

BY JOHN WALSH

The sooner the better

A superintendent in North Carolina takes advantage of ordering pesticides early

The gist of the familiar saying “the early bird gets the worm” can be related to ordering and purchasing pesticides. For some, ordering products late in the year for use the following year can save money and ease pressure on one’s budget.

Michael Haq, golf course superintendent at the private 18-hole Brier Creek Country Club in Raleigh, N.C., does just that. Haq, who has been at Brier Creek for two years, has a maintenance budget of just more than \$1 million, including labor. His chemical budget, not including fertilizer, is \$65,000.

“We are owned by Toll Brothers so cash

flow isn’t a huge issue, and we can take advantage of early orders,” he says.

Haq makes bulk purchases in November and December, the majority of which are fungicides and plant growth regulators. He doesn’t purchase a lot of insecticides and buys herbicides and insecticides as needed. He treats the entire golf course twice a year, then focuses on the four acres of greens during the year.

“We’re not in a real high disease-pressure area,” he says.

The course features A-1 and A-4 bentgrass greens, Bermudagrass tees and fairways, zo-

ysiagrass bunker faces and tall fescue rough.

PURCHASING VALUE

Purchasing many of his fungicides early before a new year begins saves Haq a considerable amount of money. The total value of his early order purchase was \$22,000 this past year. The biggest chunk outside that savings is the \$20,000 of Rubigan he purchases.

When purchasing pesticides, Haq works with just a couple distributors.

“We have a couple of national accounts, and we bid to them,” he says. “This year, we got everything from one distributor, but last



Second assistant Jon Stephens, left, and third assistant Brian Brister in the chemical room at Brier Creek Country Club in Raleigh, N.C. Photo: Brier Creek Country Club



From left, senior assistant Rob Knott, golf course superintendent Michael Haq and golf professional Mark Johnson. Photo: Brier Creek Country Club

Michael Haq's chemical budget, not including fertilizer, is \$65,000 a year.

The total value of Haq's early order purchase was \$22,000 this past year.

Ninety-five percent of Haq's chemical budget is for spring dead spot, greens and preemergent herbicides.

year, I split the purchase 50/50 between the two."

The products he uses – other than what he orders through the early order program – are common and in stock so he has no problem ordering those right before he needs to apply them.

"I can get them in a day or two," he says. "There are a lot of distributors looking for a bite out of the same pie."

But the key to being effective with an early order program is knowing how much one is going to use during the year, Haq says.

"It's worse if you order too much rather than too little," he says. "In most environments, being overbudget is more of a cardinal sin than having an underconditioned golf course. For us, it's easy to predict what we will use each year: 95 percent of the chemical budget is for spring dead spot, greens and preemergent herbicides."

PROGRAM SPECIFICS

Haq is on a preventive program and hasn't seen much disease lately on his greens, but

pythium volutum is his primary concern. On the Bermudagrass, he sprays the fairways, tees and approaches in the fall with Rubigan (fenarimol) for spring dead spot because there's a lot of it.

"I'm not sure why, but N.C. State is doing research on that subject," he says.

In the spring, Haq sprays Insignia (pyraclostrobin) for pythium volutum. In the middle of June, he applies a Chipco Signature (fosetyl) and Daconil Ultrex (chlorothalonil) mix, and another application during the third week of June if disease pressure remains. At the end of June, he applies Chipco 26GT (iprodione) and Daconil Ultrex. The first week of July, he applies Clearly's 3336 (thiophanate-methyl) and Banol (propamocarb), and, depending on disease pressure, might make another application in the middle of July. At the end of July, he applies another Signature/Daconil mix. During the first week of August, he applies 26GT and Subdue Maxx (mefenoxam). In middle of August, he applies Signature and Daconil Ultrex and then monitors the weather. If it's hot, he'll apply

Clearly's 3336 and Daconil Ultrex.

"By September, I won't make any preventive applications," Haq says.

In the middle of October or early November, he applies Signature again.

Haq says he doesn't apply many pesticides throughout the winter because he doesn't have snow mold problems.

In the insecticide realm, Haq will make two applications of a generic Bifenthrin Pro a year for cut worms when aerifying in March and September.

"We have trees but not many," he says, explaining one reason why insect pests aren't much of a problem. "We're almost immune to fall armyworms."

Regarding herbicides, Haq sprays Ronstar (oxadiazon) and Roundup (glyphosate) in February as a preemergent for summer weeds. All other herbicide applications depend on the time of year. Nutsedge is a problem, and Haq applies Certainty (sulfosulfuron) for that. However, he doesn't have a huge broadleaf weed problem but will use Speed Zone (carfentrazone-ethyl) when needed. **GCI**