

## Five Keys To Successful Overseeding

By Pat Gross, Western Region Agronomist

**F**all is the time of year when many courses in the southwest are overseeding their bermudagrass tees and fairways or sweetening their existing stands of perennial ryegrass. In either case, successful overseeding establishment requires attention to the following five elements:

1. **Timing** — Fall is the ideal time to establish cool season grasses because of the extended period of ideal temperatures for germination and establishment. Temperature has the greatest influence on perennial ryegrass germination and growth, with optimal temperatures ranging between 68 to 86 degrees. The specific timing around the southwest differs from area to area:

Palm Springs/Phoenix	- mid-October
Southern California	- late October
Northern Calif./Utah	- late September
Las Vegas	- early October

Many courses try to seed earlier or later in an effort to beat the competition or schedule around a big tournament. Sometimes you get lucky, and sometimes you fail. Remember that you are working with Mother Nature here, and you are better off sticking with the time of year when temperatures are historically in the optimum range.

2. **Preparation and Seeding Rate** — You've year it over a thousand times — you need a good seed to soil contact for successful seed establishment. When seeding into an existing stand of cool


season grasses, this is definitely true. It's best to schedule core aeration prior to seeding to prepare a good seed bed and relieve soil compaction. For courses in Northern California and Utah, a good seeding rate for sweetening is between 250 to 400 lbs. per acre. Drill seeding is still the most popular method to apply the seed. You should seed in at least two diagonal directions to avoid the corn-row effect. For bermudagrass overseeding, broadcast application works fine. It is also interesting to note the trends in renovation and seeding rates in the desert areas. Many courses now avoid heavy renovation in the fall in order to reduce problems with spring transition on bermudagrass. Courses in Palm Springs, Las Vegas, and Phoenix have also steadily increased fairway seeding rates to 700 to 800 lbs. per acre and sometimes more. To reduce turf competition during seed establishment, most courses are now using a treatment of *Primo* growth regulator prior to seeding.

3. **Irrigation system** — You need some basic tools for good seed establishment, and a good irrigation system is the most important. The system must provide excellent coverage and have the capability of scheduling multiple start times for frequent irrigation throughout the day. If you don't have a good irrigation system, don't attempt overseeding - you will just be wasting your money.

4. **Equipment** — Young seedling grass requires a sharp mower to avoid pulling the new turf out of the ground. Make sure

the reels are freshly sharpened before the first cut is made. The lightweight mowing units are generally easier on the turf and enhance establishment by reducing abrasion and wear, especially in the turning areas.

5. **Traffic control** — Seedling turf is especially susceptible to abrasion and wear damage. If possible, keep the carts on the paths for the first six weeks. If your course doesn't shut down for overseeding or if cart traffic is unavoidable, please adjust your expectations accordingly. There is no way to establish healthy seeding turf while you are constantly beating it down with golf carts.

These are just the top five factors we find to have the greatest influence on successful overseeding. I am sure there are many more details to add to the list. For those courses overseeding this year, we hope the weather is kind to you and that your overseeding operation is a complete success. 

### Did You Know?

The average golf course superintendent works over four hours more a week than a family practice physician. In the summertime superintendents work an average of 57 hours per week while a family practice physician works 53. The rest of the time they're out playing golf.



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### Quick Quote

"Sometimes it's hard to tell if something is actually a memory, or you just dreamed it. So I asked my boss if I called him a lying, stinking thief, or I just dreamed it, and he said I just dreamed it. Whew, that was close."

— Jack Handley —