



# Palm Beach Trade Winds



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## Let's Hear from the Other Side

Imagine this; a lush, beautiful golf course located on a tropical island where warm breezes ruffle the coconut palms and bermudagrass is the dominant turfgrass from tee to green.

Does this sound familiar? If you live in South Florida, this is probably what you see everyday; a golf course with bermudagrass throughout. However, there has been something creeping down from the up north country; the popular rage of the bentgrass phenomenon.

It sounds sort of peculiar, does it not? A cool season turfgrass species trying to grow in a year round, warm season climate. After all, South Florida, from Jupiter across to Naples, is listed geographically as being located in Zone 10; a tropical, warm season climate, where frosts are seldom, if ever at all. However, we find ourselves discussing a situation similar to locating an Eskimo in the tropics and asking, "why are you perspiring so profusely?"

Obviously, many superintendents in South Florida have been perspiring profusely also. The fear of losing your job because you are having a difficult time growing bentgrass in South Florida has sadly been on the increase. The intent of this article is to not ridicule the concept of overseeding, yet, let us weigh the pros and cons of overseeding in a climate where perhaps, it could be best to not overseed. Yes, life does exist without bentgrass.

Now, let's hear from the other side, those courses that successfully chose to not overseed. Given the right situation, there are many benefits to not overseeding. In the South Florida climate, if your greens are relatively large (6,000 square feet or greater), constructed of good, coarse perculative sand (and obviously U.S.G.A. specs would be even better) an adequate budget (to properly maintain turf throughout the winter season), a healthy, pure stand of Tiftdwarf (that is relatively clean of offensive contaminations), and a tolerable amount of peak season play, in order to endure the foot traffic, you can successfully combat the season without overseeding.

In defense of the Bent blues, if your greens are small, poorly constructed, with excessive winter play, overseeding might be your only solution for survival. In order for this discussion to be fair, let's hope you do not fall into

this category.

Let us compare the overseeded course to the non overseeded course on a month by month basis and see who scores the highest grade. We will begin to take the test during the month of September, reason being, this is the very beginning of the snow bird season, where some of the tourists begin to come down.

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### THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS TO NOT OVERSEEDING IN SOUTH FLORIDA.

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*September: Overseed* — Score B (3.0). The greens are acceptable, although fertilization has dropped off in order to slow down the aggressiveness of the Bermuda in preparation of next month's overseeding.

*September: Non Overseed* — Score A (4.0). The greens are probably the best they will be all year. Summer renovation is paying off, fertility is up, the greens are exceptionally healthy and ready to prepare for the winter season.

*October: Overseed* — Score D (1.0). Overseeding is taking place. Verticutting, topdress, establishment of the month of the year for the overseeded course. Politically, this can also be very disheartening. Members are just coming down, and getting an ill taste of aggravation. this can also be very disheartening.

*October — Non Overseed* — Score A (4.0). For the non-overseeded course, life is much like September. A good healthy stand of turf, that should continue to look excellent and putt relatively true for Bermudagrass. Politically, this can be a very satisfying month. Members coming down and feeling positive about the conditions of the golf course with no aggravation.

*November: Overseed* — Score C (2.0). Overseeding is becoming established, mowing heights are gradually being lowered and next month will be better.

*November: Non Overseed* — Score A (4.0). This is probably the last of the good months. Density, color and

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overall putting quality should still be excellent.

**December: Overseed** — Score C (2.0). The greens are beginning to look better. Cooler nights and shorter days are helping the establishment of the seed. Most of the members are in-town by now, expecting excellent greens, they should be patient, realizing next month will be better.

**December: Non Overseed** — Score B (3.0). The greens are beginning their downward swing. The weather is not severe enough to be detrimental and overall the members are still satisfied with the product.

**January: Overseed** — Score B (3.0). The greens are really shining now. They should be completely established, mowing height down tight and putting excellent. If this isn't your month to excel, it wasn't worth the bother. Everybody's in town and expecting perfection.

**January: Non Overseed** — Score B (3.0). The greens are holding on and this will be the last good month. Fertilization is up, topdressing is aiding the growth, putting quality is still good however, the color is off and the density could be suffering because of the foot traffic.

**February: Overseed** — Score A (4.0). Once again this should be a good month much like January. The seed has matured and the members should be very happy.

**February: Non Overseed** — Score C (2.0). This will be the toughest month of the year. The greens should actually putt quite good, because of the heavier winter fertility and topdressing however color can be off. This must be the key part of educating the members — "putting for quality, not for color."

**March: Overseed** — Score A (4.0). This could be the last great month to cash in. Assuming the seed was a good take, and no disease has occurred, the members should be very happy.

**March: Non Overseed** — Score B (3.0). Assuming no frost has occurred, you're home free. The greens will be on their upward swing. Putting quality should still be quite good although color will still be slightly off.

**April: Overseed** — Score B (3.0). Assuming no frost has occurred, you're home free. The greens will be on their upward swing. Putting quality should still be quite good

although color will still be slightly off.

**April: Non Overseed** — Score B (3.0). The greens should not only putt good, but color should be improved to the point of almost looking "normal." For this given month, the greens will be equally competitive to the overseed. Members are beginning to pack up and head north with a positive feeling about the non-overseeded greens — a feeling of passing the test with a good grass.

**May: Overseed** — Score C (2.0). By now, the overseed will be fading out, warm soil temperatures will make it most difficult to maintain the overseed, unless extra special attention is given.

**May: Non Overseed** — Score B (3.0). Little effort will be needed for the month. The greens should be extremely healthy, rich in color and you're home free from here on.

**June: Overseed** — Score C (2.0). This can be a very difficult month. Transition can be quite poor. If the Bermuda does not fill in quickly, putting quality will not be good.

**June: Non Overseed** — Score A (4.0). Much like May, the greens should look good and putt as good as desired. By now, the quality of putting can be as good as the amount of effort needed to satisfy the membership. If the season is over, and play has tapered down, you can concentrate your efforts towards summer renovation.

By now, the season is over, the time is up and let's compare the scores.

	OVERSEED	NON OVERSEED
September	B - 3.0	A - 4.0
October	D - 1.0	A - 4.0
November	C - 2.0	A - 4.0
December	C - 2.0	B - 3.0
January	B - 3.0	B - 3.0
February	A - 4.0	C - 2.0
March	A - 4.0	B - 3.0
April	B - 3.0	B - 3.0
May	C - 2.0	B - 3.0
June	C - 2.0	A - 4.0
Overall Grade		
Point Average	C+ - 2.6	B - 3.3

You be the judge. Was the overseed worth it? If you're club is located in South Florida would you overseed? Month by month, its quite competitive! So competitive, the non-overseed fared rather well. Considering the additional expenses for seed, pesticides, labor and member aggravation during the establishment and transitional periods, it hardly seems worth it.

Non-overseed allows a course to stay on a more even keel throughout the season, it allows the maintenance crew to concentrate their extra labor efforts towards more course detailing. The non-overseeded course can actually look quite good from September thru June and you might even have some time to go over to the beach and let the warm, tropical, South Florida breeze, flow through your hair as you sit underneath the shade of a coconut palm. ■

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