Tips from the USGA

Begin Communicating and Cutting Trees Now For a Better Outcome Next Season.

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1999 Overseeding - A summer success or future problem? Compared to many other parts of the country the southwest fared well this summer. Cool temperatures, courtesy of La Niña, made management of cool-season grasses less difficult this summer compared to past seasons. Coastal locations are singing the praises of their fairway overseeding success, with little or no transition damage this year as much of the overseeded ryegrass hung on through the summer. Turf managers in the "Bermuda triangle" of Palm Springs, Las Vegas and Phoenix/Tucson actually wished for earlier heat and more extreme temperatures to improve transition.

The weather is always the uncontrollable factor in the turf management equation and can determine success or failure in a given year. Looking towards the future, the cool summer of 1999 could be pivotal should extreme heat be experienced in 2000. A bad, really bad, transition may await us due to thin underlying stands of bermudagrass or kikuyugrass resulting from the competition of lingering ryegrass.

With this in mind, it may not be a bad idea to begin communicating these potential problems to your clientele and management immediately! Warn them that more bare areas could be lurking ahead this coming summer and be prepared for the worst.

Research demonstrates that establishing a complete cover of bermudagrass once the rye fades is most greatly influenced by time, temperature and ryegrass competition. If you refer to the August issue of Golf Course Management *"How to kill perennial ryegrass in overseeded fairways"* the authors report how overseeding inhibits bermudagrass shoot development during spring green up and temperature limits the percentage of ryegrass disappearance. Consistent with similar studies, their conclusion finds that cultural practices intended to reduce ryegrass populations are ineffective when hot weather is delayed. Intermediate ryegrasses, as discussed in the July 1999 issue of Golf Course Management, may ease this problem in the future, but we are not quite 100% there yet.

Pink Snow Mold, Shade and Frost - Pink snow mold will become active as winter rain and snow occur. This disease is most destructive in wet shady environments during low to moderate temperatures. As opposed to responding by immediately running out to the chemical room for help, you may wish to consider cultural methods that may reduce disease pressure.

Research performed by Dr. Roy Goss at Washington State University some years ago demonstrated that light applications of soil sulfur in the Pacific Northwest climate reduced snow mold incidence as well as *Poa annua* seed heads. (USGA Green Section Record September/October 1984-*"Sulfur the Fourth Major Element"*.) Consider trimming or removing trees that shade greens and prolong wet conditions, or keep snow from rapidly melting off should also be considered. To steal a famous quote from our Mid Atlantic Region's Director, Stanley Zontek, *"The three best fungicides available are Stihl, McCulloch and Poulan"*. And the good news is these three "fungicides" won't be regulated by the Food Quality Protection Act!

Tree removal can also help reduce frost delays when the sun is positioned low on the horizon. Long shadows cast from trees shading eastern and southern exposures have a significant impact on how quickly frosted putting surfaces will thaw and become playable. Cutting these trees can reduce tee time delays (not too many golfers would be against that early on a Saturday morning!) Reducing early morning shade not only melts frost and gets players on the course sooner, but it helps maintain warmer soil temperatures and improves growth. There is scientific evidence that early morning sunlight is extremely important for growing healthy turf and deep roots. Providing additional sunlight to greens offers season long benefits, as greens in open areas enter the summer in a more healthy condition and often survive season long stresses better than their "shady" counterparts.

Thanks! - I would be remiss not to take a moment to thank those of you who sent cards, e-mails, phoned or left messages at the office following my surgery. You don't know how much it meant to me to hear from you all, I never realized how many friends that I have out there. I'm back to work, not quite at 100% yet, but working on it. Thanks again.