

# OVERSEEDING

By NEIL KALIN  
Pembroke Lakes G.C.

Here at Pembroke Lakes Golf Club, overseeding has been a tradition for the past seven years. As the cold weather invades our tropical climate, usually in December and January, those superintendents that overseeded win the hearts of their green's committee chairman, golf professionals, members, and are deemed 'heroes' in turf management. However, there is the other side of the coin when hot/warm weather persists through the so-called 'cool season', the overseeding undergoes stress and a percentage of the seed is lost. Heroes of the past are quickly turned upon and become the center of criticism around the local country clubs.

Our profession has yet to find methods to alter Mother Nature and no one can predict cold or warm weather, consequently I am left with the opinion that overseeding is an inexpensive insurance policy which guarantees a quality putting surface whether it is for the member of an exclusive private club or a visiting tourist playing at a public facility.

Winter overseeding generally takes place between November 20 and December 7 here in South Florida. The practice of overseeding is actually the seeding of cool season turf grasses into warm season turf grass species. In South Florida the warm season species is Bermuda grass. There are numerous cool season turf grass varieties and blends. As to the specific variety or blend to be used for overseeding, golf clubs generally go along with the recommendation of their superintendent and/or golf course consultant. Cool season turf grasses commonly used for overseeding include the Blue grasses, Bent grasses, Fescues, and the Rye grasses. It is important to note that each Genus has a wide range of species, all of which have varying characteristics which make them favorable and adaptable to a wide range of environmental conditions. Once a variety or blend has been selected, the amount to be used is calculated and the seed is ordered from a local seed distributor.

It is best to have the seed delivered at least 30 days prior to the overseeding date. This enables the superintendent to check seed germination, noxious weed content, etc. The seed should be stored on pallets in a cool, dry, dark room. There is a wide range of equipment used during overseeding and all equipment should be properly serviced and checked two weeks before the overseeding date.

On an 18 hole facility, remaining open for play during the overseeding, the entire procedure takes approximately 2½ days (10 hour days). Communication/coordination between the golf course superintendent, golf professional, starter and with the assistance of a productive golf course maintenance staff, overseeding is performed smoothly with little distraction to the everyday member/golfer.

The seed is spread on a green that has been previously verticut. This method allows the seed to 'get down in' and of course provides protection for the seeds. Cyclone spreaders are calibrated and used to distribute the seed in a uniform manner. The green is seeded in at least three directions so that uniform seed distribution is achieved. To avoid seeding beyond the edge of the green (collar), a drop type Gandy spreader is used on the perimeter of the green. A blend used at Pembroke Lakes dictates using approximately 30 lbs. of seed for every 1,000 square feet of putting green surface. After seeding the green, the entire surface is moderately top dressed with 70/30 sterilized top dressing. The green is then fertilized with a super phosphate fertilizer (this enhances germination). The green is now ready for drag matting. The seed, soil, and fertilizer material is drag matted in a clockwise and counter direction to provide uniform distribution of the three ingredients. Irrigation of the green follows drag matting.

Water is the single most important ingredient to a successful overseeding program. Too little water can be just as ineffective as too much water. Light syringing of the green on a regular basis during daylight hours is most important. This enables the seeds to remain moist during sunlight hours and this ultimately enhances germination. Each green is sprayed with fungicide the day after seeding to protect the new seeds from the threat of disease. After germination, the green is sprayed on a preventive maintenance program at seven to 10 day intervals.

After overseeding, the green is mowed (without the baskets) every other day until seed germination is visible. Germination takes place from three to 21 days depending on the variety used. By hand syringing (watering) each green three to four times daily, the blend used at Pembroke Lakes Golf Club takes approximately four to six days for germination. Once germination is evident, mowing is stopped and the green is fertilized with 25 to 30 lbs. of Milorganite per 1,000 square feet. Hand watering is continued on an as needed basis throughout the entire winter season. After the initial germination, the green is cut at 3/8ths of an inch. As the grass matures and becomes 'stiff' the height of cut is lowered in increments of 1/64th of an inch. The lowest cut used at Pembroke Lakes is 15/64ths of an inch. Overseeded greens require close observation and attention and are watered, fertilized and sprayed with fungicide on a regular basis. At the end of January, the green is lightly top dressed to hide ball marker blemishes and this also helps to smooth out the mature putting surface.

Overseeding is a challenge, and there is no textbook method outlining the steps for a guaranteed overseeding program. With cooperation from Mother Nature, a good irrigation system and desire for quality putting, overseeding can be very rewarding. ■