

NORTH FLORIDA

DIVOTS

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Did you know that when Ole Man Winter blows his breath on North Florida that the superintendents do not go into dormancy like their bermuda, but start preparing for temperatures that in recent winters have set record lows?

With heavy frost occurring in North Florida and temperatures that have remained below freezing for 10 to 15 hours, preventive cold weather maintenance should not be taken lightly. Monitoring weather forecasts closely enables one to cover those certain plants around the clubhouse or grounds that need protection from heavy frost or severe cold temperatures. Replacing burned out light bulbs in irrigation controller boxes helps keep hydraulic tubing lines from freezing. Some superintendents have proposed the idea of heat lamps in pump houses to prevent freezing damage to pipes and valves. The practice of wrapping exposed pipes or even clay valves with some form of insulation has also been suggested and used by superintendents in the North Florida area. These ideas may seem drastic to some people but better safe than sorry!

During these cold snaps, good rapport with the golf pro can be beneficial. Keeping players off the course until the temperature rises above freezing or when the sun has burned off heavy frost or until one has syringed frost off the greens and tees will prevent damage to the turf.

Equipment maintenance during cold weather requires a little common sense. Adding anti-freeze to radiators is a good common sense practice. Keeping as much of your equipment under shelters in cold or any weather conditions

will prolong equipment life. Switching to 30 weight engine oil in cold weather is a practice area mechanics advise. Since engines run in cooler winter temperatures, 10W-40 weight oil is not needed so this can be a savings cost practice. Allowing engines on equipment to warm up during cold weather before putting them in full operation is also a good cold weather practice. This will allow hydraulic seals to come back into shape and prevent leaks.

Special maintenance practices occur in relation to the coming of Ole Man Winter. These practices are the removal of pine straw, pine cones, and dead leaves from over the course. This can become a headache and at the same time a useful natural resource. Pine straw can be used to create cart paths that are both pleasing to the eye and functional. An extra large pine cone dipped in varnish or lacquer with a nail in the bottom with the head removed makes a very attractive and inexpensive tee marker.

During this time, Kerb treatment for Poa Annua comes into play and some preemergent weed controls.

Other special projects are good for this time of year such as removal of dead trees, general clearing of rough areas, and special irrigation projects can take place without worrying about interfering with heavy course play.

With cold weather preventive maintenance activities and special winter projects, North Florida superintendents do not have a chance to hibernate as it would seem, but face a professional challenge extended to them by a change of season. ■

South Florida Soils

CLEWISTON, FLA.

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