

Sulfur Management Checklist

Even though I suggested that the turf manager normally does not need to be concerned about supplying turf with sulfur, it is not wise to ignore it either. What follows are some ideas on how you might handle your turf's sulfur requirements.

- To determine if your turf could benefit from sulfur, you can use a nitrogen source that contains sulfur for your next application on one or two greens, tees or other well-defined areas. Use ammonium sulfate as a soluble material or sulfur-coated urea as a controlled-release source. After a week or two, compare the areas that received sulfur with those that did not. If the sulfur treated turf is greener or generally looks better (less disease or evidence of stress), you might conclude that a sulfur application is justified.
- If your soil sulfur supply is marginal, you can make regular applications by using potassium sulfate (K_2SO_4) as your potassium source instead of potassium chloride (KCl - potash). The chloride does almost nothing for your turf while sulfate will be a readily available source of sulfur.
- A top-dressing program using composted clippings or some other organic material will provide a source of sulfur and pretty much eliminate the need to apply it in any other form. However, if you have a low-sulfur problem, clippings from your turf will also be low in sulfur and may not be returning enough in a compost derived from them to supply the turf's need. Better to bring your sulfur level up to standard using a sulfur source and after that rely on composts to maintain it.
- Remember that pushing turf with extra nitrogen will aggravate any latent nutrient deficiency problems. Consequently, whenever you are making a nitrogen application, you should consider other nutrients that might become limiting when grass growth is stimulated. Adding some materials that will supply small amounts of available sulfur, magnesium, iron or zinc often is worth the additional effort and cost. Nutrient imbalances can sometimes be more damaging than a clear deficiency and often are more difficult to identify.
- Because sulfur cycles within the turf-soil ecosystem and there are few routes for sulfur loss, retaining clippings on turf is the best way of insuring that nutrients such as sulfur, magnesium and most micro-nutrients do not become lacking and detract from turf quality.