

# Shades Of Green

OPINION

**F**lorida's harsh winters in the 1980s nudged superintendents toward a blanket policy of wall-to-wall overseeding as far south as Miami. The past five to six years of warm winters has reversed the trend, however.

But this year, Ol' Man Winter came back with a vengeance and, as a result, there were a lot of brown golf courses in Florida. It was a classic case of being damned if you do and damned if you don't.

If William Shakespeare, CGCS (Certified Golf Course Scribe) had owned a course (possibly named Hamlet CC), he would undoubtedly be asking his superintendent the following question: "To overseed or not to overseed? Aye, that's the question. Whether 'tis nobler to be greener than thy neighboring golf course in the winter or to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous transition in the spring."

Sunbelt superintendents need to ask themselves four questions before making any overseeding decisions:

## Should you overseed at all?

This question is often asked by stingy budget committees and green committee members who hate the inconvenience of establishing and transitioning the turf. After all, there was only one mild frost last year.

You must politely remind them that your club sits on land formerly occupied by an orange grove that froze one lovely Christmas day by an unpredictable Siberian Express during an otherwise mild winter.

You must insist that you overseed so that they can't blame you if the course's fairways or greens are thin.

## How much of the course should you overseed?

If you're selling real estate and have all of the following: a big ego, a fat wallet, lightweight mowers, control over tee times and weather, a modern irrigation system with excellent coverage, good drainage, an understanding membership that goes north for the summer transition and lots of employees, then why not overseed wall to wall?

But if you answered "no" to at least two of the above conditions, you might want to con-

# Overwhelmed By Overseeding?

BY JOEL JACKSON



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sider limiting your overseeding to just greens, tees and *maybe* fairways. You might tell the wall-to-wall faction that the cost of the seed is only about one-third of the total cost to maintain the overseeded turf.

## What type of seed should you use?

Regardless of which company's seed you use, I suggest it have a certification tag and not come from Home Depot. There are so many blends and varieties that it's easy to pick the wrong one. And I promise you that all hell will break loose if you try a new seed in a tough year that doesn't give you the best results.

That experience will handicap you in the future because the green committee may have a hard time understanding the need to overseed if you have a spectacular failure. To avoid going out on a limb, create test plots on your own course to see which seed works best in your conditions.

## When should you overseed?

My advice? Break out the ouija boards and tarot cards. Dial the Psychic Hotline. Send a prayer request to Oral Roberts. Subscribe to the Farmer's Almanac. Tune in the Weather Channel. Write Sidney Omarr for your horoscope analysis.

Let's face it: Overseeding is in the mystical, magical realm of fortune tellers and superstitious superintendents. Mother Nature sets the rules of overseeding, and she often forces superintendents to update résumés.

That's why you have to explore your overseeding options carefully before making any decisions. Otherwise, like Florida this year, you could be left out in the cold.

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