

**OVERSEEDING**

# To Seed or Not To Seed

There are risks, rewards, responsibilities and requirements for every turfgrass management program on a golf course. One of the most time-honored programs – overseeding – has been undergoing gradual change as new strains of hybrid bermudagrass and seashore paspalum show more cold tolerance and quick green-up after cold snaps.

While overseeding in the winter provides aesthetically pleasing stripe patterns, recent drought periods and subsequent watering restrictions of up to 45 percent cuts in allotments have superintendents and clubs taking a harder look at their programs. Appearance isn't the only reason a course overseeds. Heavy winter play can wear out the

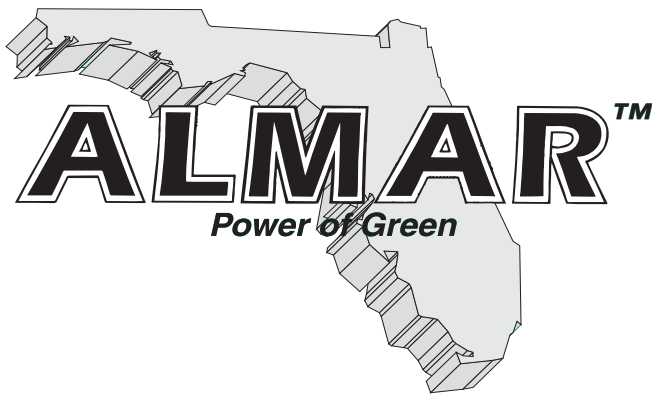


*Pleasing stripes and protecting dormant turf are two reasons for overseeding, but new grasses and milder winters are changing programs. Photo by Joel Jackson.*

turf in regions where cold temperatures shut down the active growth of bermudagrass. In these areas overseeding is a necessity not a nicety to produce a viable playing surface so the golf course

can remain profitable in the winter.

Here are some comments from your peers as they consider how to modify overseeding programs to balance battered budgets and still provide good



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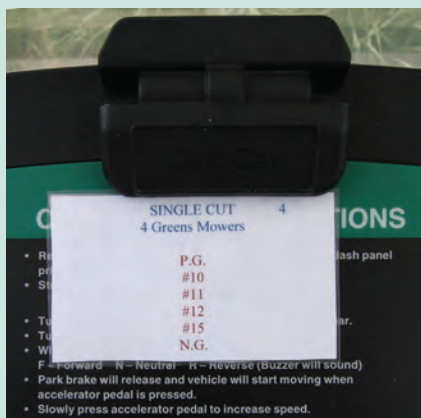
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**SUPER TIP****Pick a card! Any card!**

By Darren J. Davis

Like many golf courses, the order in which we cut our greens is well defined with only a few exceptions. For us, the practice green is always first and then, depending on whether we are trying to get both sides ready at once or just the front nine, we have a set route we want the operators to follow. The only additional variable that comes into play is how many employees we have available based on the schedule for that particular morning.

With rare exception, we utilize from three to six people each morning to cut greens. Rather than writing the desired route on the assignment board, or hand writing a note each day, we have prepared “semi-permanent” cards that dictate the order in which we want the operators to cut.



*Laminated mowing assignment cards save time and provide clear directions. Photo by Darren Davis.*

We have separate sets of cards for three, four, five, or six mowers.

The benefits of the cards are that we leave nothing to chance (either due to the fault of the supervisor or the employee) and we are saving time and materials by not producing a hand written note each morning.

To produce the cards my office manager created a template in Microsoft Word. After printing a sheet of the cards we use a laminating machine to seal the paper. The cards measure two by three inches so the final step is to cut the cards to size with a paper cutter. Our only significant cost was the initial purchase of a small laminating machine and a paper cutter.

While we feel the routes provide a consistent workload for each operator, in an attempt to provide variety and have a little fun with the crew, we often allow the operators “to pick a card” without seeing the route they are choosing. Between uses, the cards are stored in an index card storage box.

playing conditions during the all-important golf season.

**ARLINGTON RIDGE GC, LEESBURG**

Last year we were one of the courses in central Florida that decided not to overseed. We had two reasons – economic and agronomic. We realized a cost saving of more than \$40,000 as the economy was in a serious downfall.

I don't think we lost much play because of it, but on the down side we did hear more complaints about divots and bad lies. We were dormant from December to February due to a higher number of days with below freezing temperatures.

On the plus side, the fairways rebounded quicker than normal when the warmer weather returned and filled in more quickly without the transition competition with the ryegrass. With signs of a stabilizing economy emerging, we are going to overseed this year to enhance appearance and playing conditions during our in-season play, hoping to promote membership and real estate sales. We will overseed the greens with *Poa trivialis* at 6-8 lbs per 1,000 sq.ft., the tees with perennial ryegrass at 15 lbs per

1,000 sq.ft and the fairways with a 3-way ryegrass blend at 400 lbs per acre.

We have used an outside contracting service for our overseeding in the past, but this year we will do it in-house using a three-point hitch Gandy spreader for the fairways and Lesco walking drop spreaders for the greens and tees.

We will prep the greens for seeding by verticutting two ways followed by lightly topdressing, then apply the seed. We will verticut the tees two weeks prior, apply the seed and wait. The fairways will receive a light verticutting two weeks prior, then we spread the seed in two directions to avoid skips.

Once established we lightly topdress and fertilize the overseeding with a granular and liquid rotation. We will punch the greens one time during the overseeded months, usually with 1/4-inch solid tines to relieve compaction from the heavy winter play and allow air to the root zone.

When it's time for transition in the spring, I prefer to let the overseeding die out naturally on the tees and fairways. I will start to push the bermuda with fertilizer during March, when temps reach 85 degrees, and cut back a little on

watering. In April I will start verticutting lightly to help remove the rye and to promote bermuda growth. This will open up the canopy to allow more sunlight to the bermuda. By May we should be hot enough (approaching the 90s) and we can mow lower and verticut more heavily to allow the bermuda to overtake the rye.

On the greens, we follow mostly the same program, except we will aerify in April with 1/4-inch hollow tines to help remove the *Poa trivialis*. Frequent light verticutting and topdressing at this time will help the bermuda transition and cutting back on the water slightly will help gradually remove the overseeding.

*Ron Hibbard, CGCSA  
Seven Rivers GCSA*

**JULIETTE FALLS GC, DUNELLON**

We did not overseed last winter and recorded 33 heavy frost and one day below 32 degrees for at least 15 hours, which burned everything back. On the bright side, we also estimated saving upwards of \$100,000 and nearly 25 million gallons of water.

*Steve Keller, Class A  
Seven Rivers GCSA*