Says Poa Is Nature's Way of Filling In Weak Spots

By HENRY MITCHELL

Chemical control of poa annua is again being tried by the experiment stations. Tons of bent seed are still sold each year. Apparently, poa is still classified as a weed by many turf growers. It is, I think, a gift from Mother Nature. Seeding prolifically, it fills in many thin, weak spots in turf.

The most common cause of thin, weak turf is traffic. If the soil is very wet traffic affects it even more. So, it is a popular theory that poa is "caused" by traffic and poor drainage.

Especially on fairways, mowing is our most serious form of traffic. Excessive nitrogen softens plant tissue and reduces the resistance of the grass to traffic. It also increases traffic by increasing the necessity of mowing.

Reduce Organic Content

Nitrogen, lime and water reduce the organic content of the soil. In fact, they are recommended for this purpose in the compost pile. They feed bacteria and encourage it to use up carbon and simultaneously reduce the oxygen content of the soil air.

When used excessively the resultant low carbon (or organic) content spoils the structure of the soil and the low oxygen content is disastrous to the growth and function of the grass roots. There is a narrow margin between too much and too little of this nitrogen-lime-water combination. When too much is applied poa thrives on the resultant compaction.

Some factors are uncontrollable but much of the poa might disappear if nitrogen applications were reduced. About 30 per cent is forced into our turf by early feeding before temperatures are high enough for the growth of bent and 10 per cent is the result of improper use of mechanical tools.

Southern supts. are reporting the successful use of high nitrogen plus aerification as a means of forcing poa into winter greens (a substitute for overseeding with rye grass.)