

Turf colorant keeps grass 'summer' green

The most orthodox of turf professionals might shudder at the thought, but turf colorants are often used to brighten dormant or water-starved turf, or as a supplement to overseeding.

If you're wondering whether paint will injure the turf, fear not. Turf paint has long been one of the tricks of the athletic field and golf course management trades, and is mentioned in *The Turf Manager's Handbook*, by W.H. Daniel and R.P. Freeborg (1987, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).

The following is a look at three turf colorants on the market.

The grass still grows

Jim Wellborn of Green Graphics, Albuquerque, N.M., assures golf course superintendents that his Green Graphics paint does not affect the turf's life cycle. In the spring, the original turf will re-emerge from dormancy.

"If you were to examine the grass cuticle as it begins to grow again," says Wellborn, "you'll probably see that the grass is growing out of the paint, at the bottom and the top. Because of the deep green color imparted by the coating, the sun's rays will more rapidly raise surface temperatures to stimulate earlier growth, as much as three to six weeks earlier than usual."

Can't tell the difference

Mike Petty, superintendent of the Tucson National Golf Course, has used the Green Graphics product, and says it does indeed closely resemble natural turf.

"If you overseed," says Petty, "and it doesn't come out to your liking, you can just go in and paint over the top, thereby painting the dormant bermuda that shows through the overseed."

Turf paint also comes in handy if you're behind on your seeding schedule.

"If you have to overseed late," explains Petty, "you can paint over the top of the overseed before it germinates, giving you the dark color and the heat absorption."

"In painting the dormant bermuda," Petty remembers, "we had a quicker green-up than any of the other courses."

The W.A. Cleary Co., Somerset, N.J., markets the Grass Greenzit colorant. According to Bron Zienkiewicz, director of marketing and development, Greenzit can be



Green Graphics colorant brightens up the fairways at the Tucson National Golf Course in the dry, arid Arizona climate.

used on all types of turf, for dormant, browned-out turf or turf discolored from mis-application of herbicide or fertilizer.

Varied dilution ratios

Colorants can be easily diluted to achieve the desired color. "We recommend 4 to 10 ounces per gallon of water for discolored grass, 10 to 18 ounces for dormant grass," explains

California has made Greenzit especially popular in that state.

Use on thirsty turf

Drought stricken golf courses or neighborhood lawns can at least "look good" with colorants. "A number of golf courses and consumers have used it on their lawns because of water restrictions," says Zienkiewicz. "It's good for a tournament spruce up, and can also be mixed with sand to fill divots".

Cleary recommends using its colorant only when the temperature is above 40°F and when no immediate rain is anticipated.

When using any colorant, avoid spraying on windy days, and wash out spray tanks immediately after use.

Athletic field applications

Green Lawngr is a colorant from Becker-Underwood of Ames, Ia. Company president Roger Underwood says Green Lawngr is a latex-formulated, water-base paint that is suitable for any species of turf. According to Underwood, Green Lawngr is primarily used by sports turf and lawn care professionals.

"Sports turf people appreciate our product because it is a flexible coating," says Underwood. "When the field is in high use, the coating will hang on to the turf better; it won't become brittle and fall off."

Green Lawngr was recently used at last summer's World Cup soccer tournament in Italy.

Recommended use rate is one gallon per 10,000 sq. ft. **LM**

With the paint's dark green color, the sun raises temperatures to stimulate the growth of dormant grass.

Zienkiewicz.

Dilution ratios are often altered for application to different species of grasses. On bentgrasses—which are often used on golf greens, and which become only slightly discolored from winter cold—Wellborn says a Green Graphics application of a 40:1 maximum dilution is often all that is necessary to bring natural color back to the grass.

Landscape managers experienced with colorants may require a minimum 10:1 dilution ratio on totally dormant grasses with Green Graphics. The most often-used ratio of dilution is 20:1.

Zienkiewicz says low rainfall in