



JUST ANOTHER FAD?

By Monroe S. Miller

Like golf itself, golf course management is fertile ground for fads. Something that is "in" today has a good chance of becoming passe tomorrow. Our history is littered with scores of management ideas and attending products popular at some time or another.

One of the concepts being sold hard these days is the use of plant growth regulators—hormones, if you will. The idea is to suppress the growth of one species (usually *Poa annua*) to encourage the growth of another (usually creeping bentgrass) in a mixed stand of grasses.

Sounds good. But as with so many other products, these goods will last only as long (and if) they work.

There are other reasons plant hormones are being applied to golf turf. Some WGCSA members use these products to decrease grass clipping harvest. Others feel they increase putting green speed by the reduction of growth. Some feel water use is somewhat reduced. There are those who claim "playability" of golf turf is improved.

I've tried a couple of these products and, frankly, have been disappointed by the results. I haven't seen those in positions to give advice to our industry based on independent research jump out with proclamations about these materials. I don't see a

favorable cost/benefit equation on my golf course.

But I am always listening, hoping to hear of a program I can extrapolate to my own situations.

It is that interest and the fact that PGRs are receiving some attention in our business that inspired this issue's SURVEY questions. They were asked at the Watertown and Onalaska WGCSA meetings and put to any number of our members I spoke with in the past two months.

1. Do you use any PGRs regularly on your golf course?

YES 11

NO 21

2. If yes, where are you using them?

GREENS 8

FAIRWAYS 8

BANKS 1

Note: Numbers do not match affirmative responses because some are using PGRs in several areas.

3. If yes, why are you using them?

"Conversion" to bentgrass 6

Green speed 6

Decrease clipping harvest 5

Reduce water use 3

Increase playability 3

Decrease *P. annua* in surrounds 1

Materials available for purchase in our marketplace often do not measure up to either advertisements or

expectations. Could PGRs be the exception?

WGCSA members are certainly active in determining how the plant hormone products might fit into turf management in the Badger State. They might also find out that they are merely another fad.

Time will tell on this one.

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