

Northern, Southern supers prepare winter seeding regimens

Dormant seeding: Saving Northern supers time, money and headaches

By MARK LESLIE

BEDFORD, Nova Scotia, Canada — Time is money. The further north a golf course sits, the shorter its playing season, and, the reasoning goes, the quicker you need to open the course to start paying the bills.

For many, the solution has been the procedure known as dormant seeding, seeding a grass into the turf stand late in the fall so that it gets a quick start in the spring.

And now, a new method of dormant seeding "saved us a month," said Mike DeYoung of Glen Arbour Golf Course, a public track which opened in July in this Halifax suburb. "We were able to mow the first week of May, and had 80- to 90-percent coverage. That's the best I've ever had."

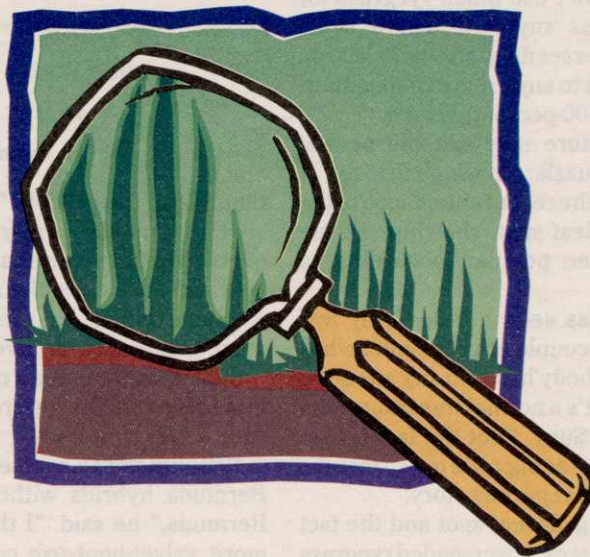
A former president of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association and former superintendent at nearby Hartlen Point Forces Golf Course, DeYoung used a new method for dormant seeding last fall on his newly built greens.

His pre-planting routine was similar to summer seeding, with phosphate and micronutrient and starter packages. Once the bentgrass seed was planted, DeYoung's crews laid down a four-mil greenhouse membrane product over each green. They stapled the membrane around the edges of the green, then sodded the collars up over the top of the membrane.

The greenhouse material was bought in 24-foot sections that DeYoung had glued by a greenhouse salesman so there were no seams and no water could get beneath it.

"In the spring we simply lifted the sod off the polyethylene [membrane] and pulled the poly off."

DeYoung said he had never used polyethylene be-



fore. He had used Evergreen covers and the nonbreathable ice shield "with less success."

"In our climate, with a short golf season, covers have become a valuable tool for a lot of people," DeYoung said. "A project near here dormant-seeded with Evergreen covers and I think they picked up three to four weeks on the back end."

The Whys of Dormant Seeding

There are more reasons to dormant seed than overcoming short playing seasons, however.

"Dormant seeding is being done more and more because of time constraints," said agronomic consultant Terry Buchen of Williamsburg, Va. "Developers are willing to gamble if they are running late because of bad weather or for whatever reason. During the spring, sometimes it's so wet you can't get out and seed. And

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The ever-changing world of overseeding for warm-weather course superintendents

By MARK LESLIE

NAPLES, Fla. — To overseed or not to overseed, that is the question. And it is sometimes answered differently by golf course superintendents right down the road from each other.

In Las Vegas half the golf courses are warm-season Bermudagrass tracks and half are cool-season bentgrass. In Phoenix all are Bermudagrass, and in Scottsdale all bentgrass.

"Six hundred feet [of elevation change] in Phoenix is the difference between bent and Bermuda greens," said Arman Suny, general manager at Shadow Creek in Las Vegas and an expert in growing grass from the mountains to the desert.

And whether a course has bent or Bermuda is a major factor whether overseeding is needed at all. When Bermudagrass goes dormant in the winter season, golfers, especially vacationing Northerners, desire green putting surfaces. Thus the existence of "overseeding" — seeding a cool-season turf into a stand of the warm-season varieties normally grown in the South.

"But you can't boilerplate it [overseeding] for anybody. It's different at every situation," said Tim Hiers, superintendent at Collier's Reserve Country Club here. "If my greens were poorly constructed, if they were old, if we played 400 rounds a day, if I had small greens, or too much shade or poor water quality, I might overseed. There are so many variables."

In his deep South location, Hiers does not overseed — instead preparing for the few days a year his Bermudagrass may be in danger.

For those who do overseeding, 1) timing is every-

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Cleaning an aerator.

Preparing the aeration system for winter

By HEATHER SCHWABE-CHASE

Water is incorporated into almost every landscape design in the form of ponds, lakes and waterfalls. Some courses even use their aesthetic water feature as an irrigation solution.

Water is beautiful, but it must be maintained in order to preserve that pristine feeling. This may be accomplished in various ways, but the most popular and effective way is aeration. Aeration, the mechanical addition of oxygen to water, is accomplished with a surface or sub-surface aeration unit. Surface units include any aeration device with a fountain-like pattern that sprays water into the air. Sub-surface units are placed below the water's surface and are not visible to the eye.

As winter approaches, thoughts turn to the removal, maintenance and storage of aeration systems for the season. Any aeration system motor that is water-cooled must be removed from the water and stored in an area where the temperature will remain above freezing. Freezing temperatures will cause the water inside the motor to expand and crush vital components. This will not only render the unit inoperable; it

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Winterization and freeze protection of variable speed pumping systems

By BOB CLARK

Variable speed pumping systems have become the standard for course irrigation.

