

Turf regulator eases mall landscape tasks

Carol Zech, horticultural supervisor for Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi, MI, found herself with a vexing landscape problem—too much lush grass.

Zech and her crew (four full-time and three part-time employees) were spending too much time mowing.

Says Zech, "Last spring, because of heavy fertilization the previous year and steady rains, grass growth was nothing less than astounding. We did so much mowing there was little time left to edge, prune, mulch, and spray."

The logical way she is solving it demonstrates the value of a clearly defined program using a new product, Monsanto's turf regulator, Limit.

Her problem is probably not unique. Saavy merchants are beginning to realize the value of oases of green in the vast concrete expanses of shopping mall parking lots.

Trees, grass, shrubbery and flowers add beauty (creating a positive initial reaction with incoming customers) while directing traffic, reducing noise, and absorbing vehicle fumes.

But more landscaping means more work for people like Zech at the 1.2 million sq. ft. Twelve Oaks Mall with its extensive multi-level parking area which is dotted with landscaped traffic islands. Compounding the problem, several of the maintained grassy areas have a 35 to 40 degree grade. "I grit my teeth every time the crew mows them. The less I have to do to those areas, the better," she says.

Last May, Zech and a staff member applied 20 gallons of Limit, a chemical designed to slow the growth of cool-season grasses, from a trailer-mounted sprayer to the quarter acre traffic islands and the top and bottom of an inclined turf area. The turf is a mix of Kentucky bluegrass hybrids. "Before using Limit, I was very worried about the toxicity of growth regulators," she admits.

A few days after she applied the Limit, the only discoloration she noticed was a slight blue-gray tinge. This was offset by other favorable results.

"During the six-week period follow-

ing the application of Limit, turf growth was slowed noticeably," she says. "Ordinarily, heavy spring growth would force us to mow every six days. However, after we applied Limit, we found ourselves trimming every other week. The grass was thinner and the clippings drastically reduced. My crew thought it was great." Equally welcome, the top and bottom of the graded grassy area Zech sprayed required only one trim mowing in a six-week period. This year she plans to spray the turf regulator on other heavy growth inclined areas in addition to the traffic islands.

Zech is also responsible for refuse removal around the mall and has been concerned with the safety hazards of mowing grass that hides bottles and cans. "If we can reduce the number of mowings, there is less chance one of my crew will accidentally run over a bottle or can and injure himself or someone else, not to mention the damage done to machinery."

Above all, reducing mowings this spring will allow Zech to devote more time to other jobs.

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