

tance. The topsoil should consist of six inches of black dirt. Proper drainage should be achieved by surface contouring or installing drain pipe under the planting bed. Occasionally we test the soil for nutrient deficiencies or surpluses. Where broadleaf evergreens are used the soil must be modified to meet the requirements of these plants.

Any lumber, stone or masonry construction should be completed before planting. Proper construction methods should be utilized to withstand soil heaving from winter freezing and the pressures exerted from soil backfill.

Once the plants are in, an attractive mulch can be used to protect the plant roots, conserve moisture, and decrease weed invasion. We normally use a shredded bark or wood chip material. The most important construction step is the cleanup. Plant tags should be removed, broken branches pruned, and the entire area fine-cleaned. Nothing detracts more from a landscaped area than a messy work site that has not been cleaned!

Landscaping various areas not only upgrades the appearance of the golf course but establishes member awareness of various plant materials. It has been a personal hobby from which I have attained a large amount of accomplishment and satisfaction. I consider my ability to design and landscape a valuable golf course superintendent skill.

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A USGA Zontek Update

by Stanley J. Zontek
North-Central Director

As is becoming traditional, I am sending some thoughts on the condition of the golf courses I have seen in my travels so far this season as an agronomist for the USGA. It may be interesting to compare the problems and situations of other golf courses to your own.

After traveling my eight state region, in talking to some of our other staff agronomists, one thing is clear ... this part of the country escaped practically all forms of winterkill. This cannot be said for the Northern and central parts of Ohio and the South. In many ways, this has been one of the most difficult years ever for bermudagrass winterkill. It has been said that there is not one bermudagrass green alive in Dallas. It probably is true. The bermudagrass was killed around Christmas time following a quick drop in temperatures. If you watch golf on television, the early tour events held throughout Texas, you saw the problems they were having with bermudagrass kill. This winter injury of warm season grasses extended through southern Illinois and into Kentucky. Fortunately, zoysiagrass was not effected all that much, it was the bermudagrass.

For those golf course Superintendents the winter of 1983/1984 will go down as one of the worst ever for bermudagrass winterkill. On the other hand, Superintendents in this part of the country should remember this winter as one of the best (with the exception of Ohio) winters in recent memory.

(cont'd. page 9)

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USGA Update

Grasswise, following the miserable summer of last year most all golf courses that we see are holding up quite well. The weather has been hot but not too hot, humid but not too humid and diseases, so far, have been mild. The only exception to this has been an outbreak of a "Gaeumannomyces" type of fungus that is effecting bentgrass roots. It is not effecting annual bluegrass just bentgrass on greens and an analysis through a microscope shows runner hyphae coming out of the grass' roots. I believe that Dr. Joseph Vargas is working on this disease with a grant partially funded by the USGA Green Section as well as Dr. Henry Wilkinson from the University of Illinois. Some control has been achieved in the lab but ... field work is ongoing now to determine how these fungicides work and what exactly are the factors that lead up to this disease. Visually, it looks like a bad case of *Helminthosporium* leaf spot or melting out but it could well be one of these strange root and crown rot diseases that only works below the surface of the soil, which makes their diagnosis ... extremely difficult.

Actually, except for this "new" type of disease, problems throughout the region have not been all that serious. In fact, the overall appearance and playability of most of the golf courses that we see is excellent. The fairways on those golf courses using the lightweight 3- and 5-gang mowers are responding exceptionally well to this type of fairway mowing program. In fact, the best fairways we see are those where this lightweight equipment is used in general and where the clippings are removed in particular. It certainly is no panacea but it is the best thing that has come along in a long time for improved fairway playability and more reliable fairway grasses through the summer stress period.

In summary, to-date things are looking pretty good. The golf course Superintendents in this part of the country could use a good summer ... especially after last year. One never knows what the next few months will bring but to-date, the overall condition of most golf courses has been excellent. Let's just hope the weather holds so that the 1984 season will go down in history as one of the best for golf course turf following the 1983 season which was undoubtedly one of the worst.

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