

# Real-Life Solutions

■ HUNTERS RIDGE GC, MARION, IOWA; HYPERION FIELD CLUB, DES MOINES, IOWA

## Slow Down

**Superintendents implement turf-growth regulator to control spring grass growth and cut labor costs**

**BY LARRY AYLWARD,**  
Editor

### Problem

The grass grows so fast and thick that it leads to frequent mowings and bushels of clippings to discard — translating into increased maintenance costs.

### Solution

A turf-growth regulator to slow growth, cutting down on mowings and clippings. Then course workers can spend more time on more vital projects.

**T**hey're ready to break out of the winter doldrums. In the spring in

Iowa and other Midwestern states, golfers emerge like crowds of crocuses — and they're eager to play 18.

"Our season seems to get longer and longer because it starts earlier and earlier," says Pete Nolan, superintendent of Hunters Ridge GC in Marion, Iowa.

### The problem

Nolan isn't complaining about the spring rush of golfers because it gets the cash register ringing. But the turf at Hunters Ridge isn't as lively as golfers, and it needs a boost to break out of dormancy. "We're forced to push things more in the spring with fertilizer to get things green and growing," Nolan says.

And boy does the grass grow. It grows so fast and thick that it presents potential headaches for Nolan, as in frequent mowings and bushels of clippings to discard — translating into increased maintenance costs.

John Ausen, superintendent of the Hyperion Field Club in nearby Des Moines, Iowa, empathizes with Nolan. The spring's tall grass yields more clippings than Ausen knows what to do with. He can instruct workers to spread the clippings in the rough, but that could be



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asking for trouble. "If a golfer hits a ball into a mound of clippings, you'll hear about it immediately," Ausen says.

### The solution

Nolan and Ausen discovered a solution several years ago to combat the problem of fast-growing turf in the spring. They've been using Syngenta's Primo 250 EC, a turf-growth regulator, as part of spring preparation on their respective courses.

By applying the product once or twice during the spring, the superintendents have slowed turf growth, which translates into less mowing and fewer clippings. That means course workers have more time to concentrate on more vital projects.

"We're freed up to do other things, rather than mow grass all day," Ausen says, adding that it takes two of his men about 5.5 hours to mow the course. "That's a significant amount of labor to free up."

Ausen says Hyperion Field Club comprises 22 acres of fairways and four

**Striping stays visible longer because the grass doesn't grow as fast.**

acres of tees. It costs him about \$900 an application of Primo on tees and fairways. That's not cheap, but even if Ausen makes two applications in the spring, he ends up saving money on labor in the long run.

Also, Ausen says use of the turf-growth regulator makes the course look more attractive. "The striping stays visible longer because the grass is not growing as fast," Ausen says. "We're giving [members] a better product."

The two superintendents agree that Primo also makes turf more vigorous. Ausen says the product may enhance turf roots, which helps it stay healthy throughout the summer. "I've seen more turf vigor [on my course]," Nolan adds.

Ausen also assumes that the product helps extend the duration of fungicide applications. "It makes sense because you're not mowing [an application] off as quickly," he adds. ■