

## Using Fish To Control Algae

Barrington Golf Club  
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### Issue

Every year, superintendents around the country struggle to control algae blooms that develop in golf course water features. Barrington Golf Club in Aurora, Ohio, was not immune to this problem. Dealing with algae outbreaks in their 13 ponds was a challenge. Superintendent Mark Figurella was using algaecides to control the issue, but the results did not meet expectations. The cost of control products and the labor required to apply them were not worth the investment. In the spring of 2016, significant algae growth occurred once again in the golf course ponds, this time Figurella decided to try a new control program.

### Action

Rather than using algaecides, Figurella stocked the ponds with tilapia, a fish that feeds on algae. The ponds were stocked at a rate of 30 pounds of fish per acre once water

temperatures were above 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Tilapia cannot be added to ponds when the water temperature is any lower.

After a few weeks, the tilapia had consumed enough algae to make a noticeable difference. Once the initial algae growth was controlled, most of the ponds remained clean all season. However, in a couple of ponds the control was not as successful. Additional fish were added to these ponds and algae control was excellent following the adjustment.

### **Results**

Using tilapia for algae control has been a huge success at Barrington Golf Club. The golf course ponds have never looked better and no algaecides were required. However, because tilapia cannot be added until the water temperature is above 60 degrees Fahrenheit, an early application of algaecides may be necessary in the spring to suppress algae growth until the tilapia can be added.

It is important to note that using tilapia to control algae is not a one-time investment. Tilapia will not survive water temperatures below 55 degrees Fahrenheit so they must be purchased every year. Nevertheless, the cost of using tilapia to control algae at Barrington Golf Club was half the cost of using algaecides. Even if a spring algaecide application proves necessary, using tilapia to control algae for the majority of the year is a more environmentally friendly control program and there will be significant cost savings.