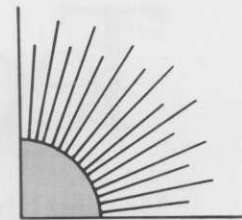


# South Florida Sunshine



By BRAD KOCHER  
Inverrary Country Club

## Bundling Up Turf For Cold Weather

It seems like every year we hear new and better methods of making our Bermudagrass turf more capable of handling the cold winter temperatures. The turf has to withstand not only temperatures that inhibit growth, it must face hundreds of golf carts that compact and put upon it a further stress.

Heavier fertilization during the September to May period is essential in South Florida to force bermuda growth. Generally speaking 3/4 to 1 pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet is necessary during these months to meet the nutritional requirements.

Potash levels have been increased by many South Florida superintendents, as a result of soil tests and by recommendations of leading turf specialists. A greater emphasis is also being placed on a one to one nitrogen potash level to increase plant hardness without a great deal of lush growth. Potash created hardness will also increase root growth and hopefully enable the bermudagrass to withstand drought stress that will no doubt occur this winter.

Cold weather preparedness of greens is undoubtedly the main area of concern. By far the majority of golf courses overseed their greens. However the ones who do not overseed are faced with greater challenges.

Both Tifgreen 328 and Tifdwarf bermudagrass must be treated in a variety of ways to enable the grass to cope with the wide diversity of winter temperatures and climatic conditions. There are temperature ranges from the low 30's to 80 degrees. There are wet and dry conditions, wind conditions, and reduced amounts of daylight hours.

Earl Grey, at Indian Creek in Miami Beach, generally fertilizes at one pound of nitrogen every two weeks during the winter season, as compared to approximately one pound of nitrogen per month during the growing season. He is also a strong advocate of at least monthly topdressings. Mowing heights are generally raised in conjunction with temperature changes.

Many superintendents find it necessary to mow above 3/16" during cold weather conditions. Heights of 7/32" to 1/4" are frequently used when temperatures drop into the low 40's and 30's. The height is then brought back down to normal levels when temperatures increase.

On many mornings greens are not mowed and periods of four to six days without mowing are not uncommon. It is also beneficial to use walking mowers during winter months to reduce compaction and tire marks from riding mowers. If riding mowers are used an every-other-day cleanup lap around the edge of the green should be used, and at least one clean-up-lap per week should be made one foot from the edge of the green.

Superintendents who do not overseed, must be very flexible and weather conscious to be able to cope with the vast variety of conditons that present themselves from November to April. Many club members do not like the four to six weeks of overseeding establishment and feel they would rather cope with less than ideal conditions for a few weeks.

Overseeding is desirable and necessary at the majority of the courses. Heavy play considerations, soil conditions, member appeal and just plain aesthetic appearance of lush

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green growth is a necessity at most establishments. A four to six week establishment period insures a consistent dense stand of bentgrass or ryegrass. Probably 95% of the overseeded courses use a perennial ryegrass. It establishes quickly and provides a dense uniform turf.

During periods of 30's and 40's the growth reduces. However, the putting surfaces remain consistent and mostly traffic tolerant. Ryegrass easily withstands the 300-350 golfers, ball marks and scuff marks that are characteristic of many of our courses.

Overseeding or non-overseeding is first a golfers decision. Those who do not usually swear by the results, and those who do swear by their results. Some just swear! Hope we have a mild winter, regardless. ■

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