June, 1995

THRU THE GREEN

New Research Locates Friendly Microbes

The label on the bag says it contains Trichoderma, Gliocladium, Enterobacter, and Pseudomas. The question is, what do you do with it?

Do you A) Haul it to a toxic waste dump, B) Use it to brew your herbal tea, C) Call your local witch doctor to report that you found his magic potion, D) Apply it to your greens, tees and fairways. Well, if you've attended the recent CGCSA Meeting in San Diego, then you know that those are the names of various beneficial soil microbes. Are these the future of golf course management? Maybe. Should we all run out and buy tons of these materials? Probably not yet, but the next generation of superintendents might be referring to these soil microbes just as casually as we refer to N, P, and K.

Is this new technology? Definitely not. Is this new research? Definitely! Past generations of golf course superintendents applied many of these microbes to their golf courses without knowledge. These microbes, and many others are found in composted organic wastes. These composts were topdressed into the soils, and organic fertilizers were applied directly to the turf.

This new research comes from the laboratories of Dr. Eric Nelson at Cornell University. They have isolated organisms that cause suppression of many of the soil borne parasitic fungi of Turfgrasses. They have also isolated microbes that aid in nitrogen breakdown and thatch reduction.

Some of these materials are available commercially right now. You can bet that additional material will be available soon. One word of caution, however; **Research.** Check out the trade journals and other sources of research data. Look for independent university research that identifies specific microbes. Do your own research on nursery greens. Ask lots of questions. Do pesticides kill off beneficial microbes, and if so, which chemicals? Don't think that this is a cure all for all of your problems. There are no substitutes now, nor will there ever be, for good sound agronomic practices. This new research/ old technology is another tool for us to use in our overall management program.

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