

Switching From Conventional Overseeding To Pigment/Liquid Nutrient Programs

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The Problem

The growth of bermudagrass considerably decreases as temperatures drop during fall and winter. Winter is the peak play season for many southern courses, and many seasonal golfers expect lush, green playing surfaces. Historically, many golf courses overseeded dormant bermudagrass with a cool-season grass to improve winter color and definition. Overseeding is a costly practice, both financially and agronomically, and can cause considerable turf decline as the overseeding transitions each spring. Furthermore, since cool-season grasses grow during winter, overseeded areas must be mowed, diverting labor that could be used for other projects. Lastly, the winter weed *Poa annua* is extremely difficult to manage in cool-season overseeding and can grow to large populations in just a few years at overseeded golf courses.

The Solution

To strengthen the base bermudagrass and reduce *Poa annua* populations Candler Hills decided to give the course a break from overseeding one year. Instead of going “cold turkey” and simply not applying anything, the course chose to spray tees and fairways with pigments – along with nutrients – every two to three weeks to improve bermudagrass growth and aesthetics.

The Results

Pigments were new to the industry in 2011 and the degree of greening that these treatments would provide in the Southeast Region was unknown. Yet, Candler Hills decided to withhold from overseeding for a year to evaluate pigment performance. Candler Hills’ management continually educated golfers about the process and benefits of using pigments. Using pigments came to be referred to as “liquid overseeding” and it has been so successful that Candler Hills has chosen to forego conventional overseeding for the past four years. Candler Hills has realized the following benefits of liquid overseeding:

- Reduced irrigation by roughly 10-12 million gallons of water per year
- Saved nearly \$45,000 by reducing fuel usage, wear on equipment, irrigation pump electrical costs and seed purchases
- Improved bermudagrass health by eliminating competition with overseeded turf for sunlight, water and nutrients which caused the bermudagrass to become thin or bare during spring transition
- Dramatically reduced *Poa annua* populations
- Reallocated labor from mowing multiple times each week to other improvement projects that improved the quality of the entire golf course
- Increased rounds during fall and spring transition periods

Candler Hills has been very pleased with the results and will continue to spray pigments in lieu of conventional overseeding. For more information on the success of the pigment program at Candler Hills, see the article, [Switching from Traditional Overseeding to 'Liquid Overseeding'](#).



Figure 1. Frequently sprayed pigments and nutrients maintain excellent turf health and playability on tees and fairways during the winter play season.