PennLinks Greens, Tees and Fairways Add Excitement to Excellence at McChesney Golf Club in Chicagoland

“This twenty-one hole public course is destined to be a Chicagoland showpiece when it opens in August, 1993. Nothing about this Robert Trent Jones, Jr. designed course is halfway” says Tony Kalina, Assistant Superintendent at McChesney Golf Club in West Chicago. “The clubhouse focuses around a 2½ story brick structure moved three miles to the center of the 240 acre site.”

Selecting the right creeping bentgrass for greens, fairways and tees was not left to chance, either. Superintendent Scott Nissley says, “I specified PennLinks because of its predictable germination and outstanding heat and moisture stress tolerance. I’ve found PennLinks to be more aggressive in cool soil temperatures than other bent varieties, and the best Poa annua competitor.”

Tony Kalina, responsible for seeding and establishment, finds PennLinks germinates rapidly and establishes uniformly, with seedling emergence as early as four days. Tony says, “We were mowing our fairways with lightweight mowers twenty days after seeding. After 50 days we’re maintaining putting greens height at 0.2 inch.”

Superintendent Scott Nissley sums it up: “The ball rolls truely on our greens and our fairway lies are excellent. I think Chicagoland golfers will enjoy this course as much as any course they play, and one reason will be PennLinks.”

PennLinks: From Tee-2-Green

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Circle No. 120 on Reader Inquiry Card
DIY lawn care is really not the bargain it might seem

We saved $60, maybe a few dollars more. In return, we forfeited about six hours of our Saturday leisure time.

This surprised us. When we decided last winter to improve our lawn with a program similar to that of a professional applicator company, we thought the savings would be greater. A professional quoted us a price of $128.40 ($120 plus tax) for four lawn applications.

But when we tallied our costs and efforts at season's end, we realized we had undervalued two important variables: convenience and time.

We suspect most do-it-yourselfers make the same mistake.

A lawn care DIYer can choose from a world of fertilizer products. Retailers carry plentiful supplies of turf fertilizers, mostly granular, in a variety of analyses.

We bought the O.M. Scotts four-bag, four-application program for a 5,000-sq.-ft. lawn in early March. Our lawn is just slightly under 5,000 sq.ft. The program cost $49.95 plus $3.50 tax, $53.45 total. The four 15-pound bags included fertilizer products containing pre-emergent, broadleaf control, and insect control in the first three rounds, respectively, and just fertilizer in the fourth. (By mid-August the price of the program had fallen to $24.95.)

Another decision had to be made. For $40 or so we could buy a serviceable drop spreader. But where would we store it over the winter? The basement is too unhandy; the lawn shed full of bicycles.

We decided to rent one, as needed, from a neighborhood hardware store. A Scotts' PF-3 spreader cost $2.50 per day. We rented it four times this past season for $10.70, including tax.

So, for a reasonable $64.15 we grew the best looking lawn in the neighborhood? Hold on. It's not that easy.

It took us 35 minutes for a single pass over our property.

We followed the instructions on the fertilizer bags, and didn't rush. Even so, in backing the spreader away from several small trees, or getting into several tight spots around our small storage shed, we evidently applied too much product. A couple of days after the August application, four or five patches of turfgrass, each about a foot square, turned brown.

For the fall application, we set the spreader on half the rate suggested on the bag. We walked the lawn one way, then walked it again from side to side. No problem with burns this time, but we turned the 35-minute walk into an hour job.

For the season we invested just over three hours to apply fertilizers.

Convenience? We decided we couldn't get an accurate accounting of our effort if we overlooked the automobile trips to buy or rent the materials we needed. Add three hours of driving, loading and unloading.

Presto, we've got six hours invested in improving our lawn.

And it did improve. The lawn, except for one dry week in June, was green and full well into the fall. Because 1992 was one of the wettest, coolest growing seasons ever in northern Ohio, every lawn in the neighborhood looked good. Even the weeds remained a bright green.

A lawn care pro can't compete on price with a do-it-yourself program. We knew this going into the season.

