

## PROSCAPE

By Michael Hurdzan, Ph.D., golf course designer and consultant

**NOTE:** In the January 1979 issue of WTT, I advised you on a late fall fertilization to be applied in late November and early December. Although I have seen good results with fertilizer applications during this period, I believe that you will have better results with a mid-October application instead. This change in thinking is basically a product of many discussions with turf managers and researchers this fall and winter.

**Q.** I have heard and read many viewpoints on thatch and mat in turf and in almost every instance the definition of the two has been reversed. Please give an example and illustration of each (thatch and mat). Also, has any information on the use of Posan to retard seeding of *Poa annua* on greens been compiled, or is Posan strictly for fairways? Oxnard, CA

**A.** The difference between mat and thatch is only in degree. The term mat is meant to connote about 1/4" or less of undecomposed stems, leaves, stolons or rhizomes, that accumulate between the soil surface or rootzone and the living plant. In most instances mat is a desired condition because it provides resiliency to the turf and thus lessens mechanical damage to the plants, resists compaction of underlying soils, and reduces rapid evaporative moisture loss from the soil. In short it is a thin manageable, thatch layer. On the other hand, thatch is the excess accumulation of the same dead plant parts which results in all the commonly associated, and too well known problems.

The use of Posan should be confined strictly to fairways and a Bensulide based product used on greens. Check the September 1978 Proscap column for elaboration.

**Q.** Is there a school in the U.S. where you can take a landscape architect course by corresponding? B.H., Accomac, Va.

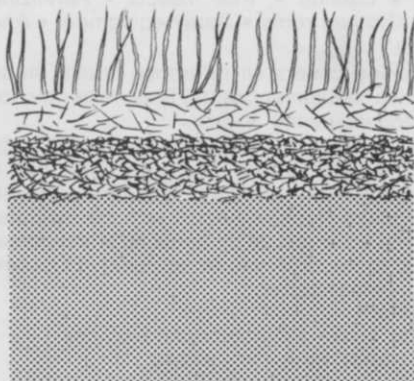
**A.** Not that I know of and if there was such a course I would advise you not to waste much money or time with it. The reason for such a strong

negative reaction is that to learn landscape architecture skills by correspondence is analogous to learning medicine by mail. To do landscape architecture (not to be confused with landscape design) requires using: Detailed problem and situation analysis; applying a suitable design process; formulating and presenting the design in standard architecture language; selling the design intention from a basis of history, economics and limitations using many graphic skills; and then being able to technically advise and inspect the work during construction phases. The really proficient landscape architect also has the ability to advise on long term maintenance of the design features to insure it remains as he planned it. To acquire these basic skills requires 4-5 years of total immersion in a classroom/studio situation where you learn most from your fellow classmates, much from the professors and critics, and some things from your own efforts. This program is very intense and requires extreme discipline of mind and body to endure the rigors of a program that sets high standards in such diverse subjects as:

- 1) History
- 2) Basic design
- 3) Graphic and design language
- 4) Architecture appreciation
- 5) Problem analysis and construction methods
- 6) Communicative skills
- 7) Plants, plant materials, and construction materials
- 8) Advanced math or computer science.

To dramatize the dedication that such a program requires, it is not unusual for many large universities to start with 200 L.A. students as sophomores and only graduate 40 or 50 of that group. The benefit to the general public is that this harsh selection process insures only qualified practitioners.

In addition, most states require that a landscape architect be registered within that state and often this requires extensive testing. To pass these rigorous tests nearly mandates a formal college program. Check Proscap in the January issue of WTT for more information on available schools.



**Thatch**, as illustrated on the left, is an excessive accumulation. Mat, illustrated on the right, is an acceptable amount of thatch that actually enhances the micro-environment. (Photo courtesy of *Turf Manager's Handbook* by W. H. Daniel and R. P. Freeborg.)

