

# Sow them late and reap the benefits early

*Maine superintendent finds that dormant-seeded bentgrass sprouts earlier and stronger*

By Peter Blais

He thought it was ridiculous. But the bank insisted. Seed the last four holes before winter or no more construction money.

Falmouth (Maine) Country Club superintendent Kevin Ross had lived in the Pine Tree State a good portion of his life and knew temperatures in early November were too cold for bentgrass seeds to germinate. He had never tried dormant seeding (seeding when soil temperatures are too cold for germination) and didn't know if the seeds would survive the Southern Maine winter.

But the bank was calling the shots and the new course needed the cash if it wanted to stay on schedule. Grudgingly, Ross planted the remaining holes.

The results were dramatic. The dormant-seeded holes germinated very early in the spring of 1988 and a fine stand of turf resulted. Soon they were in better shape than the holes seeded early enough for fall germination. In fact, much of the seed that germinated the previous fall didn't survive the winter.

"I was against the original dormant seeding," recalled Ross, pointing at a plug of dormant-seeded turf with inch-long roots on a recent late-April morning. "I was amazed when we had grass coming up in early April. You usually can't



Falmouth Country Club superintendent Kevin Ross (left) displays a section of the club's driving range that was dormant-seeded with bentgrass. A close-up view of the healthy turf in a tee area is highlighted (right). Ross believes dormant-seeded turf areas come up earlier and healthier than areas planted in early autumn.



get grass to germinate around here until the middle of May."

Ross was so taken with the results he tried it elsewhere. That fall his crew aerified and dormant-seeded some weaker fairways. They also dormant-seeded divots on tees and a driving range target green. The results were the same.

"While some fellow superintendents were re-seeding winter-damaged greens with bentgrass and getting poor germination results, I was noticing excellent germination in our

experimental areas. These results were noticed from early- to mid-April, with soil temperatures of only 40 to 45 degrees," Ross wrote for Seed Research of Oregon for which he is an advisory committee member.

Bentgrass generally germinates when temperatures reach about 55 degrees, "or at least that's what they teach you in turf school," he added.

In the fall of 1989, Ross' crew groove seeded a practice range tee in two directions. Germination occurred in soil temperatures between 38 and 43 degrees.

"The dormant-seeded areas were mowable before before I had germination from spring seeding on some winter-damaged greens," he wrote.

Ross now routinely dormant seeds greens, tee divots and trouble spots on fairways as an

insurance policy against winter damage. To help the process, he fertilizes the areas with a slow-release fertilizer. He minimizes erosion of newly seeded areas with mulch, turf covers or erosion blankets. Turf covers are moved from greens to other dormant-seeded areas as soon as possible in the spring. Time permitting, he treats the areas with a quick-release fertilizer in early spring.

The \$5,000 annual price tag for seed, materials and labor is a small price to pay for healthy turf that comes up four to six weeks early, particularly in an area with a short growing season, Ross said.

Dormant seeding could also prove useful on courses converting from *Poa annua* to bentgrass, Ross said. This could be accomplished in two ways.

Continued on page 35

## Full Serve or Self Serve?

If you're thinking about installing or redoing a cart path system on your course, with SOUTHERN CONCRETE PAVERS you have two options...



### Full Serve

We bring our patented PATHPAVER™ and experienced crew to your course to install a complete cart path system, usually in less than 30 days!

### Self Serve

Purchase our machine, and we'll train you to do it yourself. Rental and leasing programs also available.

Call for free estimate

## Southern Concrete Pavers, Inc.

800-833-3014 FL; 800-368-7890 CA

### ADVERTISER INDEX

RS#	Advertiser	Page	RS#	Advertiser	Page
131	The Andersons	38	128	Montco	34
112	B.H.Sales	16	114	Naiad	18
145	Bell Turf Equip.	43	124	Neary Mfg.	30
142	Bloch & Co.	43	134	Ohio Turfgrass	41
102	Ciba-Geigy	3	113	Page Com	17
130	Ciba-Geigy	37	116	Par Aide	19
141	Continental Bridge	43	118	Partac Peat	22
105	Cushman	6-7	144	Pavelec Bros. Construction	43
117	Cushman	20-21	120	Precision Small Engine	22
132	Cushman	39	159	Precision Tool Prod. Co.	45
129	Davenport Seed Corp.	36	138	Pumping Systems, Inc.	47
103	Di Giacomo	4	111	Regal Chemical	16
126	Dura Plastics	31	137	Roots, Inc.	37
146	Excel Bridge Mfg.	43	135	Sandscape, Inc.	27
140	Federal Signal Co.	43	139	Southern Concrete	46
110	Flowtronex	14	156	Sporting Valley Sod	45
150	Golf 2000 Pavers	44	107	Standard Golf	9
153	Greenscape Pump Services	44	155	Syntennico	45
115	Guettler & Sons	18	104	Tee-2-Green	5
125	Huber Ranch Sod Nursery	30	152	Terracare Products Co.	44
106	Jacklin Seed Co.	8	108	Toro Comm'l. Prod. Div.	10-11
160	Jacobsen	48	133	TurfSeed	40
123	John Deere	28-29	151	Unit Structures	44
154	JPF Distributors	45	109	Valent USA	13
119	Lab Systems/Software	22	148	Warehouse Radio	44
121	Lebanon Turf Products	26	147	Warren's	43
122	Lebanon Turf Products	27	161	Western Wood Structures	45
157	Master of the Links	45	143	Willadsen Scale Models	43
158	Mike Young Designs	45	101	Yamaha	2
162	Milona Turf Products	45	149	Yard Edge	44