



## OVERSEEDING...Part II

### I would like to amplify my article Overseeding – Boon or Curse?

(September 2002) with the following points:

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- Few issues generate more controversy in golf course management today than the topic of overseeding. This issue is very complex and no one article can adequately address all these issues. As economic concerns are coupled with increasing competition between golf courses controversial issues, such as overseeding, become more not less controversial.

- There are both benefits and problems with overseeding. Our goal in making agronomic decisions regarding golf course management is to provide the best quality playing conditions possible throughout the year. The basic problem is that in the warm-season turf areas of the Southern United States no one grass will provide perfect conditions 12 months of the year. This is true whether golf course overseeding is done or not.

- In California, numerous microclimates exist. Even small distances between golf courses may require different cultural requirements for turf health and vigor. Overseeding and bermudagrass transition success are ultimately founded on climatic conditions, such as light intensity and quality, soil and air temperatures, water quality.

- Golf course cultural procedures also affect overseeding and bermudagrass transition success. Cultural practices that enhance turf health including mowing height and frequency, fertility program, irrigation procedures, and cultivation procedures (*i.e. core aeration, vertical mowing, sand topdressing*) have dramatic impacts on turf quality.

- A recent example illustrates the value of good cultural practices. A superintendent in southern California who has had good results over the past 15 years from his overseeding program has also found routine core aeration, vertical mowing, and sand topdressing of his fairways are needed to maintain turf quality and health. Golf courses that stop sand topdressing or other cultural programs inevitably find reduction in bermudagrass and overseeding success. The bottom line in all these discussions is that proper agronomic procedures for turf health of both the

cool-season and warm-season grasses are needed. To simplify the overseeding discussion to only the overseeding neglects the real issue of overall turf health. Both warm and cool-season turf health is necessary year-round if overseeding is to be successful.

- There is a direct correlation between staff and budget levels for golf course maintenance and golf course playing quality. The maintenance staff and budget level should be tied to cultural requirements needed to produce the playing quality expected by the golfers who are paying to play there. Overseeding decisions are agronomic decisions that should be based on their effect on play quality just like any other maintenance choices for golf course maintenance.

- Overseeded areas will provide a green playing surface during warm-season winter dormancy periods. This is especially important in areas with high numbers of winter play.

- Overseeded areas provide turfgrass fill in for areas with poor turf density. This procedure will also protect and stabilize soil during winter dormancy periods. Golf play especially when carts are used can be very disruptive to dormant turf.

- Weed encroachment is a topic that illustrates the complexities behind these agronomic decisions. While overseeded areas may reduce weed encroachment by some weeds due to providing increased turf density following overseeding establishment, (*i.e. two to four weeks after seeding*), the cultivation, planting, and irrigation procedures applied during the overseeding may also increase spread and encroachment of weeds. There are annual and perennial weed seeds and reproductive plant parts always available for growth when conditions favoring growth occur. This reservoir of weeds is referred to as a seed bank. The seed bank is a primary source of *Poa annua* (*annual bluegrass*) spread. As an example, *Poa annua* seeds remain viable in the soil for up to six years.

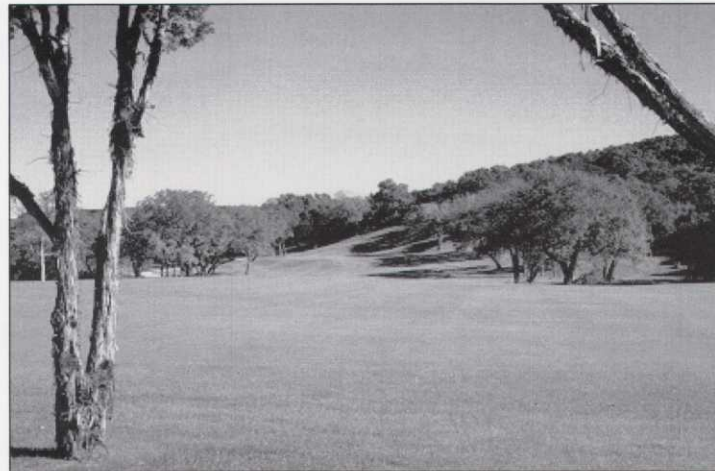


Photo provided by Spot Water Management

- Golf play, cart traffic, mowing, cultivation, and natural processes, such as frost, flood, hail, and drought, are also disruptive to the turf surface. The golf course turf playing surface is a living organism subjected to many changes during a 12-month period. This is true whether overseeding is done or not.

### Conclusion

Overseeding provides benefits and problems at golf courses throughout the Southern United States. The issue is complex as are many of the agronomic decisions made at golf courses year round. Most golfers simply want the best playing surface possible year round. It takes a combination of sound agronomic practices conducted by educated professions supported by the golfing public to successfully achieve this goal. Unfortunately, turf quality will not be perfect all 12 months of the year. The good news is that golf enjoys a much higher quality today than it did even 10 years ago and we expect to continue our efforts aimed at achieving the highest quality possible in the future.