Winterization of any irrigation pump station is a necessity in virtually any part of the temperate world. Even locations in Florida, Arizona, and California can experience freezing temperatures for long enough to damage system components.

Besides the normal winterization procedures that are carried out on many irrigation systems, three components of most variable frequency drive (VFD) pump stations require specific attention:

1. The heat exchanger has a water-filled coil that must be blown out with compressed air. Close the heat exchanger feed line isolation ball valve. Remove the inlet and outlet fittings allowing the inlet hose to drain. Using relatively low air pressure (less than 50 psi) blow into the inlet expelling all water from the coil outlet. Replace the fittings and hoses. This is a good time to disassemble and clean the regulator and solenoid valve.

2. Isolate the pressure transducer sensing line using the ball valve typically provided on the system manifold. Remove the sensing line from the pressure transducer fitting. Leave the line disconnected until the freezing condition has passed.

3. The relief valve is best protected by removing the piloting entirely and placing it in a freeze-protected area. Otherwise, the entire valve can be removed and likewise protected. This is a good time to

service the valve by disassembling and cleaning its components. It is a good idea to have a repair kit on hand before disassembling the valve. If the valve is left in place, the water that is trapped under the cover must be purged by loosening the cover nuts and allowing the water to escape.

Points to Remember

It can and does freeze almost anywhere. Plan for freezes before they happen and damage expensive, essential components.

- A kerosene heater is often your best protection (as long as you remember to fill it and light it). It is not dependent on electricity like gas and electric space heaters. The turbo type of heater can be used in temperate areas even if the station is not in a pump house.

- Should a heat exchanger coil be damaged by freezing, it can be easily removed and taken to a radiator shop for evaluation and repair. This is generally much quicker and less expensive than replacing the coil with a new one.

- If your local temperature falls to 25 degrees Fahrenheit (-4 degrees Celsius) or below for more than two hours, you must take action to assure that freeze damage does not occur.

- Strategically placed heat lamps can work well in protecting the system components from freeze damage. However, caution must be exercised to assure that plastic hoses, conduit and wire insulation are not in contact with such lamps. If

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Dormant seeding

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contractors love it because sometimes they don't have to come back in the spring."

Arman Suny, general manager at Shadow Creek in Las Vegas, recalled on dormant seeding three or four holes during construction of Country Club at Castle Pines in Colorado.

"We got it done before Thanksgiving and opened July 4," he said. "If we had seeded it in the spring, we could not have opened in July."

Suny added that a number of Northern superintendents dormant seed in "perennial weak spots, places that get shade and ice. With dormant seeding, they have a shot at coming back quicker."

At Springbrook Golf Club in Leeds, Maine, superintendent Rick Newbauer said most of his colleagues in the Northeast are experimenting with dormant seeding.

"A lot of us will pick one or two greens a year and try slicing and seeding in the bentgrass, and follow up with applying a snow mold control fungicide. The timing varies — often at the end of October, or perhaps the first of November."

Newbauer's most successful effort came when his crew built mounds around the 12th green and put down a ryegrass-bluegrass-fescue mix and rolled it in. "The next spring it was like we had sodded it. We started mowing it right away," he said.

The reason? Though Newbauer could not say with scientific certainty, he said he used aeration plugs from greens and tees as a base for the mounds. "That was good soil, and we added two to three inches of topsoil over that. It took off great."

But, timing and the weather are determining factors in the success of dormant seeding.

"It's a gamble," said Buchen. "You might have to reseed it. The best-case scenario is a 50-50 chance."

Nevertheless, "It's prudent dollarwise," said Suny. "If everything goes right, you've gained a couple of months. If it doesn't go right, you've lost some seed."

You also lose preparation and labor costs, which affect some courses more than others. For Newbauer at the daily-fee Springbrook, "You have to think of economics," he said. "It costs \$175 a bag for seed and I have a skeleton crew in the fall."

Whether the Weather

The cruelty of winter weather can also negate the best of dormant-seeding programs.

As Blake Palmer related from Rockwood Park Golf Course in St. John, New Brunswick: "Dormant seeding up here in open areas hasn't been that successful, basically because of all the ice we get. It is so hit-or-miss."

Palmer has dormant seeded late in the fall, especially with bentgrass on *poa annua* greens.

"Success depends on the type of winter we have. If we get a mild winter like last year, the success rate is a lot higher and the mortality rate a lot less..."

"We simply can't bring ryegrass through the winters up here. If we get snow and mild temperatures, it will survive. But generally our winters start open and cold, then get to freezing and thawing with ice and snow."

Because of recent winters where ice damage has been significant, Palmer's solution is using a combination of covers and dormant seeding.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

Pump station winterization

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electrical power is interrupted this will obviously allow freeze damage to occur.

- If your discharge manifold is supplied with a drain valve, open it to remove all water from the piping. This can protect pump check valves from damage.

- A variety of pumps are used for pressure maintenance. Any end suction or vertical multistage pumps should be drained using plugs usually located on the bottom of the pump housing. If the system is to remain off line for an extended period, leave the plugs removed and place them in a safe location, such as inside the control panel.

Conclusion

Although not necessarily a complete list for all makes and types of pump stations, the previous suggestions apply in most situations. If in question, drain a component until freezing conditions no longer exist. Following the proper freeze-protection and winterization procedures will best assure that when spring or warm weather returns, you will not be delayed in restarting your irrigation equipment. Hopefully the only leaks you find on your pump station are from the plugs you forget to replace on your pump housings. Remember, they are in the control panel.

Bob Clark is a field service specialist with SyncroFlo, Inc. in Norcross, Ga.



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