

All precautions said lost if top dressing inconsistent with root zone

By MARK LESLIE

The green is built to U.S. Golf Association (USGA) specifications. The root-zone mix is perfect. The turfgrass is looking exceptional. All is rosy with the world, right? Well, not necessarily.

"The biggest problem right now with USGA greens is when superintendents don't use the absolute — and I mean absolute — same material in their top dressing process for the years to come," said architect Rees Jones.

"I'm not talking material someone says is 'almost the same.' I'm talking about the exact same source."

Jones decried the practice of superintendents to use the same sand suppliers they have always used simply because they trust them.

"This happens all the time," he said. "Huge mistakes are made a lot. These suppliers don't change their mix from course to course. They're not specifically customizing top dressing for each

course, as we have specifically customized it for each course."

Top dressing greens with a blend that does not comply with the root-zone mix "can create a new perch water table that chokes off everything we've done," Jones said.

"Ideally, you top dress with what you build the greens with," agreed Steve MacWilliams, vice president of Turf Diagnostics and Design in Olathe, Kan. "The primary rule is: Don't top dress with a finer material, which would layer out

the green in the top two to three inches. You can go in with coarser sand."

The superintendent should go to the trouble of getting the sand and mixing it himself, Jones said, suggesting it is a good idea to purchase a small blending machine.

MacWilliams passed on some tips concerning top dressing materials:

- When top dressing is delivered, bag a portion of it and store it away. It may come in

handy if there are turf problems and you want to see if the problem was the top dressing.

- If superintendents are communicating with their associations and a sand company starts delivering bad product, the association can go to the supplier and lay down the law.

- If superintendents makes it known they are quality-controlling their top dressing, the supplier knows it must supply good material.

In addition to stressing a compatible top dressing blend, Jones said, "Superintendents have to change their watering practices on USGA greens.

"They need to be flushed by heavy watering and then not watering, rather than lightly watering all the time. The biggest mistake I see is a superintendent lightly watering them. That water stays on the top. The roots come up to the top. And you start developing a sick thatch that you have to keep aerifying out."

Builder beware!

Continued from previous page deciding the best mix," Hummel said. "What is mixed by hand in the lab differs from what you get in the field where they might be running the materials through screw augers or belts to mix them. I suggest the blender run a couple of calibrations to come close to what was developed in the lab.

"After the machine is properly calibrated, it should be tested every 1,000 tons. The test would entail basically the organic matter to make sure it is being metered in proper proportions and sand size. If something is off, and that is not unusual (especially the percentage of organic matter), put a hold on that stockpile until a complete physical analysis is run on it."

Watkins tests the blend every hour on site.

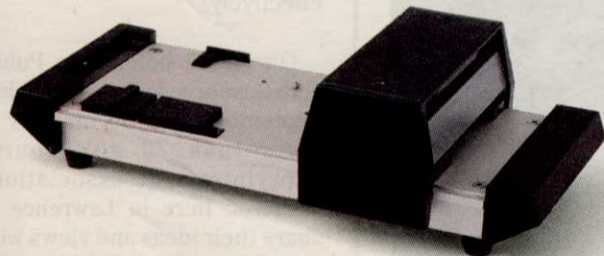
Other suggested cures for the root-zone material problem:

- Pre-qualify the material before it goes to bid to the contractor, said Mike Pierce, president of Dakota Peat.

- "Never let a blending company purchase the materials," Watkins said. "It puts a person in a compromising position if they are furnishing the materials."

- Make sure the lab being used is competent in dealing with soils.

- Developers should reserve the right to see all tests and information pertaining to a project, since more and more contractors have a code-of-ethics agreement that no one can see test results except the person who paid for them, Pierce added. Their contract should give them the right to require proof of purchase on the sand and peat moss, and verify it by going directly to the mining company or manufacturer to inspect all documentation.



The charge card changed the way consumers purchased goods and services. Two of the largest banks introduced the first bank credit cards.

1958



The charge of simple batteries is the fuel for the E-Plex™, the first all-electric triplex greens mower. This technology will change forever the way golf courses are maintained.

1994

the course of history

The E-Plex is a showcase of contemporary engineering, leading the industry into the twenty-first century. This innovative machine was born out of Cushman's four decades of experience with electric vehicles and Ransomes expertise with reel mowers.

The E-Plex is the herald of a new era in turf maintenance. Harness its energy for benefits that were unheard of but a few years ago. Charge ahead with the E-Plex!

For a free demonstration call 1-800-228-4444. We'll give you the name and location of the nearest dealer. FAX (402) 474-8522.

* Covers 9 to 18 holes on one full charge depending on terrain.



Charge ahead by sending for a free video on the E-Plex. Just call 1-800-228-4444.



RANSOMES

Driven to be the best.