

HYDRO-SEEDER: NEW USES PLUS OLD

A hydro-seeder can be used to solve different course maintenance problems, says Tantallon's superintendent

By James G. Estep

Superintendent, Tantallon CC, Tantallon, Maryland

A hydro-seeder can prove invaluable not only in golf course maintenance but in construction as well. Tantallon CC, Tantallon, Md., purchased a 500-gallon unit in 1964 for seeding areas around utilities and streets throughout the development. The unit is mounted on multi-rib, low pressure tires and, when loaded, can be easily pulled by a 40hp turf tractor. The average load of seed, mulch, fertilizer or water covers 4,500 square feet. Time to prepare and apply a full load averages about 30 minutes.

Different uses for this machine became evident as certain difficult and time-consuming jobs arose, such as the application of limestone on greens and tees. Using a drop type spreader and pulverized limestone, it usually took up to five full man-days to apply lime to the greens, which average 10,000 square feet. Part of the trouble was the mess involved. Golfers were bothered because the dry limestone could be kicked up and would stick to their clothing and shoes. The lime, therefore, had to be watered in immediately, but this method of application was uneven. We decided to try an application with the hydro-seeder to see if we could achieve a more even distribution, dispense with the immediate requirement for water and also save time and money. It worked beautifully. The limestone, suspended in water, was easier and faster to apply and it came in contact with the soil more quickly. For this operation one load in the seeder covered two greens or 20,000 square feet.

During the summer of 1969 we experienced many problems with the golf course irrigation system. As usual the problems arose at the most critical times, when it was extremely hot and dry. We used the hydro-seeder to syringe greens. Without it we would have lost some, if not all, of our bentgrass greens.

In many instances our unit has been used to apply fertilizers, both soluble and organic, herbicides, insecticides and fungicides. It was also invaluable for watering new trees and shrub plantings on the golf course and for watering small areas of seed or sod in out of the way places.

I still like to use the broadcast methods for seeding bentgrass, such as Penn-cross, on tees and greens. After seeding I apply a heavy concentration of hydro-mulch fiber and get the same benefits as from hydro-seeding, *i.e.*, moisture retention, protection of the seedling from the elements and soil erosion control.

When seeding, I've found that the most effective method was to use a two-inch fire hose and, with the seeder running at about one-third power, I can direct the mixture directly down into the seed bed. This gets a more even distribution and the seed into closer contact with the soil. The hose is rigged with quick connecting snap couplers. A quick coupling sprinkler key was modified to fit the two-inch hose coupling so that the seeder can be filled from any valve on the course, thus the hose is used for filling the tank as well as for distributing the material.

Several different nozzles are available and each has definite advantages. We use three different ones: 1) the wide ribbon, which distributes material to a width of 20 to 25 feet; 2) the narrow ribbon, which covers a width of 10 to 15 feet, and 3) a firefighting or elongated type for distant or hard to reach places. Because the firefighting type gives more pressure, we use it for washing down parking lots, entrance roads and buildings. □