

Can compost actually fight snow mold?

By PETER BLAIS

GLENVIEW, Ill. — Superintendent Dan Dinelli is experimenting with yard compost this fall to see if the organic alternative will help suppress snow mold here at North Shore Country Club.

"There's some data that supports the idea that a top dressing of compost injected with certain bacteria can help prevent snow mold," Dinelli said. "It's pretty preliminary data. But since they've taken away the mercury-containing products we've always used to combat snow mold, we've got to find an alternative."

"There are several other fungicides out there, but none that work as well as the mercury products. Compost is a natural alternative. Hopefully it works."

Laying down snow mold treatments to prevent snow mold is one of the main winter preparation projects at Northern courses. Snow mold is particularly prevalent where snow remains on the ground for three months or more without a thaw. It is characterized by the springtime appearance of grayish to dark brown-colored areas ranging from 3 to 24 inches in diameter.

Dinelli plans to test a compost mix

Continued on next page



A Scott's Company fertilizing/overseeding vehicle on the job in Jacksonville.

Fertilize & overseed: All at once

By PETER BLAIS

MARIETTA, Ga. — It's mid-fall, the summer help has returned to school and superintendent Tracy Meeks is looking at overseeding Canterbury Golf Club with a "bare bones" crew.

Until a couple of years ago, Meeks' crew did the time-consuming job itself with the limited equipment available at the course. That's when O.M. Scott representatives approached him about putting their custom fertilizing trucks to a new use, i.e. overseeding Meeks' course.

"It's worked very well," Meeks said. "There are some skips because the trucks act as giant drop spreaders. The little that doesn't get covered we can go back and do ourselves. Overall, though, it's the quickest way I've seen to get the course green for winter."

Scott first introduced its fleet of fertilizer trucks in 1992,

example, the truck travels through the center of the fairway at 11 to 12 miles per hour. It slows significantly as it approaches the green. The radar tells the computer the green is ahead, the vehicle slows and the computer slows the application rate.

"The technician operating the vehicle is the key to the operation, however. We hire trained golf course personnel, many assistant superintendents, who understand the placement of seed."

Meeks was impressed with the operators. "I don't even send someone to ride with them anymore," he said. It cost Meeks \$12,000 to overseed Canterbury's 20 acres of fairway. That included three visits: an initial starter fertilizer, the actual seed and a high-quality fertilizer application in early winter.

Two years ago, Scott realized it could also help Northern courses prepare for winter by using the same vehicles to

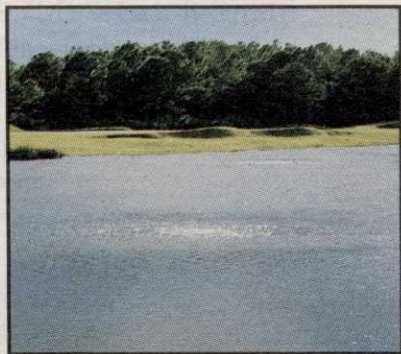
Continued on page 40

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Top-dresser turned overseeder

With a few minor modifications and two special covers, the Turfco F-12 Top Dresser will overseed fairways, repair areas, tees and greens with a tow-behind top dresser. As an overseeder, the modified top dresser requires 75 percent less labor than broadcast spreaders, according to company literature. The F-12 spot seeds in a single morning what it takes a push-type broadcast spreader two days to accomplish.

The ability to use the Turfco F-12 top dresser as an overseeder is made possible by its patented chevron belt. It allows the user to apply a wide variety of materials — in top-dressing mixtures of sand, peat, mosses and humus as well as crumb rubber and calcine clays. Turfco discovered the top dresser could also apply grass seed.

The F-12 handles all ryegrass blends and other large seed grasses used for overseeding. These seeds are used predominantly in Southern parts of the country and intermittently in the North. The F-12 can spread rye seed at a minimum rate 7 pounds per 1,000 square feet or 300 pounds per acre.

The F-12 does not apply very

small seeds at lower rates.

Turfco developed a special-fitting hopper cover to prevent lightweight grass seed from blowing out of the hopper. To prevent wind drift during overseeding, a wind screen covers the rear panel and seeding zone from the hopper to a few inches above the turf. A hand-controlled clutch actuator lets the operator start and stop overseeding without ever getting off the seat of the tractor.

For more information call Turfco at 612-785-1000.

CIRCLE #307

Verti-Drain offers aeration alternative: Narrow-needle tines

Verti-Drain, developer of a diverse line of soil aeration systems, has introduced a series of multi-tine aluminum holders that utilize narrow needle tines for effective golf course and sports field aeration during the hot, high-traffic summer months. The new equipment, with tines divided into two rows, enables turf professionals to aerate faster with the same amount of holes per square foot, or at the same ground speed with more holes per square foot.

The solid needle tines (each 5/16 of an inch by 9-1/4 inches) used in Verti-Drain's multi-tine heads can penetrate the soil and deliver air and other nutrients to the roots up to a depth of

7 inches with virtually no surface disruption. Follow-up topdressing isn't necessary. Multi-tine heads developed for the Verti-Drain 005.120 Model (7 inch by 2 inch by 1-3/16 inch) incorporate 7 needle tines and offers two 3/4-inch by 2-3/16-inch adapters which fit directly into the 3/4-inch holes of the tine holder. A separate multi-tine holder for the Verti-Drain 105.145 Model (8 3/4 inch by 2 inch by 1-3/16 inch) fits 8 needle tines symmetrically into two rows. It also comes with two adapters.

For more information, contact Verti-Drain at 717-288-9360.

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Compost test

Continued from previous page

on five acres of tees and fairways. "We'll keep it off the greens because compost could interfere with soil mechanics, air and water movement," he said.

The major problem with compost is its variability, Dinelli said. Since it contains everything from sticks to leaves to grass clippings, compost can vary greatly in terms of carbon/nitrogen ratio, ash content, pH and other nutrients. To help minimize any variations, Dinelli will purchase all his compost from a local supplier, Greencycle. The cost should run between \$7-14 per cubic yard.

"You can make compost on site, but there is really quite a science to it if you want to do it right," Dinelli said. "Compost suppliers have expensive tub grinders and windrow equipment. They constantly monitor their materials so they can turn them at the proper time."

Dinelli will transport the compost to the course site where he plans to incorporate the compost with a bacillus bacteria in early October. He will top dress the material into the specified areas in early November, "just about the time the turf goes dormant," he said.

"We'll remove the top dressing or work it into the soil in the spring," he added. "It will be a heavy top dressing and the leaf blades have to be visible. There's no smell. And it won't interfere with play since it won't be on the greens. Besides, we get very little off-season play."

"I'll let you know how it works out next spring."