

Turf Paint Reduces Damage from Harsh Minnesota Winters

By DAVID OBERLE

Owner of Excel Turf & Ornamental

As we all know, Minnesota winters and turf damage go hand-in-hand. Golf course greens, in particular, don't take kindly to brutal wind, below-freezing temperatures, ice and snow. But it's part of turf maintenance when you work in Minnesota, so the goal is to find proactive solutions that ensure the course is in pristine shape when spring arrives.

One of the solutions I recommend is a Turf Paint Program, which gives added protection and is cost-efficient. A turf paint product such as Regreen® from Precision Laboratories is sprayed onto dormant turf late in the year at a rate of approximately 12 ozs. per 1,000 sq. ft. Not only does the nonphytotoxic turfgrass colorant provide long-lasting natural color, but superintendents cite additional benefits such as winter desiccation protection, early plant stimulation and anti-crown dehydration.

University Research Proves Effectiveness of Turf Paints

A 2005 study at Iowa State University that compared the effects of several winter protection practices, including turf colorants, turf covers, anti-desiccants, wetting agents and fungicides. While many options are available for winter protection, the research confirms that turf paints provide better appearance, improve turf color during the winter and supply a slight advantage in turf color even after the colorant was no longer visible.

In addition, a 2001 study from the University of Maine com-



pared the impact of crown dehydration on both untreated and painted turf. The study found that the turf paint improves the survival of bentgrass greens and that turf paints had better results than plain anti-desiccants, while the green pigments provided a quicker spring green-up due to darker turf canopy.

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WHAT IS AQUEDUCT? Aqueduct is a curative surfactant formulation designed specifically to provide rapid recovery from existing water management problems such as localized dry spot. Aqueduct can also be used as a pre-treatment tool to correct problem areas before starting a regular preventative program. It moves water deeply into problem areas, reducing water repellency and restoring the root zone's ability to regain optimum moisture levels. Aqueduct quickly reduces turf wilt and promotes recovery of stressed turf.

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- ▶ Promotes fast recovery from LDS
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Turf Paint -

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Superintendent Dan Hanson does not cover the 45 greens at Majestic Oaks GC in Ham Lake. He wanted a product that would provide added protection over winter. In November 2009, he made the decision to use turf paint on 24 greens, specifically those that were most exposed to harsh winter wind. Although there was a constant snow cover throughout winter last year, Dan still noticed the greens sprayed with turf paint came out of winter better than the others.

Dan noticed more clippings than the non-painted greens. "I think the paint helped to warm the canopy faster, so the turf recovered more quickly," said Hanson.

Similarly, **Fred Taylor, Superintendent at Mankato GC**, used turf paint on greens that suffered from winterkill the year before. "The greens we sprayed with turf paint were healthier and the color was strong; overall the quality was better and we were catching more

clippings," cites Taylor. "The strong color and increased vigor could've been attributed to early soil warm-up."

While it's easy to immediately link the benefits of turf paint to early spring color, the added winter protection is prompting superintendents to give it a try. Much like

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*- Dan Hanson
St. Cloud Country Club*

black sand or Milorganite, the use of a turf paint triggers early spring green-up by speeding up plant metabolism. In addition, it would be hard to find a better product to offer winter desiccation protection. And, of course, the color! The idea of strong spring green color was the main motivator for Wes Stoneback, Superintendent, to use turf paint at The Wilds Golf Club in Prior Lake, Minn.

"I used it for color, so protection was an

added bonus," says Wes. "I found that it had as good or better effect than TransFilm for winter desiccation, plus the soil warmed up faster because of the turf paint."

"In spring, I would give the color of the greens sprayed with turf paint a '9' and I'd give turf quality a '9' as well. The course opened two weeks earlier than usual and the greens were actually green, which impressed the golfers."

Turf Paint Benefits Extend Beyond Color

While it's easy to immediately link the benefits of turf paint to early spring color, the added winter protection - especially in Minnesota - is what prompts so many superintendents to give it a try. Much like black sand or Milorganite, the use of a turf paint triggers early spring green-up by speeding up plant metabolism. In addition, it would be hard to find a better product to offer winter desiccation protection. And, of course, the color!


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