

Treated seed for overseeding minimizes diseases

Superintendents who overseed cool-season grass mixtures into existing warm-season combinations also raise disease potential for infections caused by *Pythium* and other fungi, according to Dr. Terry Vassey of Horry-Georgetown Technical College in Conway, S.C.

To reduce the risk of damaging seed and seedling diseases, especially where intensive turf management is necessary for

year-round play, superintendents should always use a fungicide. They may overseed with fungicide-treated seed or apply foliar fungicide spray as diseases appear, says Dr. Vassey.

"*Pythium* can wipe out large sections of overseeded golf courses. When course quality and playing ability goes down, it can be devastating," he says.

"During establishment of overseeded

stands, when more water and fertilizer is used to sustain growth—combined with temperatures still reaching 85 to 90 degrees—you have the perfect conditions for disease."

One of the most prevalent and destructive turf diseases is the soilborne fungus *Pythium*, which thrives in warm, moist soils and causes damping off. *Rhizoctonia* and thatchborne *Fusarium* fungi can also cause seed rots, seedling blights and damping off.

Many superintendents spend an estimated \$35,000 to \$50,000 for annual overseeding, Dr. Vassey points out. While this cost is budgeted, he adds, supers don't want to pay it twice, which can happen if *Pythium* or other fungal epidemics arise, causing a need for another seeding.

Good drainage and carefully managed irrigation can help reduce the incidence of diseases, but since the host—turf—can't be eliminated, most turf professionals recommend a systemic fungicide treatment that provides extended seedling protection against pathogens.

Dr. Vassey's comments appeared in Vol. 2, Issue 2 of "Turfgrass Tillers," a newsletter from Gustafson, Inc., Plano, Texas.

For more information on warm-season disease control, consult the May, 1992 issue of *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT*.

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