

Plant Protectant Check Plots

Edgewood Country Club
Stanley Heidinger, superintendent

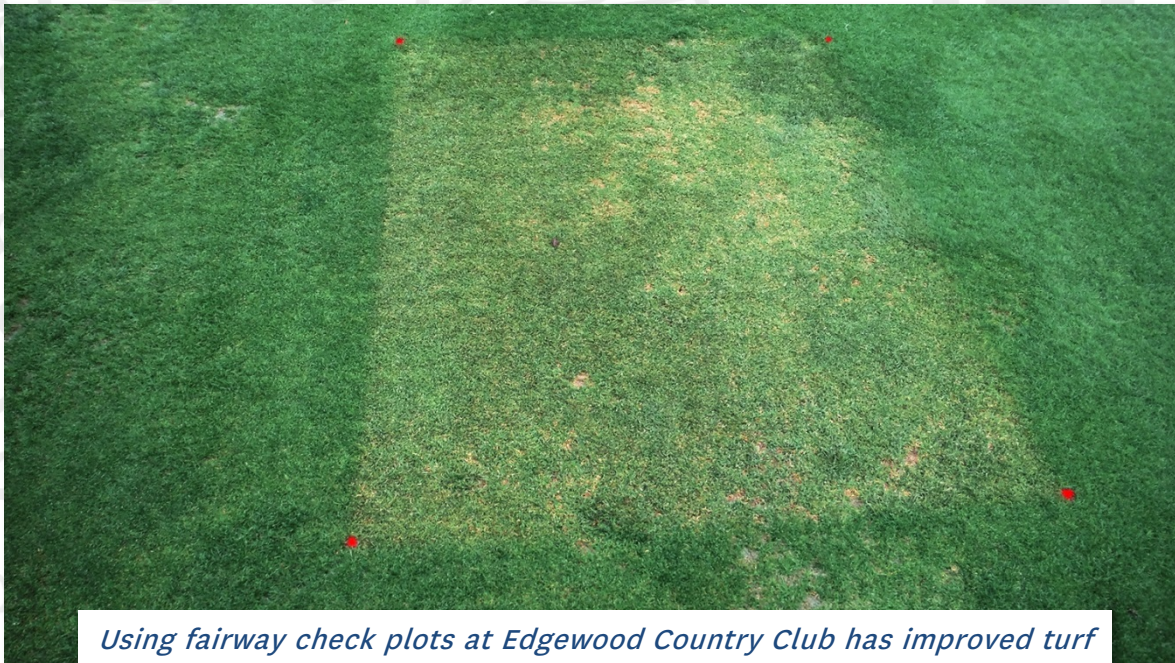
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Issue

Determining the efficacy of fertilizers, surfactants and plant protectants on a golf course can be difficult. Academic research relies on numerous small test plots to compare rates, timings, formulations and other variables. This method produces excellent results, but it also requires specialized equipment and lots of time and patience. At most golf courses, such an elaborate testing process simply isn't practical.

Despite the importance of determining product effectiveness, it is often a low priority on a superintendent's checklist. Product efficacy is often measured simply by success or failure, with little tolerance for intermediate results. This makes it difficult to fully understand the effects of various products.

At Edgewood Country Club, fairway plant protectant applications account for



Using fairway check plots at Edgewood Country Club has improved turf health by helping to determine product efficacy.

51 percent of the chemical budget. It is important to determine the effectiveness and value of each application so that these resources are used optimally. It is also important to know whether rate adjustments or a product change could yield better results.

Action

While numerous small test plots might not be a practical product testing method at most golf courses, untreated check plots are a great way to assess product efficacy. Before every fairway spray application, Superintendent Stanley Heidinger uses a sturdy tarp to cover an area of fairway turf. This creates a small, untreated check plot. The tarp is stored in the sprayer and secured to the fairway turf using several sod staples. Once the area surrounding the tarp has been sprayed, the tarp is removed and the corners of the check plot are painted red so that they are easily seen. Heidinger and his staff will then observe the area over the coming days, noting how the application has performed.

Results

Using an untreated check plot allows Heidinger to easily measure the effectiveness and longevity of fertilizers and pesticides by comparing treated and untreated areas. This information has helped him make valuable adjustments to his spray program. He has a better understanding of each product and he can identify opportunities to stretch spray intervals. Achieving the same results with fewer applications saves time and money. The check plots also help show golfers how important plant protectants are for maintaining a healthy and fun golf course.