

very product used to manage a golf course is tested extensively before it ever gets to the maintenance building. But experienced golf course superintendents know that products researched in other locations with different conditions may perform slightly differently on their courses. To more completely understand a product's performance on your course, do as the university experts do. Research it.

Do-it-yourself (DIY) turf-management research doesn't need to be costly or complicated. Simple, scaled-down, yet strategic techniques can assure you you're using the best tools to meet your course's distinctive needs.

Just about any golf course man-

# Simple, effective tips to improve your golf COURSE BY KYLE MILLER

agement technique or tool can be researched. Here's a short list of typical research subjects:

- Turf varieties What grows best on your fairways: colonial bentgrass, creeping bentgrass or perennial ryegrass? Which variety of Kentucky bluegrass should you use in your roughs? Testing grass varieties side by side will help you learn the top performers for your course.
- Herbicides, fungicides, insecticides and plant growth regulators — Research can compare different products or one prod-

uct with varying timing, rates or growing conditions.

- **Fertilizers** What kind, when, where and how much?
- Testing some of the many methods of aeration, topdressing, mowing, rolling and dethatching should show you what works best for your course.

## **Data collection basics**

Similar to turf test plots at universities, you should visibly mark trial areas. Extensive mowing schedules make it nearly impossible to come back to your on-course research area two or three days later and know where you applied a fungicide or tried a different setting on an aerator. Identifying plots with marking paint and routinely remarking them

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# **Do-It-Yourself Research**

Continued from page 67 so they can easily be found is crucial. It's also important to keep a written map

of all trials.

Another recommendation is to replicate research. Say, for instance, you want to evaluate Insignia fungicide for summer patch control on fairway turf. Replicating the application two or three

times allows you to evaluate the average of the results for a more accurate view of performance.

Always follow label instructions and use products during the same time period you would normally do so, especially for chemical products. The goal of DIY research is to learn how products work under your real-world conditions.

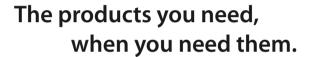
### Location

There are several things to consider when choosing where on your course to conduct research. First and foremost, consider what you're studying and what the worst-case scenario might be. It may not be smart to test a new herbicide on a highly visible area of your course. Would you want to risk discoloring the 18th fairway?

Choose areas representative of your course as a whole in order to fairly evaluate products. When testing fungicides or herbicides, it's better to avoid areas with high or low disease or weed pressure. Utilizing an area that's typical of your course will make positive results easier to replicate on a larger scale when you start using a product in earnest. Similarly, avoid areas that are topographically unique. If only one portion of your course is hilly, for example, you probably don't want to do your testing there.









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# Other tips

Everybody wins.

out being overwhelmed.

**Conduct research on small plots.** You don't want to tie up a lot of the course with research plots.

Working with university researchers

can be particularly beneficial. Collabora-

tion provides another set of trained eyes

that can monitor results, provide recommendations and give insights into the

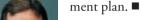
latest turf-management trends. It also gives university researchers a real-world venue to conduct studies. All the while it improves your course for golfers.

- **Communicate results.** Post informal research results on your Web site or in your newsletter so members are aware of your efforts to improve the course.
- Beg, borrow and steal research ideas from nearby courses. Introduce yourself to other superintendents in your region and pick their brains about what they're doing on their course. Chances are they're doing something you should try.
- Invest in and use a decent digital camera. Before-and-after and side-by-side photos come in handy when evaluating research results. It's also a great way to show off your work to your board of directors or green committee.

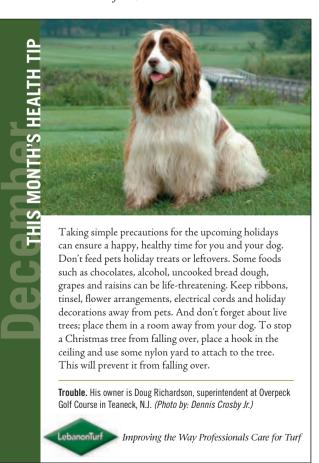
# **Keep improving**

DIY research is an excellent way to make your course the best it can be without breaking the bank. It's an efficient way to test new products, equipment and techniques so you know exactly what to expect when you incorporate

them full-scale into your course management plan.



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