But if time is money, then what is a do-it-yourselfer's time worth? What is our time worth? That seemed to be the heart of the matter as we loaded the spreader into the back seat of the four-door Dodge after the final application.
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Rhododendron borgers and cankers
Problem: Some of our rhododendrons do not look good. They have canker or borer problems. What would be the best way to manage them? (Ohio)

Solution: Generally, borer insect and canker disease agents establish themselves on stressed and weakened plants. Some environmental stresses such as excess soil moisture (wet feet disorder) and nutrient deficiency resulting from improper pH, drought, or winter drying, can affect a plant’s overall health. Under these conditions, rhododendrons will be more susceptible to borer and/or canker diseases such as Botryosphaeria canker.

Provide proper growing conditions as the first step in managing most of these problems.

Rhododendrons prefer well-drained soil with a low pH. For this reason, they are called acid-loving plants. If the pH is high (alkaline), the so-called micronutrients will be tied up, leading to nutrient disorders such as iron chlorosis.

Iron deficiency also can further decline plants. Materials containing iron and/or those which acidify the soil will help improve this situation.

For nutrient disorders, determine the deficient element through foliar analysis and provide proper treatment. Provide proper watering, fertilizing and mulching as needed to help improve plant health.

As far as borer management, insecticides such as lindane or Dursban can be used in mid-May. Treat the trunk and branches thoroughly.

For Botryosphaeria canker disease, prune and discard affected plant parts when dry. Disinfect pruning tools in Clorox disinfectant, rubbing alcohol or Lysol to prevent further spread of the disease agent. There are no effective fungicide treatments for canker disease. Some reports suggest using copper-containing fungicides. Even in this case, the timing and number of treatments needed are not known.

The best method of managing these problems is to select proper plants for site conditions and maintain a good plant health care program.

Treating Dutch elm disease
Problem: Can Dutch elm disease be treated once the tree has been infected with the fungus? (Maryland)

Solution: The success in fungicide treatment depends on early detection and proper treatment.

Dutch elm disease management includes early detection, sanitation (pruning at least 10 feet into the healthy wood) and Arbotect fungicide injection.

In the past, insecticide treatments were recommended to manage bark beetles which spread the fungal spore during their feeding in crotch areas. Some researchers feel it is difficult to get a good coverage of the tree with insecticides and provide sufficient protection to deal with new generations of beetles. Another concern is the potential of drift to non-target areas which would result in public and regulatory concern. Therefore, practitioners are now considering the feasibility of skipping the insect treatment and instead treating with Arbotect fungicide.

As far as fungicidal injection, reports indicate that better results can be obtained if the crown infection (flagging symptoms) is less than 5%. If the crown infection shows more than 10% of wilting and branch dieback, the chances for survival are much less.

If the dieback and wilt is 20% or greater, the tree cannot be saved. In this situation, it is better to remove the tree promptly.

Prior to removal, if there is a healthy tree within 40 feet of the diseased tree, Vapam fumigant (a soil sterilant) treatment between the two trees is recommended to prevent root graft transmission of the disease. When doing this, read and follow label specifications.

Reports indicate that a three-year rate of Arbotect fungicide injections made at or below ground level on the root flare would be beneficial for better distribution and protection of the tree. Along with this, follow good watering, fertilizing and pest management as needed to improve plant health. Read and follow label specifications for better results.

Roundup persistence
Problem: How long does Roundup last on the soil surface? Sometimes during no-till renovation, we may have to re-treat if the existing plants don’t die. Will this cause accumulation of material in the soil? (North Carolina)

Solution: Regarding your first question: according to the Monsanto Co., manufacturer of Roundup, the Roundup will break down once it comes in contact with the soil. As a result, there will not be any soil residual. Therefore, the answer to your second question is “no.” Roundup is not known to build up in soil. There will not be any problem of repeated application, if needed to manage the weed problem.

Roundup is a non-selective, post-emergence herbicide. Therefore, you can expect it to manage whatever weeds are growing at the time of treatment. New weeds may establish from seeds or often some of the rhizomatous weeds may present a problem if the Roundup did not translocate uniformly to underground parts. In this situation, a repeat application would be beneficial.

Dr. Balakrishna Rao is Manager of Research and Technical Development for the Davey Tree Co., Kent, Ohio.

Mail questions to “Ask the Expert,” Landscape Management, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear in the magazine.
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In the South, where weeds are a problem most of the year, you don’t get much of a break from using herbicides. Mila usually studies show it doesn’t harm root systems. So Southern turf stays strong and healthy.

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cide. So the milder your herbicide is to turfgrass, off-target plants and the environment, the better off you are. That’s why you should seriously consider Surflan* herbicide for your weed control program.

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