

# Using Growth Regulators To Help Control Poa Annua on Putting Surfaces

In 1984 everything was fine, greens were cut at 7/32", irrigation systems worked well, we received proper amounts of rainfall at just the right time, the golf course was at peace.

1985 came around and the request was made to try to speed up the greens. A stimpmeter reading of 96" to 102" would be very nice for our members who really enjoy putting. After proper consideration, taking into account that the greens were built of heavier soils, (in fact the newer greens built in 1962 had soil that came from the ponds that make up the water hazards on 8 & 14), I explained to the Green Committee of the potential problems that could happen, and that you just don't automatically lower the height-of-cut to 5/32" and get quicker greens. But anyhow, we went ahead with speeding up the greens.

Finally, when out with the green chairman, he noticed these lime green patches of grass on the greens and inquired as to what they were. I had explained that this was Poa annua, and as long as we keep the greens like they are, we will have a Poa infestation, and eventually the greens will become predominately Poa.

Along came the drought of 1987-88-89, and the irrigation system started to decline. The Poa suffered more. Finally something had gotten the attention of the Green Committee. The suggestion was made by myself to investigate chemical means of getting rid of or suppressing Poa. Finally in 1989 I decided to use Scott's High K fertilizer with TGR. Of course, the application would not be made until late August of 1989 and only on specific greens to evaluate the growth regulators effect on Poa. The greens that were chosen for this experiment were No. 7, 9, 13 and the putting green. I had estimated that no green had any more than 20 to 30 percent Poa. Exactly how do you find out how much Poa you have on putting surfaces? Apply TGR at full rate, my guess of No. 13 having 30 percent Poa was slightly off by about another 40 percent. All of a sudden it was "the greens are dying."

Older members did not understand just what was going on. Most of that was my fault because I did not communicate what I was doing with anyone but the Green Committee, and even they were shocked at the color of these four greens. However, they did enjoy the speed that these greens had over the untreated greens.

Now I had an idea of how to use TGR and what it would do. It was time to figure out how to encourage more bentgrass growth, and that was easy to do; just cut in seed at a rate of .75 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. two weeks after TGR application. I selected Pennlinks Creeping Bentgrass because it just seemed to be overall a better species of Creeping Bentgrass.

Now that we had evaluated using TGR as a way to bring our greens back to being free of Poa Annua, it was time to go and do all greens with TGR. This started during the 1991 golfing season. Some of the benefits that have been noticed are the speed of the greens really does get better and, in some instances, I have seen less turfgrass disease such as Dollar Spot on the treated areas, and mowing is significantly decreased. On the other side, no matter how many times I have put it in the club

newsletter or written special letters about using the growth regulator every time we apply it, we still get comments about how the "greens are dying." However, the benefits do outweigh the comments. Other uses of TGR have been to currently apply it at half rate every three or four weeks during the summer, just to keep the greens a little quicker. This also keeps the Poa somewhat suppressed, and we do try to encourage the creeping bentgrass.

This year I decided to try Cutlass on greens numbered 3 and 14, while on greens numbered 8 and 12 I will use Primo to control Poa. Unfortunately, due to this past winter's harshness, I will not be able to apply anything to greens numbered 4, 6, 10 or 17.

I think it will be interesting to see how these products do compare against each other. If you ever start leaning towards using growth regulators on putting surfaces, make sure you tell your membership and tell your membership again, it will save you problems in the future. Or just try them out on a nursery green so you realize the full impact of these products. What to do next is to find a good pre-emergence herbicide to keep the Poa out once and for all.

—Dale Wysocki  
Faribault Golf & Country Club

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