



# Suncoast Sails

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Gator Creek Golf Club

## MAINTAINING GREEN SPEED

The first step in maintaining green speed is to determine the speed at which the greens are to be. Since the majority of the members at Gator Creek want quick greens, our maintenance program is geared to this objective.

As in most golf course situations the green speed is greatly affected by weather conditions. Due to the limited play we receive through out the winter we feel it is in our best interest not to overseed for winter play. This allows as quick a surface as desired. We increase the nitrogen fertility level to 2 lbs. N/m per month from, depending on temperature, December through February. The other nutrients are added as needed according to soil tests. We maintain a cutting height of 3/16 to 1/4 inch. When frost is a problem we use charcoal to increase the soil temperature while using the irrigation system to syringe the greens as necessary.

As spring approaches we gradually lower the nitrogen rate to 1 lb. N/m per month. A frequent light topdressing program using 100% sand initiated along with a light vertical mowing program up to two times per week. The cutting height is slowly reduced to 9/64 inch. A nematocide is applied during March or April for the control of Nematodes and mole crickets. We maintain this program until the rainy season begins.

Due to the fact that our tidwarf Bermuda greens are contaminated with Pee Dee and are not very well drained we are forced to reduce the vertical mowing frequency as well as raise the cutting height to 5/32 - 3/16 inch during the hot rainy season. This tends to reduce thinning of the Pee Dee. We continue to apply a frequent light topdressing however. During the late spring the greens are aerified and plugs removed, followed by a slightly heavier topdressing. This is done 3-4 times through the summer. Lime is applied if needed after coring. Fungicides and insecticides are applied as needed.

As the rainy season comes to an end and the temperature begins to fall we increase the frequency of vertical mowing and gradually reduce the cutting height to 9/64 - 5/32 inch, while continuing the light frequent topdressing. Depending on the turf quality the nitrogen level may be increased slightly.

During November or December we raise the cutting height to 3/16 inch, reduce vertical mowing, increase the nitrogen level to 2 lbs. N/m per month and begin to

phase out the topdressing applications. This thickens the turf in preparation for winter. A member educational program is used to make them aware of the importance of repairing ball marks when the grass is in a semi-dormant stage.

Although this is our basic greens maintenance program we usually alter it slightly as conditions and turf quality dictates. We tend to keep the greens on the dry side when possible throughout the year. The only herbicide used is Basagran, used for spot treatment of sedge. We double cut the greens when a faster surface is desired for tournaments or special occasions. Since no two golf courses are the same, each superintendent develops a greens maintenance program that suits his conditions and provides the putting surface desired. ■

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