



## Time To Make Plans For Turf Colorants

By Patrick O'Brien, agronomist, Southeast Region

October 7, 2016

Turf colorants have gained popularity and become a game-changer for many golf courses. Often, turf colorants are applied on dormant bermudagrass putting greens, fairways and tees to enhance turf aesthetics and define key playing areas. Each fall, superintendents make several key decisions regarding how to use turf colorants:



*The annual USGA Turfgrass Colorant Workshop provides an excellent opportunity to learn about turf colorants.*

**1. Philosophy**—What is the goal of the turf colorant program? Is it meant to extend the duration of green color in the fall? Is it meant to improve definition throughout the entire winter? Or is the goal to help bermudagrass with spring green-up? Answering these questions is necessary before selecting a colorant product and application method.

**2. Sprayer Setup**—Applying turf colorants with a sprayer is significantly different from applying fertilizers, herbicides, growth regulators or insecticides. Nozzle types, nozzle spacing and boom height all require modifications to achieve the desired results. Proper sprayer setup optimizes colorant results and application efficiency.

**3. Communication to Golfers**—It is important to communicate the goals of a turf colorant program to golfers. For example, if turf colorants are only meant to extend fall turf color, avoid disappointing golfers by explaining that the turf may

lose color during the winter as the colorant wears off. Effective communication is key.

**4. Technical Information**—Choosing the appropriate turf colorant and delivery mechanism is not easy because the options are complex and evolving. Continuing education is a worthwhile investment to achieve the desired results of a turf colorant program. A workshop called, “Turf Colorants: How They Look Inside and Outside the Plant,” is being offered November 14 at the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association Conference and Trade Show. The workshop will be taught by Dr. Grady Miller, Dr. Casey Reynolds and Robert Vaughan. To sign up for this workshop visit the [Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association](#) website.

**5. USGA Turf Colorant Workshop**—The USGA will also provide the fifth annual Turfgrass Colorant Workshop this winter. Last year, more than 70 attendees participated in the workshop held at the Pinehurst Resort in early February. Stay tuned for more information on this upcoming USGA workshop.

Turf colorants are playing a bigger role in the programs used by golf course superintendents. Turf colorant usage has exponentially increased over the past five years due to outstanding products and improved sprayer technology. A practice that was once met with skepticism and avoidance is now generally accepted due to the diligent work of pioneer superintendents who looked for ways to make the game of golf more fun and sustainable.

**Southeast Region Agronomists:**

Steve Kammerer, regional director – [skammerer@usga.org](mailto:skammerer@usga.org)

Chris Hartwiger, director, USGA Course Consulting Service- [chartwiger@usga.org](mailto:chartwiger@usga.org)

Patrick M O'Brien, agronomist – [patobrien@usga.org](mailto:patobrien@usga.org)

Todd Lowe, agronomist – [tlowe@usga.org](mailto:tlowe@usga.org)

[Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service](#)

[Contact the Green Section Staff](#)