

## USGA

### Life At 3/16"

By Pat Gross, USGA Green Section

You've heeded the warnings and raised your putting green cutting height to 3/16" just like all the experts have told you. All the greens are healthy and it looks like you're going to have a good summer. Just when you're proud and confident of your accomplishments, the golfers start complaining that the greens are too slow. "Cut 'em lower" they cry, "turn off the water," "they need more verticutting," and the ever popular "I don't care what you do, but they better be rolling 10' for the big tournament!" Don't they remember all the disease and turf loss that occurred when you tried to keep them fast all summer?

Mowing at 3/16" is a prudent practice for creeping bentgrass/Poa annua greens during the summer. There is no doubt that the increased mowing height improves turfgrass stress tolerance during the summer, and yes, the greens are going to be a little slower. Instead of caving-in to demands to lower the

mowing height, there are several things you can do to improve ball roll and keep the turf healthy at 3/16":

- 1. Keep 'em Sharp** — Greens suffer just as much from a poor quality cut as they do from an excessively low mowing height. Your mechanic should check the cutting units daily when they come in from mowing, and make any necessary adjustments. Weekly or biweekly back lapping along with checking the bedknife will keep the cutting units sharp at all times.
- 2. Proper Irrigation** — Irrigation management is far and away the most important practice for maintaining healthy turf at any cutting height. With creeping bentgrass/Poa annua greens, the goal is to keep the soil uniformly moist, but not wet. If you are on a leaching program to control salinity, go ahead and give the greens a good long soaking when necessary (4 to 6 hours) and then turn off the automatic system and go to hand watering for as long as possible.

Overly wet greens are slow, bumpy, and disease prone.

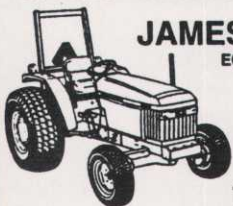
- 3. Double Mowing** — Consider double mowing your greens once a week. This is a good practice to improve surface smoothness without having to lower the cutting height. If you are short on labor, you can use a triplex mower in one direction and hand mow in the opposite direction, or even double mow with the triplex units.
- 4. Light Topdressing** — If the turf is healthy and the temperatures are not too high, it is perfectly fine to apply light sand topdressing to smooth the surface. Many superintendents refer to this as "dusting the greens" with approximately 0.1 to 0.3 cu. yds. of sand per 1000 sq. ft. every two to four weeks. Topdressing should be suspended at the first sign of turf stress or if temperatures are expected above 90° F.
- 5. Grooming** — Groomer attachments are great tools to improve the quality of cut and

Continued on page 7

### TURF & INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT SINCE 1968

SALES • PARTS • SERVICE

**JAMES SHERMAN JR.**  
EQUIPMENT ADVISOR



1 (800) 655-8873

2715 LAFAYETTE STREET • SANTA CLARA, CA 95050

JOHN DEERE  
CUSHMAN  
CLUB CAR  
LAND PRIDE  
HOWARD PRICE  
DAIHATSU

### Supporter Listing

#### SCOTTS PROTURF

Fertilizers - Poly S and new Triaform technologies Herbicides, Fungicides, Seed, Soil, tissue, water and turf disease testing.  
Chuck Dal Pozzo, Sr. Tech. Rep. 510-791-8985

#### CALCIUM

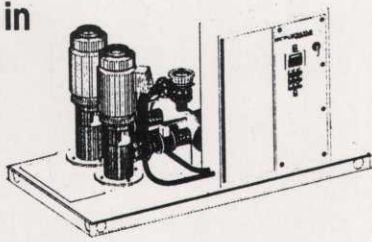
Pacific Pearl Oyster Shell — the most efficient calcium for the turfcare professional. Available from your fertilizer dealer. For Technical assistance call John Mazura.  
Jericho Products, Inc. 707-762-7251

#### RUSSELL D. MITCHELL & ASSOC., INC.

Providing quality irrigation design and consultation services including bid document development, hydraulic analysis, and field staking.  
510-939-3985 FAX 510-932-5671

### FLOWTRONEX PSI Pumping Systems

Industry Leaders in  
Quality, Service  
and Innovation



Wes Hall  
619-747-1662

### Space Available