

THIS AND THAT ABOUT THATCH

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In the past several years a great deal of research has been done on many turf related problems. New products have been tested and released to the market helping solve problems related to specific disease and insect problems.

In our own state our association has supported Dr. Ward Stienstra and continues to support his work for winter diseases. Now the association is supporting research by Dr. Stienstra on summer diseases. We, as superintendents, have benefited from the work he has done and our clubs have benefited by being rewarded with better turf.

We must be cautious because even the wonderful cures available to us become less and less effective if we do not continue to implement good sound cultural practices. In simple terms, we must continue to aerify, topdress, verticut, fertilize with caution and water carefully.

Thatch is probably the one problem in turf as it relates to reducing the effectiveness of pesticides. This reduction in effectiveness is due to the fact that thatch limits the proper placement of the pesticide. Thatch is the layer of undecomposed leaves, stems, roots and rhizomes. This thatch layer can limit water movement into the soil, reduce air infiltration into the soil, increase disease and insect potential.

Thatch can be controlled best by using a combination of verticutting to remove thatch, topdressing to stimulate decomposition, aerification to grow the roots out of the thatch zone and the use of only enough nitrogen to keep the grass actively growing without overstimulation of growth. However, a small amount of thatch is necessary cushion, to protect the delicate plant parts and leaf tissue from the abrasion of soils below.

With thatch properly controlled the products for disease and insect control are easier to place properly; thus, increasing their effectiveness, reducing costs with fewer applications and helping produce the turf desired by golf memberships.

Remember it is a combination of the new research and products mixed with a generous amount of basic cultural practices that produces the best turf.

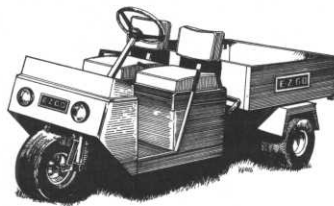
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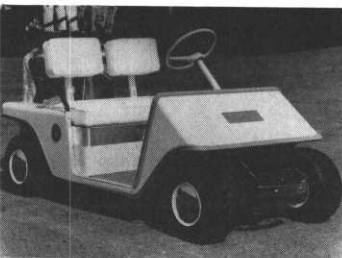
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