

Superintendents stretching budgets with plant growth regulators

By TRENT MEIDINGER

For superintendents with a tight budget and stretched labor force, there rarely are enough hours in the day to keep up with mowing.

To help stretch their budgets — and time — superintendents are relying more on plant growth regulators, or PGRs. By using

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PGRs, they can save time and money for several reasons, including:

- less mowing,
- faster mowing,
- reduced need for extra workers,
- fewer clippings, and
- less wear and tear on equipment.

Although PGRs have been around since the 1950s, many early products were unreliable or costly. Today, PGRs are proving

to be cost-effective on every part of the golf course.

PGRs fall into two categories, Type I and Type II. Type I PGRs, which include older compounds such as Embark and Limit, inhibit plant growth by stopping cell division.

Type II PGRs, unlike Type I products, don't stop plant growth. Instead, they affect the biosynthesis of gibberellic acid. This plant substance causes cell or stem elongation. Cutless, Scott's TGR and

the newest product, Ciba's Primo, are Type II PGRs.

According to superintendents across the country, PGRs are cost-effective because of the benefits that accompany slower turf growth.

Some superintendents who use PGRs choose to cut down on the number of weekly mowings, while others maintain the same mowing schedule. Either way, the superintendent comes out on top.

"We don't reduce our mowings," says Ray Avery, superintendent at

Quail Hollow Country Club in Charlotte, N.C. "But with PGRs, we've reduced clippings and really improved the look of the course."

Dick Gray, superintendent at Loblolly Pines in Hobe Sound, Fla., does use PGRs to reduce mowing in bermuda fairways.

"While using a PGR during the summer, we reduced our mowing from five times per week to two or three times," Gray says. "When we did cut back on the mowing, we didn't run into a problem with leggy turf."

In addition to reducing mowing frequency, PGRs may extend the life of mowing equipment.

"We sprayed our PGR at recommended rates in the rough so we could reduce the growth and see if we could get by without buying a new rough-mowing unit," says Chip Martin, superintendent at Southern Oaks Golf Course in Easley, S.C. "It definitely worked, and we didn't have to buy a new unit."

Because less time is spent mowing, PGRs also free up time for workers to spend on other parts of the course.

For Loblolly Pines' Gray, it's an important benefit that his crew can get off the fairway mower and onto other projects around the course.

"We can keep the same number of people and use them elsewhere on the course," he says.

Other superintendents agree with Gray. After doing some arithmetic, they say that using PGRs saves them money because they have to hire fewer workers.

For Southern Oaks' Martin, using a PGR helped him reduce his labor costs in his roughs.

"The members, especially here, like a short rough. And all superintendents know that roughs really can be a headache, especially when you have a lot of rain," he says. "But with a PGR you don't have to worry about it nearly as much."



Dick Stuntz
Superintendent
Alvarado Country Club
Lawrence, Kansas

"With the amount of flooding and heat we've had this season, most preemergence herbicides would have fizzled out by now — but not Barricade. It's still giving us excellent control."

John Freeman
Superintendent
Deerwood Country Club
Kingwood, Texas

"Our preemergence weed control program was too expensive. Rather than cut back we switched to Barricade. Now, for the same dollars, we not only get excellent control, but also more coverage. Plus, we have the advantage of using multiple applications and getting better control of a broader spectrum of weeds."



Show: Record registration

DALLAS, Texas — Pre-conference registration for the 65th International Golf Course Conference and Show here Jan. 31-Feb. 7 totaled 3,117 as of Jan. 10. Last year's record was 2,996.

On the educational roster for members of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America are: 58 pre-conference seminars; two "innovative superintendent" sessions; six concurrent educational sessions encompassing 35 state-of-the-art topics, and ten special-interest forums.

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