



To Seed Or Not To Seed

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Most superintendents across the Upper Midwest have less money in the operating budget for course maintenance this year versus last season. Cutting back labor is the most common way to address budget cuts, but every option needs to be explored when money is tight.

Whether or not to apply growth regulators to fairways for *Poa annua* seedhead suppression is an issue many superintendants are struggling with this spring. The cost of Primo/Proxy treatments for 30 acres of turf can be difficult to justify when deep budget cuts have occurred. Seedheads are a big issue to some memberships and are hardly noticed by others. If pristine fairways persuade an additional member or two to join a club, then the additional cost of early season Primo/Proxy may be a good investment.

A fair number of courses across the Region still attempt the more economical option of Embark seedhead suppression each spring, but the issue of turf discoloration during spring always needs to be considered when a course is trying to attract new members. Some courses want to present the best possible turf conditions to prospective new members during the spring. After all, a new member who joins during May will pay dues for the rest of the year. The possibility of turning off a potential member due to burnt orange fairway turf has discouraged some courses from using this material, regardless of good success using Embark in the past.

Timing is always the key to success when using growth regulators to suppress seedheads. There is no substitute for many years of experience and the ability to communicate to golfers the potential problems of phytotoxicity when it comes to using these materials. Universities use research to constantly fine tune timing recommendations. For example, a useful growing degree day tracker for the

upper Midwest and information regarding various options for seedhead suppression can be found on the Michigan State University Web site at: <http://www.gddtracker.net>

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