

IMPACT ON THE BUSINESS

The early bird

A fall preemergent herbicide application saves time in preparation for a busy spring

By John Walsh

Like most golf course superintendents, Tom Breiner is busy in the spring. Because he has a lot on his plate during that time of year, Breiner spreads out certain tasks. One of those is a preemergent herbicide application.

Instead of applying Barricade (proflumicarb) in the spring, Breiner applies the product in the fall, specifically late November.

"That will give us season-long control for the following year," says the golf course superintendent of the private, 54-hole Fiddler's Elbow in Bedminster, N.J. "Applying Barricade in the fall takes pressure off of us in late April when we're busy with other things."

Breiner applies the herbicide in a granular form combined with fertilizer at a rate of 0.75 pounds of active ingredient per acre. If he were to apply the herbicide in the spring, the rate would be less – 0.55 pounds of active ingredient per acre.

"It's not that much more costly to apply it in the fall," he says.

Breiner says he can apply Barricade in fall because the herbicide breaks down by microbial activity, and in cold weather, there's little to no microbial activity. The herbicide isn't mobile, and it doesn't leach; rather, it binds to clay colloids in the soil.

"I've been doing this successfully since 1994," he says.

Barricade also has a desired effect on *Poa annua*, but that's not why Breiner uses it.

Breiner spends about \$425,000 a year on inputs (fertilizer, pesticides and lime). Herbicides are the least costly in that group at less than \$30,000. He applies preemergent herbicides on tees, fairways and the rough but applies postemergent herbicides only on the rough.

Eighteen years ago, Breiner worked with a consultant to improve the soil in the fairways. At the time, he was using dicamba to control white clover. But over time, with the use of lime, fertility and a soil-balancing program, the need for a postemergent herbicide in the fairways ceased.

"Just dandelions will pop up here and there," he says. "At most, we'll hit weeds in the fairways with an herbicide in a spray can."

The pressure for crabgrass is strong at Fiddler's Elbow, Breiner says, adding that if he misses a spot treatment or neglects to apply a preemergent, crabgrass will appear. In addition to crabgrass, Breiner controls many broadleaf weeds, including white clover, dandelions and oxalis.

On the 90 acres of creeping bentgrass

fairways, Breiner has been rotating Barricade and Drive (quinclorac) every other year.

"Barricade is very strong, and there is a concern about high amounts of it in the soil, but I haven't seen problems," he says. "I'm just being precautionary."

Drive has a 45-day residual postemergent effect. It also controls white clover. Breiner also uses Gallery (isoxaben), a preemergent for broadleaf weeds, regularly in weed-prone areas.

Breiner uses various products, such as 2,4-D, dicamba and triclopyr, for postemergent applications. He uses amine formulations of postemergent herbicides from early to late fall and then switches to ester formulations of the same product because amine formulations need warmer soil temperatures to work, and ester formulations

are less temperature dependent.

Yellow nutsedge is a problem weed for Breiner. He has been using SedgeHammer (halosulfuron methyl) and recently observed good results using Dismiss (sulfentrazone).

Additionally, Breiner plans to test various herbicides. For example, he'll work with Dimension (dithiopyr) – the only herbicide he knows much about for use on greens – on two greens that aren't in play where crabgrass is emerging. He's also experimenting with Quicksilver (carfentrazone), a fast-acting product with a low use rate that can be used in conjunction with a Trimec (2,4-D) formulation.

Breiner also plans to test Tenacity (mesotrione), which removes undesirable bentgrass out of bluegrass rough. **GCI**

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