

PLASTIC MULCH A SUCCESS AT BUTTERFIELD

by C. G. Wilson

Superintendent Bert Rost was forming ulcers on his ulcers this Spring because the wet Fall of 1965 had delayed construction of several new Ray Diddier designed greens and tees at Butterfield. Then, too, all of us know that Spring failed to spring with its customary vigor in Chicago this year.

Bert had to seed in early May and the members expect to play by July 4. From the looks of things, by late May the deadline will be met, thanks to a conversation that Bert had with the U.S.G.A.'s Jim Holmes. Jim suggested they try "Soil-Set," an elastomeric polymer concentrate dispersed in water as a liquid mulch to hold soil, seed and fertilizer in place.

Seedbed Preparation

Putting green seedbeds were prepared in the usual fashion. A 10-10-10 fertilizer at 20 pounds and Milorganite at 40 pounds were lightly tilled into the surface with Penncross bent at 3 pounds per 1,000 square feet. All new greens and tees were rimmed with bluegrass sod, and this may be one reason why the Soil-Set application was so successful. Certainly, it prevented the "undercutting" type of erosion from non-treated areas experienced by some who have used this material.

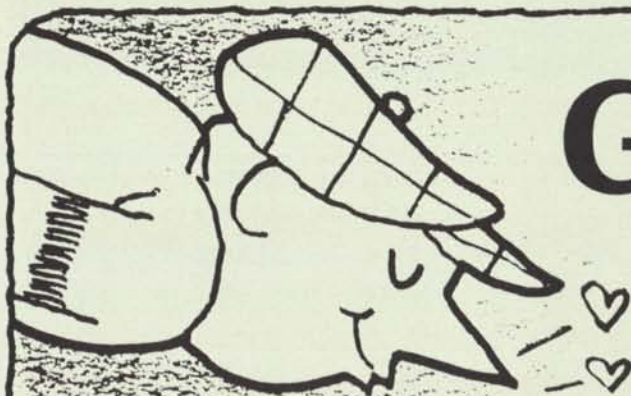
Soil-Set was then applied using the recommended 9 parts water to 1 part Soil-Set dilution at a cost of about \$3.00 per 1,000 square feet for the plastic mulch. The manufacturer, Alco Chemical Company, suggests waiting for 3 hours after the application before walking on or dragging hose over the newly seeded area. Bert feels that under his conditions a 12 hour wait was even better.

Love Those Check Plots

Fortunately for our knowledge Bert has small (about 2 square feet) check plots on each newly seeded area. These plots had everything but the Soil-Set and offer visual proof that the mulch really worked. In addition to stopping 90% or better of potential erosion, the Soil-Set brought about earlier seed germination. Bert feels it did this by holding the Milorganite in place. Shortly after seeding, a 3 inch plus gully washer of rain arrived at Butterfield. Within another week almost 2 more inches of rain fell in a short time. This washed fertilizer and seed from the non-treated check plots, but not where the liquid mulch had been applied.

Although no soil temperature measurements were made, Bert Rost is certain the black Milorganite granules absorbed some heat from the sun to bring about earlier soil warming and thus earlier germination. On the border where the Milorganite washed from the check plots more growth is evidenced to bear out Bert's contention.

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PLASTIC MULCH (Continued)

Mr. Rost also found another advantage from the liquid mulch application. After the 3 to 12 hour waiting period one hand watering was all that was needed. Subsequent irrigations were made with large fairway sprinklers to save time and money.

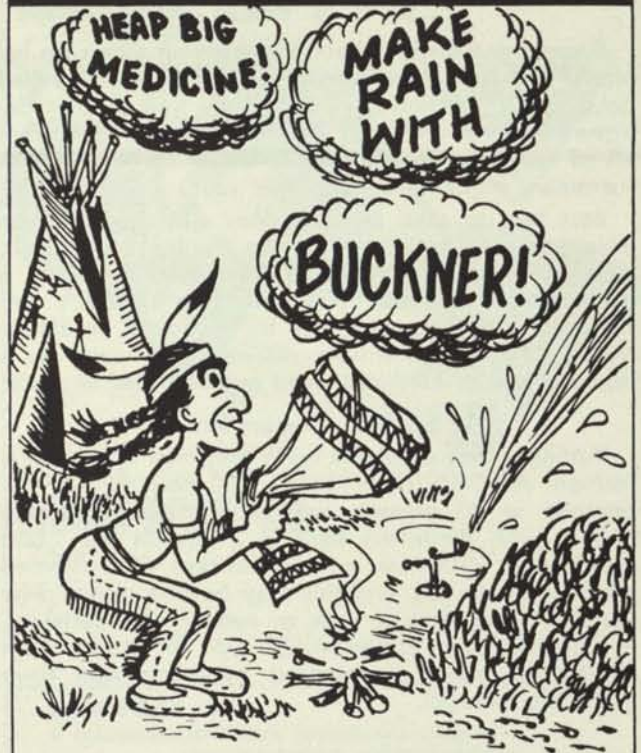
The only erosion noticed was a few minor rivulets at the lower end of large and rather steeply pitched greens. Bert feels that possibly a double rate application under these conditions would have prevented any damage. In any event, Bert Rost is satisfied that for Spring seedings, Soil-Set is worthy of consideration. It definitely worked for him.



After 20 days pictures show increased growth in dark area with use of liquid mulch over area (lighter) where no mulch was applied.



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