



Green Section

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES CASE STUDY



Converting fairways to creeping bentgrass improved playing conditions and reduced the inputs required to maintain healthy turf.

BENTGRASS FAIRWAY CONVERSION IMPROVES PLAYABILITY AND REDUCES INPUTS

Corning Country Club | Corning, N.Y. 14830

John Hoyle, CGCS, superintendent

ISSUE

The fairways at Corning Country Club contain several different grasses, some of which are inherently prone to various diseases and summer decline. During a stressful summer, the fairways would often become thin and playability would suffer during the busiest time of year. The significant population of *Poa annua* in the fairways necessitated regular application of plant protectants to prevent damage from insects and disease.

ACTION

Corning Country Club elected to convert the fairways to creeping bentgrass to improve playing conditions and turf reliability. A newer variety of bentgrass called Luminary was chosen because of its resistance to dollar spot, a disease that can be costly to control. The fairways were sprayed with a non-selective herbicide, cultivated and seeded in the fall. Instead of converting all the fairways at once, the worst two fairways were converted first and then adjustments were made to the process the following season.

To minimize disruption to play, the holes that were being regrassed were played as par-3 holes from temporary tees that were created in the rough adjacent to the fairways. The approaches were not being converted, so there was enough room around the putting greens for golfers to play these holes while the fairway was closed.

RESULTS

The first two fairways were successfully converted to bentgrass, but a few ways to improve the process were identified during the initial phase of conversion. First, trees that were shading fairways or were too close to fairway edges needed to be removed. This would expedite the grow-in process and improve long-term performance of the bentgrass – a grass that needs plentiful sunlight. Once the need for tree removal was identified, the club decided to hire a golf course architect to help select trees for removal and to restore fairway contours as part of the conversion process.

In 2017, three more fairways were converted and the adjusted process proved beneficial. Superintendent John Hoyle, CGCS, says that removing problematic trees is helping the bentgrass to establish more vigorously, which helps prevent undesirable grasses from invading the newly seeded fairways.

Fairways are closed for four to five weeks to complete the conversion process. The total cost is just under \$1,000 dollars per acre, which includes all products and labor for the process. Due to the disease resistance of the new bentgrass, Hoyle will be able to reduce the number of plant protectant applications made to the fairways each season – saving time and money.

Currently there are 22 acres of fairway turf at Corning Country Club, bringing the total cost of the fairway conversion to approximately \$22,000. Although there was an initial expense for the conversion, the new bentgrass fairways require fewer inputs than the grasses that were in the fairways before – savings on product costs could be more than \$6,000 per year. In four years, the new bentgrass fairways can more than pay for themselves.