

Something New For Pythium

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The turf industry in Florida can always use a new fungicide, especially a systemic one. Aliette is a new turf fungicide from Rhone-Poulenc chemical, makers of Ronstar and Chipco 26019. The material has been available in Europe and South America, and should be labeled for turf this year. Aliette is currently labeled for some ornamental plants, and can be purchased from some of the local suppliers.

The chemical name of Aliette is Phosethyl-aluminum. It controls Pythium and Phytophthora systemically, like Subdue or Ridomil. These water-mold fungi are among the worst diseases of turfgrasses. They are severe root rot pathogens, especially in wet weather and poorly aerated soils.

The main interest in Aliette stems from the fact that it translocates downward. When applied as a foliar spray, it

is absorbed by the leaves and travels downward to the roots. Once there, Aliette works within the plant's own chemistry to combat root rot. One of the problems with many Pythium fungicides is that they must penetrate the soil quickly and thoroughly in order to be effective. In some soils, fungicide penetration can be big problem, especially with tight, compacted, poorly aerated soils. (Such soils are also ideal for Pythium.) The concept of foliar spraying to control root disease is a whole new aspect in turf disease prevention.

Research with Aliette on turf was begun last fall at the University of Florida, but the Christmas freeze cancelled any potential results. Dr. Ed Freeman is conducting tests right now with Aliette on bermudagrass, using 2, 4, and 6 ounces per thousand square feet. Aliette should be useful for disease control in most of the major commercial turfgrass varieties. The material is also being tested for aerial blight of ryegrass.

Aliette should be quite effective in controlling Pythium on commercial turf, especially in poorly drained or waterlogged soil. After excessive rainfall, it can be sprayed on without significantly adding to the excess moisture. The product is reasonably safe, but it is volatile so keep the bag closed. Aliette is also competitively priced, and is actually cheaper to use than some existing fungicides. The product should be a very useful disease control tool for the Florida turfgrass industry.■

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