

ZOYSIA GRASS

Mel Anderson's Bold Experiment



Mel Anderson checks zoysia grass turf for incidence of disease. He uses Daconil 2787 to control dollarspot and Helminthosporium. Dacthal W-75 controls crabgrass and chickweed.

FIVE years ago, when Mel Anderson set out to build a golf course from scratch in Lawrence, Kansas, he took a gamble. He would put the entire 18 holes in Zoysia Grass. As part owner, as well as course manager, he had more than his job at stake.

His gamble is paying off. Alvarmar Hills Golf Course, a public course, is attracting golfers from miles away. The players like the zoysia turf. It gives the balls a good lie during long, dry spells and even in the winter months when a good deal of golf is played in Kansas.

Mel Anderson knew quite a bit about zoysia before he started Alvarmar. While working under Charlie Sidenstucker at the St. Joseph Country Club in St. Joseph, Missouri, he helped install zoysia nurseries and worked with zoysia on tees. Anderson also had considerable experience while managing the Lawrence Country Club prior to assuming the responsibility of building Alvarmar Hills. During these years he felt zoysia could be grown by stolonization, and it has proved very successful.

He liked its drought and weed-resistant qualities. He knew that it had taken intense punishment from the heavy traffic on tees and playgrounds. It spread rapidly and was winter hardy.

Anderson had the common problems of converting new land into a golf course. The 180 acres he had to work with included farm land, scattered trees and some timber. After clearing the timber where needed to make an interesting course, he turned the soil. The soil type in the area included a layer of gumbo lying over limestone rock.

Once the soil was worked, he soil-tested to determine what should be added. The elements included lime, potash and some trace minerals. He applied two pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet every 10 to 14 days at the start. And now that the turf is established, he continues to apply about one pound per year.

At the same time, he installed an underground irrigation system.

Weeds and fungus diseases were his next problem. On the basis of his past experience, he selected Dacthal W-75, a preemergence herbicide, to handle weeds and broadleaf grasses in his fairways, roughs and on tees. Crabgrass and chickweed were his chief targets, but he knew that Dacthal would also handle the occasional annual grasses that he anticipated.

To control disease in his C-7 bentgrass on the greens, he chose Daconil

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Golfers like zoysia turf. It gives the balls a good lie during long dry periods. Alvamar Hills hosts between 200 and 300 players a day. Anderson developed this turf from stolons.

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2787, a broad spectrum fungicide with which he had also had previous experience. He was confident that he could control dollarspot, brown patch and *Helminthosporium*. His program consisted of sprays — scheduled 7-10 days apart — in the spring and fall.

Anderson's methods in his original stolonization were as unusual as his decision to go all out with zoysia. He produced all the zoysia from his own nursery at Alvamar. Then he shredded the stolons in an ordinary farm ensilage grinder. The zoysia was finally spread with a regular manure sprader. He lightly dished in the stolons. Part of the course was seeded at a rate of 250 bushels per acre, another part at 300 bushels. He found no difference in the stands he got.

"Stolonizing for a good stand is a tricky process," says Anderson. "The first 10 to 15 days are the most critical. You have to keep it wet all the time until it is through the shock stage."

Though zoysia exhibits good weed resistance, Anderson has maintained a consistent chemical and mechanical weed control program from the start. Each year, he continues to treat the course with Dacthal W-75, in the spring as a preemergence control. Rate is 12 to 14 pounds per acre and application is made about April 15. "I use it primarily to get the silver and the soft crabgrass," says Anderson. "But it works on the few, occasional broadleaf weeds, too. Most everyone knows that you can get

anything in a new course, but I have always had the weeds and grasses well under control."

Anderson uses Hardy boom sprayers for Dacthal on the fairways and in the roughs. He uses hand sprayers to apply Daconil 2787 on the greens, spraying according to label instructions. He irrigates as necessary, depending on the weather. However, he cautions that even in the dryer climates, zoysia requires good drainage.

After five years of large scale experience, Anderson is convinced that zoysia grass is the best answer for a turf that will perform well in an environment such as that around Lawrence.

"It is tough to combine a warm and cool weather grass in one," he comments. "But zoysia does it. We have plenty of hot, dry weather here in Kansas, and the zoysia loves it. Between severe winter storms, we also have a lot of days when the ground is clear and golfing is pretty good. The zoysia gives good turf then, too."

Anderson thinks that zoysia can perform well in many other areas besides his own. He roughly draws a limit on the north at the Iowa-Missouri line and another line as far south as Houston, Texas. "The more humid portions of the United States and a longer growing season may tend to produce a matty, thatching condition," he thinks. Soil types all look about alike to zoysia, he maintains.

Anderson doesn't worry much about zoysia's reputation for tanning out. "It takes a good, hard freeze to

turn it," he says, "and even then the golfers don't seem to mind. It holds the ball up and that is what they are after."

The greens have never been much of a problem. Since the start, he has kept them on a control program using Daconil 2787. "I've always had 100% control of dollar spot and leaf spot," says Anderson.

His gamble with zoysia grass has been watched closely by superintendents throughout the area. He gives regular reports on his experiences to the University of Missouri turf grass conferences, and to other turf meetings. Several golf courses are now testing zoysia on a few fairways. "I get a lot of calls for consulting work and for installation of zoysia in fairways, football fields, and golf course construction," he says.

But most important of all, golfers seem to like Alvamar Hills Golf Course and its zoysia. The course hosts between 200 and 300 players a day, and some travel considerable distances to get to it. "Sometimes there are so many strangers, it looks like a resort course," says Anderson.

Business is so brisk that another nine holes are under development. The addition, which is being built on cleared timberland, will be open to the public in June, 1973. Mel Anderson's formula will be the same. Soil-testing to determine fertilizer requirements, zoysia grass stolons chopped and applied with a manure spreader, preemergence application of Dacthal with annual treatments to follow, and use of Daconil 2787 on the greens.