time for surface infiltration. High mowing heights can also deter runoff when prop-
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DO NOT use excessive nitrogen during the summer on cool-season turfgrasses that have gone into dormancy. But keep in mind that some nitrogen may be necessary to prevent nitrogen deficiency and promote turfgrass recovery from play. The key is to apply only enough nitrogen for reasonable turfgrass quality during the spring and summer. Fall fertilization is the critical time to focus on adequate fertilization. It is during these “cooler” growing conditions that cool-season turfgrasses exhibit their greatest growth, not to mention fix carbohydrates.


REFERENCES


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Cultivars, Cutting Heights Affect Black Cutworm Feeding

By Cale A. Bigelow and Douglas S. Richmond

Throughout much of the cool-humid region and upper-transition zone of the United States, the most widely planted species for golf course roughs and lawns has been Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*). This is due to its pleasing dark-green color, wear tolerance and recuperative capacity.

The recuperative capacity of Kentucky bluegrass is attributed to its underground rhizomes that if not properly managed may form a dense, thick, thatch layer. Thatch provides an ideal habitat for various disease causing fungi and insect pests. Therefore, to ensure turf persistence in economically important areas, turf managers preventatively apply insecticides each year.

Although pesticides may be an important and periodically necessary tool to sustaining a perennial turf, ideally they are not the first line of defense in pest management.

Two other turfgrass species, perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) and tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*), are also well adapted and frequently used for lawns either in combination with Kentucky bluegrass or alone. Both of these species germinate and establish much more quickly than bluegrass, but because they are bunch-type grasses, they do not spread and recover as well as Kentucky bluegrass and are generally regarded as less desirable species where a uniformly dense, durable and persistent turf is wanted. During the past decade the fungal disease gray leaf spot (*Magnaporthe oryzae*) has devastated many perennial ryegrass stands, and this species has therefore lost favor with turf managers.

By comparison, tall fescue has been underutilized because of its association with pasture and forage use and the fact that early cultivars (e.g. Kentucky-31 and Alta) were deemed unattractive for high-quality turf areas. These early fescue cultivars have a light-green color, wide leaf blade, low shoot density, poor traffic recovery and do not tolerate relatively close mowing heights (under 2.5 inches) as well as Kentucky bluegrass.

Recent advances in turf-type tall fescue breeding, however, have produced superior cultivars that are very dark green, fine-leaved and possess high shoot densities and wear tolerance comparable to many Kentucky bluegrass cultivars. Many of these improved turf-type cultivars have been popular for lawns throughout the transition zone and much of the southeastern United States. They are widely planted throughout this warmer climate because they perform well in a variety of growing environments, including full sun and moderate shade, are generally easy and inexpensive to establish from seed, tolerate prolonged heat, drought and low fertility soils. Most importantly, though, they do not turn brown because of winter dormancy like the warm-season species.

Another characteristic which makes tall fescue more desirable than Kentucky bluegrass or perennial ryegrass is a deeper and more extensive root system enabling it to extract water and nutrients from a larger soil volume. Thus, this species may require less supplemental irrigation and fertilizer to maintain an equivalent level of appearance. Lastly, tall fescue may be more desirable than Kentucky bluegrass because of its bunch-type growth habit, which does contribute to a thatch layer and some of the problems often found with thatch. In terms of resistance...
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