

TURF COMMS



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PURPOSE: To pass on what we learn willingly and happily to others in the profession so as to improve turf conditions around the country.

WINTER COVERS (cont. from pg. 4 of Issue 8, Vol. 2)

The grass then proceeds to rapidly turn brown and almost appears to die a few days after you remove the cover. The best time to remove a cover is at the very beginning of a mild spell.

Materials that have been used for covers include: MANURE - may have high salts, doesn't let light thru too well, introduces weed seeds, and may promote snow mold. BRUSH - tends to attract mice and other rodents. PLASTIC - unless punched full of holes it does not let water in or out (does not "breathe"), if black it does not let light thru. SNOW FENCES - put around the green they cut down on the wind and allow more snow to stay on parts of the green, they are very effective at keeping snowmobiles off the greens as well as golfers and skiers. Straw - difficult to hold in place in windy areas, may promote snow mold. Hydromulch - expensive, apply one fungicide prior and one in the hydromulch for snow mold protection, traffic on this mulch tends to cause it to blow off. SYNTHETIC BLANKETS - sold as geotextiles, or landscape fabrics, expensive but if rolled up and stored in the dark may last three winters, except for their high cost these are probable the easiest materials to work with, they must be well pinned down, 12 inch spikes every two feet may be needed. EXCELSIOR - now available inside a plastic netting, is expensive and more difficult to handle than the synthetic blankets, may provide more protection.

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The most recent research report on protective covers was that by Dr. J.M. Roberts of New Hampshire in the January - February, 1986, Agronomy Journal. Dr. Roberts reported that spunbonded polyester blankets of 1 to 2 ounces per square yard provided desiccation protection. He found 10 to 20 percent more spring leaf moisture, increased root length and clippings. He also found up to 18°F warmer soil temperatures in the spring. This material let 29 to 56 % of the light thru. The wave lengths of light valuable in the photosynthesis process that is.

The spunbonded polypropylene blankets were compared to heavier and more opaque polypropylene blankets. These allowed 3 % or less of the usable light waves through. Also, examined were pine needle and sewage sludge covered treatments. The turf was less healthy under these other three covers. Roberts concluded that opaque covers should be removed earlier in the spring. The exclusion of light by the polypropylene had resulted in cooler soil temperatures as well as reduced plant vigor. He applied covers in late November and removed in April.

He did find that ice melted 2 days faster over the sludge and polypropylene blankets. He also suggested leaving desiccation protective covers on in the spring until supplemental moisture was available.

For faster snow and ice melt I suggest you try the powdered graphite mentioned below. (also mentioned in Vol. 2, Issue 4, pg. 3)

MELT IT WITH GRAPHITE: For those greens where ice and snow accumulations are a problem try the following. Put 2 cups of powdered graphite in 3 gallons of water. Shake well and spray on with a backpack sprayer. This should adequately blacken 5000 square feet to give you faster snow melt if any sunlight gets thru at all. The beauty of this approach is that you will have no problem getting it to stick to very smooth icy crusts. Try ordering the powdered graphite from your local metal foundry or his supplier.

TURF ADVISORY SERVICE FEES FOR 1987

There will be a \$50 increase in the turf advisory service fee structure for subscribing clubs in 1987. This is the first increase in two years and is necessary to keep up with travel expenses. Even so, Doug Hawes is still the biggest bargain in golf course maintenance today, especially when compared to the USGA and other commercial agronomic consulting firms.

The new fee structure for 1987 is: 1/2 day visit - \$400
full day visit - \$600

Your continued support appreciated.

WOULD YOUR GREEN COMMITTEE AGREE TO NO WINTER GOLF ?

The green committee at a Northeastern country club closed the course with the following note to the members last winter.

WINTER GOLF

The grass-growing season for northern golf courses begins about April 15 and ends about October 31. During this time, the bentgrasses we encourage on greens, tees and fairways can recover from normal traffic, divot and wear injury and compete favorably with other plants that seek to encroach. During the entire growing season, an intensive turf maintenance and management program is directed totally to encourage more and more bentgrass and less Poa annua on our greens, tees and fairways. This "battle" goes on during the entire growing season and if problems arise during this time, Poa annua is usually the reason! Heavy seed growth in spring, slow putting surfaces, brown spots in greens caused by disease or wilt, uneven growth, excessive pollen to affect golfers with allergies all are problems caused by Poa annua that affect golfers and play.

Golf in winter, when the bentgrasses are frozen and dormant, totally favors Poa annua. Poa annua quickly takes advantage of any bentgrass weakness to gain foothold. Poa annua seed is ever-present and ready to germinate at the slightest opportunity.

Golf in winter compacts the soil...compact soils require more aeration during the spring and fall golfing seasons...and aeration at any time is disturbing to all golfers during the regular playing season. We reduced our program to one aeration of greens and tees annually...with winter play, greens may have to be aerated at least twice annually during the regular golfing season. Aeration always requires heavy topdressing -- both are costly budget items.

Problems with golf turf in winter also concerns involvement with soil temperatures, air temperatures and drainage. In winter, soil under turf freezes to depths from a few inches to several feet, depending upon the severity of cold experienced. Once the soil freezes, it negates all underground drainage until the frozen soil once again thaws completely. To compound the problem, part of the upper inch of soil thaws on sunny days, causing excessive wetness in this area from trapped water above frozen soil. Now this combination of circumstances results in severe compaction when play is allowed under these conditions because the thawed soil is compressed, vise-like, from foot pressure on solid ice below the thaw.

Infrequent warm days will not thaw a deep freeze significantly. It takes 10 to 14 days of continuous air temperatures over 50 degrees for winter soils to thaw to a safe depth for play. SOIL TEMPERATURES GENERALLY ARE 10 TO 15 DEGREES COLDER THAN AIR TEMPERATURES. GRASS ROOTS DON'T BEGIN TO FUNCTION UNTIL SOIL TEMPERATURES REACH THE AREA OF 40 TO 45 DEGREES! The areas hurt most by winter play are greens and tees.

Therefore, in the interest of more enjoyable playing conditions for all golfers during the growing season, we deem it necessary to close the course from February 15 until we feel it safe to resume play in spring, approximately April 15

We seek the support and understanding of all members in our quest for BETTER, STRONGER PERMANENT TURF with each and every passing year.

Green Committee

From the Editor: Heard a quote from Ross Perot over the radio on the way to work one morning that I thought worth repeating. This will not be an accurate quote as I'm not good at writing in Dallas traffic. Mr. Perot, for non-Texans, is a rather famous person and former owner of Electronic Data Systems and more important lately the chairman of a committee that examined Texas's school system and came up with some strong suggestions for improvement. The most famous of these was the NO PASS - NO PLAY rule which does not allow high school students to participate in extracurricular activities if they failed a subject in the last six weeks. It does not just pick on athletes but you would think so to hear most of the screaming.

Anyway Mr. Perot said his mirror told him he was not a pearl, so he decided to be the oyster. But, now looking back over his life he felt more that he was really the grain of sand that irritated the oyster into producing the pearl. He may just have done that with the Texas school systems.

Hope some of these articles will provide the proper "irritation" in the turf world to produce some "pearls".

RUBIGAN AGAIN - Did you catch the article in the September/October issue of the USGA Record? "Use of Fenarimol for Selectively Controlling Poa annua in an Overseeded Bermudagrass Golf Green" Read it and then go back and reread the recent articles in Turfcomms. Fenarimol is the common chemical name for Rubigan.

END