

Converting Turf Species to Improve Divot Recovery and Reduce Water and Pesticide Use

Laurel Creek Country Club
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The Problem

Laurel Creek Country Club has a wonderful practice facility that is available for unlimited use. Upper and lower teeing ground are used throughout the season, the lower teeing ground receiving heavy use from junior clinics. Cool-season grasses planted on the practice teeing grounds struggle to recover fast enough from the amount of divots created during hot, summer months.

The Solution

Several courses near Laurel Creek Country Club converted practice teeing grounds to cold-tolerant cultivars of bermudagrass, which thrive in the summer heat and have improved cold-hardiness during the winter. Laurel Creek investigated the idea of converting the lower practice teeing ground to bermudagrass and concluded the project could improve turf performance and reduce the use of resources like water and pesticides.

The lower practice teeing ground was renovated in late 2012. After the old turf was removed, drainage was installed and the teeing surface was regraded before being sodded with Patriot bermudagrass.

The Results

The Patriot bermudagrass teeing ground has been a tremendous success. Golfers now have access to quality practice teeing surfaces throughout the entire year. The upper practice teeing ground – which remains planted with cool-season grasses – is used most during the spring and fall when the cool-season turf can adequately recover from concentrated divots. The lower teeing ground is used during the summer months when the Patriot bermudagrass is vigorously growing, providing quick divot recovery during the peak playing season.

Converting turf species has allowed Laurel Creek to reduced water and pesticide use, overseeding costs to repair divots and labor inputs. Savings are in excess of \$2,000 per year and water use has been reduced by approximately 1,500-3,000 gallons per day.

The biggest challenge for Laurel Creek was convincing course officials that bermudagrass – a species commonly regarded as a southern grass – would perform well in New Jersey’s climate. Sharing the success stories of area golf courses that installed Patriot bermudagrass helped educate golfers on the prospect of converting turf species.

The successful use of improved, cold-tolerant bermudagrass cultivars at golf courses in New Jersey and Pennsylvania is inspiring courses around the northern transition zone to convert turf areas to more sustainable species that can reduce water and pesticide use.



Figure 1 - Laurel Creek Country Club converted their lower practice teeing ground to Patriot bermudagrass, which recovers rapidly from divots during the summer and requires less water and pesticides.