

GOLF & ATHLETIC TURF

LEADERS of the PACK

PGRs on fairways and deep aerification are just two ways that today's superintendent is responding to the challenge of better maintenance for better golf courses.



■ Using plant growth regulators (PGRs)—for *Poa annua* suppression and less frequent fairway mowing—is perhaps the fastest-growing trend among golf course superintendents across the nation.

"I've done a little of it," admits **Joe Alonzi** of Westchester Country Club in Rye, N.Y. "The PGR apparently weakens the poa but doesn't affect the bentgrass. It also slows plant growth so you don't have to mow it as often.

"If you're going after the poa, there's some yellowing, but if you just want to cut down on mowing, you don't see as much (discoloration). The rates are different."

Mark Esoda at Atlanta Country Club, **Rick Boehm** at Wright Patterson Golf Course in Beavercreek, Ohio, **Tom Kintzer** at Carlisle (Pa.) Country Club, **Dave Dutton** at the Links of Stono Ferry in Hollywood, S.C. and **Gene Daniel** at River Hills Country Club in Lake Wylie, S.C. also reportedly use fairway growth regulators.

Though at least half a dozen PGRs are available to the golf course market, the

product of choice seems to be Primo, introduced in 1993 by Ciba Turf & Ornamental.

Dr. Joe DiPaola, technical representative for Ciba, says that field tests at Ohio State University show no phytotoxicity on plots where Primo is used at rates up to ¼ oz./1000 sq. ft.

Primo, DiPaola notes, allows superintendents to skip weekend mowings when courses are busy. In a bentgrass divot recovery study at Michigan State University, he further points out, "Primo was doing as well or better than check plots, and data on bermudagrass show similar results."

More aerification—Though aerification is not new, more superintendents are doing more of it. Deep aerators like the Verti-Drain and Floyd McKay Drill Aerifier give superintendents the opportunity to penetrate deeper into the soil profile.

"In the last five to seven years, the Verti-Drain and the variability you can have with it is just tremendous," says Brad

Settings like this one at Springvale Country Club in North Olmsted, Ohio, are becoming more popular as superintendents try to offer players and members a natural environment in which to play golf.

Kocher of Pinehurst (N.C.) Golf Club. "Everyone I know either has (a deep aerifier) or has access to one."

Aerification with the water-injection (Hydroject) process developed by Toro, Inc., is also becoming more popular. And greens rolling in combination with aeration promotes faster greens.

"I started rolling because of the PGA tournament we had here earlier this year," says Alonzi. "I found out that once you do it for the pros, you have to do it for the members, so we continued through the summer.

"I haven't found a drastic difference, but on hot windy days we might have to water a little more."

John C. Mood of Sandy Run Country

ELSEWHERE

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'You'll see more courses just letting wildflowers and fescues grow.'

—Tim Smith
Hawk's Nest

Club in Oreland, Pa. also started rolling his greens this year.

Managing the wilds—More frequently, supers are letting some of their rough areas grow wild, a concession to the trend of "environmentally friendly" courses.

"We let wild (rough) grasses just grow and they look gorgeous—as long as you do it in areas that aren't in play," notes Alonzi. "I haven't gotten any complaints, either, except in marginal areas where some players have lost their golf balls."

Tim Smith, who supervises Hawk's Nest Golf Club in Creston, Ohio (see article, page 27) thinks trends like this make the course easier to maintain.

"We've got a course with more of a Scottish 'links' look," he says. "I think you'll see more courses just letting wildflowers and fescues grow. We've also planted trees in areas where it's easy to maintain around them, and we have tapered creek banks that we can run equipment down to the edge of."

C. Thomas Haudenschild of Highland Golf Club in Shelton, Conn. reports he's planted more wildflowers, and **Al Comeau** of Cummaquid Golf Club in Yarmouthport, Mass., says he's replaced some annual plantings with wildflower sod. **Wayne Brown** of Scovill Golf Course in Decatur, Ill. is using more ornamental grasses, wood chips and shrubs in place of grass.

The management—Supers are doing more in the way of public relations—especially public courses. For instance, Hinckley Hills Golf Course in Hinckley, Ohio sponsors a charity golf tournament. It's called the "Open Heart Open," and this year's was the 14th annual event.

"Ever since my father had open heart surgery, we've sponsored this tournament," says superintendent **Jean Esposito**. "All proceeds—usually about \$5,000—go to University Hospitals' cardiology research unit. We get the local distributor to contribute the use of Club Car golf cars, and a local restaurant donates the food service." All donations, Esposito says, are 100 percent tax deductible.

"After the tournament, we have an auction of collectibles from the Cleveland Indians and other American League



Kocher: Deep aerifiers popular with friends.



Esposito: Charity events for public relations.



Downing: Accepting managerial responsibilities.

New golf course maintenance trends

■ Here's what a variety of golf course superintendents reported they would do differently in 1994. The mini-survey was taken at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America convention in Dallas earlier this year:

"ADDITIONAL PLANTERS"—**Faron Stoops**, Chambersburg Country Club, Scotland, Pa.

"ADDITIONAL FLORAL PLANTERS; ROOT FEEDING OF ALL TREES"—**Rich Pollock**, Eagle Run, Omaha, Neb.

"MORE PERENNIAL AND ANNUAL PLANTINGS"—**Kathy Eldridge**, Homewood Golf Course, Ames, Iowa

"BUNKER RENOVATION; INCREASING AERIFICATION PROGRAM; INITIATING USE OF MORE FLOWERING PERENNIALS"—**Frank Rendull**, City of Dayton, Ohio

"JUST BUILT A GREENHOUSE"—**Jack Birdwell**, Spring River Golf Course, Roswell, N.M.

"AERIFICATION OF TEES; SEEDING MORE THAN ONCE A SEASON"—**Richard Ahrens**, Decatur (Ill.) Park District

"USING 'EXHIBIT' TO CONTROL WEBWORMS; USING BIO-BACTERIA TO REDUCE BROWN PATCH PRESSURE ON BENTGRASS GREENS"—**Tom Schlick**, Marriott's Golf Club at Shiloh Falls, Pickwick Dam, Tenn.

"CONSTRUCTION OF SOIL FERTILITY MODIFICATION PROGRAM"—**Ron Mahaffey**, Oakhurst Country Club, Clayton, Calif.

"INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT; NEW NEWSLETTER FORMAT"—**Paul Schippers**, The Moor's Golf Club, Portage, Mich.

"ENLARGE SOME TEES; BEAUTIFY CLUB ENTRANCE"—**John Segui**, Waynesborough Country Club, Paoli, Pa.

"AERIFY AROUND GREEN BANKS AND OVERSEED"—**Ken Smith**, Beechmont Country Club, Cleveland, Ohio.

—J.R.

teams, the Cleveland Browns and the Cleveland Cavaliers."

Finally, says **Dave Downing II**, "we've all had to be better managers." He's director of golf course operations at Wild Wing Plantation in Conway, S.C.

"We're all into more record-keeping, safety, training, public relations, budgeting, selling and communicating. But playing conditions are still very important: if the grass isn't right, you're hitting the road."

Kocher—like Downing, a multi-course superintendent—puts it this way:

"You've got to keep oiling the wheels. When people come visit our course, you want them to see that you continue to do new things and continue to maintain old things. If you're not doing that, then they're going to notice and maybe they'll go somewhere else. People vote with their feet."

—Jerry Roche