

GOLF

'Black layer' damaging nation's greens

It doesn't matter whether it's an old green, or a new one; in California or New Jersey; summer or fall. Black layer will strike greens anywhere, at any time.

James Snow, director of the USGA Green Section's Northeastern Region, says black layer is a layer of anaerobic material, rotting organic matter, resulting from poor drainage in the green.

Superintendents usually discover it when the turf becomes weak and develops poor root systems and the soil remains saturated. A soil probe will show the black layer at the same level in the green.

Snow says that a number of things could have gone wrong in the green's construction, causing black layer.

"The materials rototilled into the top layer may not have been mixed properly. Water backs up and rots the material," Snow explains. "Maybe they never sent materials to our soil lab in Texas. Or, maybe they did, but the sand they sent wasn't a representative sample."

Gary Watchke of the USGA in Connecticut fought black layer in his greens at Iowa State University. "We found root-rotting pythium and algae which thrive on free water," Watchke says. "I've seen black layer more frequently in high sand greens, maybe because superintendents water those more often."

Black layer can hit at any depth of the green. Snow recommends careful watering and frequent aeration, which helps break through the layer. Watchke says the fungicide systemic Aliette can fight pythium in the roots.

If the layer is deep in the green, it may need to be rebuilt. In some cases, however, Snow says drainage lines can be installed without rebuilding the green.

Black layer can hit at any time, but is more common in the summer when the green is under stress, and during persistent rainfall. Watchke says the problem will often resolve itself after several years when the soil regains a balance.

BUSINESS

Corporate 'bad breath' costly, expert warns

Telephone skills can be powerful tools for any landscape company. Telephone skills produce new business, promote company goodwill, build confidence, elicit cooperation, resolve doubts, and lower tension.

"In that first moment of contact, a well-trained receptionist is more valuable to the company than its highest-paid estimator," says Richard Lambert, author of a new audio cassette series entitled "Professionally Speaking."

But the opposite can also be true. "Corporate 'bad breath,' as we call it, can be a costly problem," advises



CUT A LOT MORE TURF

Loaded with features, the newest generation of highly maneuverable Power Quint mowers virtually guarantee you decades of the finest turf care

with even small PTO-equipped tractors. Adjustable reels work against heavy duty bedknives in individual cutting units that truly float over uneven terrain. And when the job's finished, this



© 1986, National Mower Co.

ASK ABOUT OUR NEW VERTI-CUT UNITS!