

Using Cold-Tolerant Bermudagrass for a Northern Region Practice Range

Fishers Island Golf Club
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The Problem

Fishers Island Golf Club receives most of its play during the summer months. Its practice facility is located in an environmentally sensitive site abutting the island's drinking-water wells and a seed oyster nursery. Therefore, the practice range is maintained without any traditional pesticides or synthetic fertilizers. Attempts to maintain cool-season turf across the practice range were unsuccessful due to crabgrass encroachment and disease pressure.

The Solution

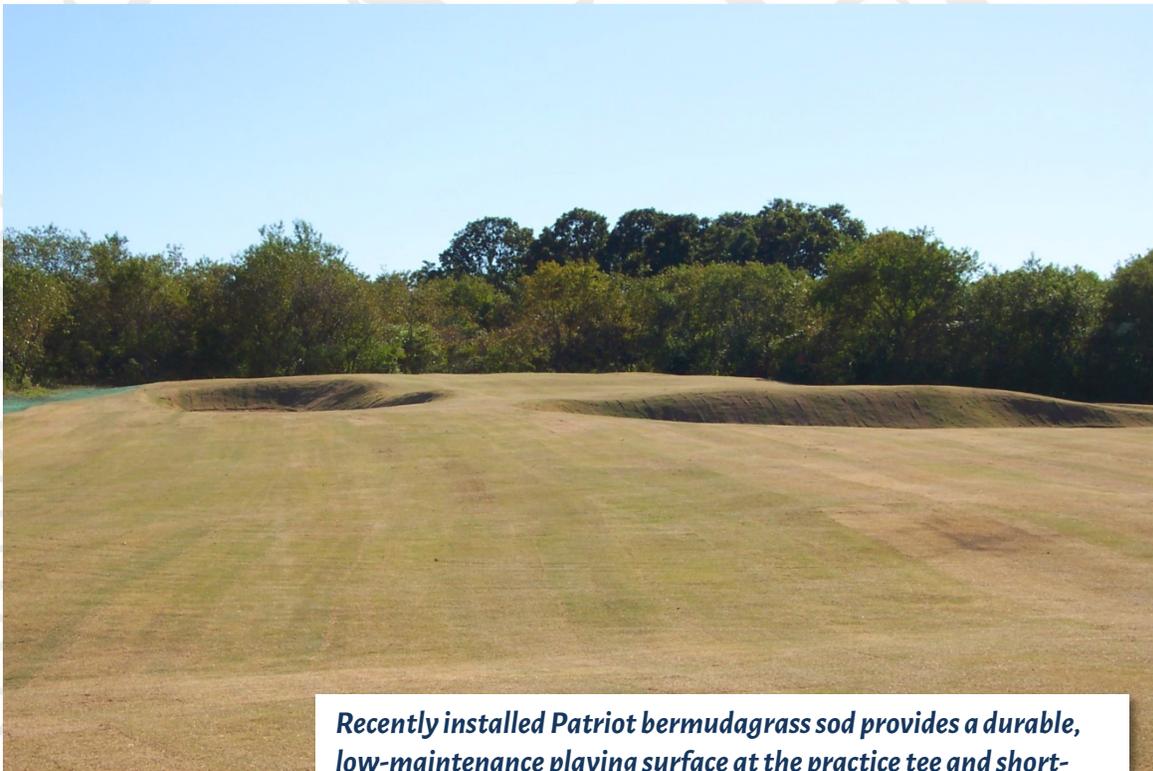
Patriot bermudagrass sod from an earlier project performed well – i.e., remained weed free and maintained good turf quality – without any chemical management programs in an on-site nursery. The bermudagrass sod also recovered rapidly from divots made by staff during the summer season. Don Beck, golf course superintendent, suggested bermudagrass as a solution to the problems occurring on the driving range tee and converted a portion of the practice tee to bermudagrass for one season to see how it performed. The trial worked exceptionally well during the summer of 2012 and survived the difficult winter that followed. After a second successful summer, a decision was made to build a new short-game area and establish it, along with the remaining part of the practice tee, with Patriot bermudagrass. The practice tee and new short-game area were completed in fall 2013.

The Results

The practice tee and short-game area have been well received by golfers, and use of the practice facility has at least doubled since the renovation. The bermudagrass continues to compete well against crabgrass and remains disease-free without pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. Also, divot recovery during the summer months, when the tee is used most heavily, has been impressive providing better playing quality than the previously used cool-season turfgrasses.

Beck reported the biggest challenge was obtaining Patriot bermudagrass sod due to the golf course's remote, island location. Arrangements had to be made between the sod grower, trucking company, and ferryboat service to cut and deliver the sod in a timely fashion. Once the sod arrived, Beck and his crew had to quickly unload the sod from the large tractor trailer in time for the next scheduled ferry.

The project was a success. The bermudagrass now fills an important niche at this summer facility located on the northern fringes of the specie's adaptive zone. There may be a winter when the bermudagrass does not survive, but Beck is comfortable that the staff can quickly reestablish the tee and other playing areas in time sod for the summer playing season.



Recently installed Patriot bermudagrass sod provides a durable, low-maintenance playing surface at the practice tee and short-game area without the use of pesticides or synthetic fertilizers.