

Overseeding Trends

Earning Your Stripes

This article was supposed to be about overseeding trends, but guess what? The trend has remained the same; most courses are still overseeding and the last 5-10 years of mild winters didn't really cause very many courses to back off their usual programs. Some courses with ultradwarf greens may have lowered their rates a little. The big news was the winter weather in 2002-03 and what it taught everyone.

The first lesson was that we had indeed become spoiled by mild winters and the severe cold weather this year exposed some chinks in preparation and management techniques. Maybe we all got a little lackadaisical since the mild winters hadn't stressed the bermudagrass very much in the last five years. This year was more typical of the 70s and 80s weather some of us veterans remember, and the pitfalls of establishment and transition were magnified for all to see.

Successful overseeding can be a crap shoot under any circumstances. Timing of seeding is a blind draw depending on Mother Nature, so there's no guarantee that going down early or late is the solution. Extended periods of rainy weather and the onset of cold weather early in the season can severely limit the quality of establishment just as much as an overly warm fall season. Here are some thoughts from your peers on this year's overseeding trials and tribulations.

Gainesville CC Overseeding Is a Year-Round Responsibility



"What you do to your greens all year affects your overseeding program."

- Buddy Keene, GCS

What you do to your greens all year long affects your overseeding program. We are always verticutting and topdressing our greens throughout the spring and summer. That



January 2003 Overseeding stripes at Deltona Hills G&CC. Photo by Joel Jackson

way when we apply our seed we do not need to go in and do any major verticutting or heavy topdressing. We also aerify at least three times annually. We apply our seed sometime between mid-to-late October. This gives us a two-three-week window in case the weather is not favorable on the first attempt.

The near-record cold winter of 2002-03 did not catch us by surprise because we watch and read all weather-related data available like the Weather Channel and the Farmer's Almanac. Laugh if you want but the Almanac is a pretty good resource. We communicate to our membership with a monthly newsletter about what to expect with the weather and how it affects turf conditions and aesthetics. Our members are well informed. They don't like surprises any more than we do. Our overseeding went very well the last couple of years so I do not anticipate changing a thing.

We use straight *Poa trivialis* on our greens at 10-12 pounds per 1,000 square feet. We do not go heavy because it may result in transition difficulties. We would rather be a little thin on the overseeding because it favors better transition in the spring. As far as the tees and fairways we go out at 400 pounds per acre with a three-way blend, that way we have different seed varieties in the mix for every environmental stress that we may encounter. We could go heavier on the rate, but we have Ormond bermuda-

grass fairways and a lot of shade. The Ormond does not come out of the cold very well especially if it has a lot of competition from the ryegrass.

The fertility program on our greens is all soluble with the spray rig, with maybe some granular during transition. We believe it is better to spray a little every week instead of a lot all at once. This method alleviates all of the peaks and valleys in the plant nutrition program. Obviously, we have to periodically adjust due to the weather and other stresses, but we pretty much keep it on an even keel. Our fairways and tees are handled a little differently from our greens. We use granular fertilizer blends and fertigation. We use soil and tissue tests to determine what to apply and go from there.

As for as our spray program for pre-emergence control, we use Barricade everywhere in the irrigated areas where we do not want tracked-off volunteer rye seed to germinate and this also controls a variety of weeds in our irrigated areas. We try to apply other pre-emergent applications well ahead of any forecast rain event in non-irrigated areas. For post-emergent control we use Manor, Kerb, Princep and others. Once our overseeded grasses are up and established we try to topdress once every three-four weeks or as needed.

Transition management can be difficult if the weather is not favorable. We do not spray out our overseeding. We let it check out on its own with very little encouragement from our

end. This is because our bermudagrass does not come out of the cool weather very well primarily due to our nematode populations and shade. We keep the overseeding as long as possible without impeding the growth of the bermudagrass. We do lower the height of cut gradually, and brush, verti-groom and vertical mow, but we have never used any herbicides to take out our overseeding. We also do a lot of hand watering of the hot spots to prevent premature thinning before the bermudagrass is actively growing.

Buddy Keene

Southwest Florida Weather is the Wild Card in Game Of Overseeding



"It was the coldest, wettest, busiest winter with the quickest spring warm up we've ever had."

- Stuart Taylor, GCS

Transition woes this spring had Stuart Taylor

of the Riverwood GC in Port Charlotte scratching his head in disbelief. Says Taylor, "We used the same cultural practices we have used successfully the past five years and we used the same Poa trivialis (75 percent) and bentgrass (25 percent) blend that we used and liked last year."

So what was the difference?

"There was an immense difference in the weather this year. We have been averaging 10 frosts a year the last few years. This year we had 30 frosts. The winter was wetter.

Riverwood Overseeding Practices

Preparation

- Verticut greens 3 ways.
- Verticut tees and fairways 2 ways
- Scalp roughs

Seeding Rates

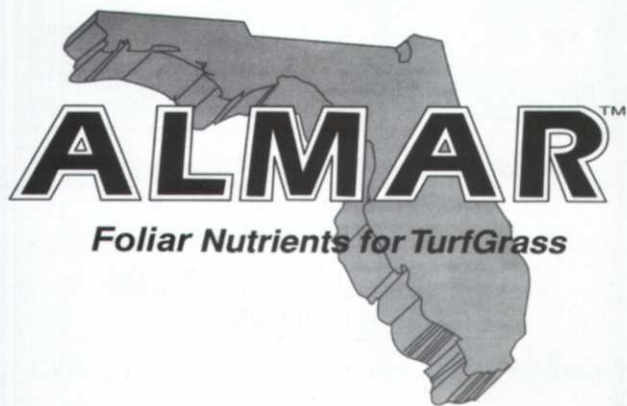
- Greens 8 lbs/M Poa trivialis/bentgrass blend (75%/25%)
- Tees 400 lbs/A; Fairways 320 lbs/A; Roughs 210 lbs/A

We had 25 inches more rainfall than normal, and we had more traffic than ever as we experienced our busiest winter season ever with around 240 rounds a day. It didn't get much better going into spring. We had frost on April 1st and seven days later it was 85 degrees. The grass didn't know whether to come or go. It was very difficult to manage since the conditions were so atypical and changeable"

The transition frustration for Taylor was magnified by the fact that he felt like he had a great overseeding establishment. "Everything looked great in the fall. The seed went down smoothly, germinated and grew in. For nine months beginning in September, we had the best greens we've ever had, and then for 30 days beginning in May we've had the worst greens in five years. They are coming around now.

"We are on the frost line on the west coast. Thirty miles south and maybe overseeding could be optional, but we are also a development course so aesthetics are a critical issue year round for real estate sales and member satisfaction. So, overseeding is not optional. The trade-off is the members are kept informed and we brought in the USGA to also help explain transition problems."

"Some of our worst areas were on



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