

NATURAL BALANCE

An Audubon-certified golf course in Minnesota, "the land of a thousand lakes," finds the right mix of techniques to cut back on labor spent on algae and duckweed control. BY MEGAN LEONHARDT

Working as a superintendent at a golf facility in "the land of a thousand lakes" is not an easy task, but Scott Thayer, superintendent of Legends Club in Prior Lake, Minn., has found that with a little ingenuity and the right combination of products, the facility's 21 water features sparkle.

Legends Club is an 18-hole, daily-fee facility with a 30-acre lake anchoring it. With a maintenance budget of \$725,000 a year, Thayer makes sure his wetlands, streams, marshes, ponds and lakes are well cared for.

The course has a man-made irrigation lake that's connected to several of the ponds and lakes through underground piping. Keeping this pond clean is crucial. Some of the biggest problems Thayer faces each season are the filamentous algae and duckweed, as well as other vegetation. To combat these pond pests, Thayer uses a combination of pond products and manual labor. He uses the biodegradable AquaSpherePRO and supplements it with Blast, a beneficial bacterial product that breaks down organic compost.

"It really cleaned up the water, and it's taken away 95 percent of the algae," Thayer says of his program. "We used to be spending 50 to 60 hours per season cleaning in past years, but I have not had to clean it yet this year," Thayer says of the old method, which included stringing rope between metal landscape rakes to pull the algae to the side of the pond and hauling in out by hand. Now he spends about \$100 per month on treatment products, and the labor costs are minuscule. He uses two biodegradable spheres for every acre of lake each month.

Of course, managing Legends' water features not only requires cleaning, but also upkeep. Though the 30-acre lake, which is 5- to 6-feet deep in some areas, is controlled by the State Department of Natural Resources, Legends has installed a bubbler to help with water and air quality during the harsh winter months.

His advice to other superintendents is to be patient. The right mix of products will make pond water cleaner in the long run, he says.

"Keeping movement in the lake will also help the products work even better," Thayer says. "If the product is not doing what you need, then circulating the water or algae will help eradicate it as well." **GLI**

Leonhardt is a freelance writer based in Medina, Ohio.



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