

# Treasure Coast "Tide"ings

## Overseeding for Real Estate Profit

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Heritage Ridge Golf Club

Overseeding of tees and greens in South Florida has always been looked upon as a method of improving playability during the winter months. As more and more courses are being developed for real estate purposes, overseeding is becoming a sales tool.

Most northerners have a preconceived notion that Florida is palm trees, sunshine and green grass. As Florida superintendents know, delivering a lush green golf course throughout the winter can be made impossible by the weather.

One way to produce green fairways and rough is to overseed the entire golf course "wall to wall." While this practice does improve playing conditions to some extent, as a general rule it doesn't justify the expense of the seed and additional mowings. Two notable exceptions to this rule would be overseeding unhealthy grassy areas that would not be suitable for play during the winter months and overseeding for aesthetic appeal to bolster real estate sales.

Heritage Ridge Golf Club has practiced "wall to wall" overseeding for the past five years. This all began the first season the club opened. The course was planted in September and in order to open the course for the winter season overseeding fairways and rough was deemed necessary. The response from the membership, sales department and management was so overwhelming that the practice has been continued every year since.

Agronomically, the overseeding of fairways and rough is not easy to justify, but as most superintendents know, sound agronomic principles must sometimes be pushed aside for economic reasons.

Overseeding has been proven to be a highly profitable tool at Heritage Ridge due to our specific circumstances. The club is privately owned and maintained and must maintain high levels of real estate and golf membership sales during the first years of operation.

The cost of overseeding a 120 acre golf course "wall to wall" with perennial rye-grass effectively is roughly

\$18,000 (depending on the variety of seed, seeding rate, cost of seed, etc.). Taking into consideration the cost of increased mowing, equipment wear, fuel usage, etc., the cost would rise to approximately \$28,000.

After the brutal cold snap last winter, Heritage Ridge was one of the only inland golf clubs with any color for a six week period. This time period also coincided with the peak of our playing season. Needless to say, the membership and sales department were overjoyed.

It has been estimated that our improved condition throughout the winter season is responsible for approximately fifteen of the fifty new memberships each year. The profit made in new memberships and subsequent renewals can quite possibly offset the cost of overseeding on its own.

The effect of overseeding on real estate sales is somewhat harder to estimate, but take for example a developer that has 300 homesites or homes to sell. What is the value of the increased aesthetic appeal of the development on each? \$2,000 per unit? \$5,000 per unit? Quite possibly more. This increased value multiplied by the number of units can easily justify the cost of overseeding.

Overseeding "wall to wall" is not a practice that would be profitable to most clubs. If there is little or no real estate or memberships to be sold, overseeding to this extent would not be fiscally responsible. Clubs in this position that would like to increase the aesthetic appeal might consider overseeding one or two holes near the clubhouse or other main focal points. Another option that has been used with great success has been the overseeding of roughs but not fairways. This will maintain the roughs' playability and give outstanding definition to the fairways.

Overseeding of large turf areas may not be economically feasible for many clubs, but with the majority of golf courses being constructed for development reasons, this practice may become a highly profitable tool. ■