USGA GREEN SECTION RECORD

September 21, 2012 -- Volume 50, Number 20

A New Hue

A guide to using colorants to enhance the color and growth of fine turfgrass in the southwestern U.S.

by Brian Whitlark, agronomist, Southwest Region and Kai Umeda, turf extension agent, University of Arizona

In the desert Southwest, golf course industry professionals know the majority of their annual revenue is generated between October and April, when warm temperatures and sunny skies lure out-of-town golfers seeking lush, green golf courses. Historically, many in the industry assumed that overseeding with cool-season grasses was the primary method to achieve such conditions. That business model is changing, due in large part to the ability of the new ultradwarf bermudagrasses to perform exceptionally well during the winter months without overseeding, and the growing trend and acceptance of artificially coloring putting greens.

Colorants were applied using a CO2-powered backpack sprayer with a hand-held, three-nozzle boom with TwinJet™ 8008 flat fan nozzles spaced 20 inches apart.

In the southeastern region of the country, coloring greens has become a widely accepted practice, but in the Southwest anything other than overseeding to achieve a green hue was simply unimaginable, at least until recently. Thanks to a growing number of pioneering superintendents and research conducted by the USGA and the University of Arizona, artificially coloring greens is catching on. It is catching on at high-end private clubs, at resort courses competing for the discerning traveler, and at daily-fee facilities. In fact, the popularity of colorants is growing at such a fast pace that new products seem to appear in the market monthly. Consequently, there is a need for research and field trial demonstrations to compare and evaluate the new colorants and to determine how these products could be best applied for optimal performance in the unique southwestern environment.

Click here to read the rest of this article

Warming Up in the Transition Zone

Golf courses are increasingly choosing warm-season turfgrasses as maintenance budgets continue to be squeezed.

by Aaron Patton, Ph.D., assistant professor, Purdue University

(Left) Meyer zoysiagrass provides high-quality fairways at the Honors Course in Ooltewah, Tenn. (Right) Zoysiagrass provides a playable surface in the winter months. If only the distinct color contrast would actually help more golf balls find the fairway! (Photo courtesy David Stone, Honors Course in Ooltewah, Tenn.)

The transition zone is that 200-mile-wide belt between the cooler northern states and warmer southern states that stretches from Kansas to Maryland. Both cool-season and warm-season turfgrasses are present in this area, although few turfgrass species are well adapted to this challenging climate. Transition zone golf courses primarily have cool-season grasses, such as annual bluegrass, creeping bentgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, and perennial ryegrass on the fairways. However, golf course superintendents in this region struggle to maintain cool-season grasses during the summer due to excessive heat, irrigation requirements, disease pressure, and traffic effects. These grasses can decline in the summer, causing poor golfing conditions in spite of superintendents spending many hours and dollars to maintain acceptable playing surfaces.

Click here to read the rest of this article

Deferred Maintenance Is No Bargain

Why short-term cutbacks now may ultimately cause problems later that are more costly to correct.

by Patrick Gross, director, Southwest Region

The pile just keeps getting bigger - deferred projects, worn-out equipment, an old irrigation system, and an overgrown and increasingly problematic tree population. These are just a few of the most common examples of deferred maintenance and financial cutbacks at golf facilities today, but there are more. Although we want to close our eyes and hope the pile disappears, it never does. What is a golf course to do? Understandably, the downturn in the economy in recent years has been especially difficult on the golf industry. It has forced owners, managers, and superintendents to decide what they can afford to do at the present time and what must be deferred for later.

In some cases, the desire to balance the bottom line has unfortunately extended into even the most basic agronomic practices. Managers, golf professionals, and superintendents face difficult questions. "Do we really need to aerate and topdress greens? If we skip aeration this fall, can we get more play and generate more revenue?" Granted, putting greens won't die if one treatment is skipped, but it is in the best long-term interest of the golf course to aerate and keep the greens as healthy as possible. Observations over the past four years have been very interesting. In general, skipping one core aeration treatment has had very little impact on the overall performance of greens. But skipping the second, third, and maybe fourth treatment has had a cumulative effect on putting greens. This comes in the form of a dense thatch layer that contributes to soft, soggy greens that are more prone to disease. Consequently, more fungicides are applied and extra hand watering is needed just to keep greens alive under difficult weather conditions. Is this really a bargain?

Click here to read the rest of this article

Regional Updates

The USGA Green Section agronomists see an broad variety of issues and challenges as they visit golf courses across the country. Be sure to read the highlights of each region since many of the topics covered apply to courses everywhere.

Mid-Atlantic Region

This update includes:

It's Time To Rejuvenate! - Aeration, tree leaf cleanup and preparations for the fall golf season.

View the rest of this update.

Southeast Region

This update includes:

Year In Review - Spending time to review the current year is the first step in ensuring success next year.

View the rest of this update.

North-Central Region

This update includes:

Not So Fast! - Time, modest green speeds and higher mowing heights are needed for late season turf recovery on putting greens.

View the rest of this update.

Florida Region

This update includes:

Wrapping up the Summer and Prepping for Winter - Isolated flooding, bermudagrass management during reduced sunlight intensity, and other fall challenges.

View the rest of this update.

Northwest Region

This update includes:

Aeration is in the Air - To improve playability on approaches, simply core aerate the area simultaneously with the putting greens..

View the rest of this update.

Sign Up To Receive The *Record* or Forward To A Friend

It's easy to subscribe and to share it with others.

Each *Green Section Record* issue includes articles and information that appeal to golfers and those who work in the game. It is always free of advertising and free of charge. Please help us distribute this publication as widely as possible. The best way to do this is sign up if you are not already a subscriber, and to forward this publication to your friends.

Sign up for the Green Section Record

GO

Privacy by SafeSubscribe℠
For Email Marketing you can trust

Green Section Record Archive

Looking for a previous issue of the *Green Section Record?*

The *Green Section Record* has been published under various names since 1921 and is composed of an valuable collection of full-text articles and photos. This collection is stored and maintained by the library staff at Michigan State University in the **Turfgrass Information File (TGIF).** All past issues of the *Record*, including this one, can be accessed free-of-charge by following this link.

Search the *Green Section Record*

Looking for something?

Important Links

USGA Privacy Policy
USGA Green Section Home Page

USGA Staff Contact Information
Turf Advisory Service Information
USGA Turfgrass and Environmental Research Online (TERO)

©2012 by United States Golf Association©

Permission to reproduce articles or material in the USGA Green Section Record is granted to newspapers, periodicals, and educational institutions unless specifically noted otherwise. All materials must be used in their entirety. Credit must be given to the author, the article's title, the USGA Green Section Record, and the issue's date. Copyright protection must be afforded. No material may be copied or used for any advertising, promotion or commercial purposes.

Green Section Record (ISSN 2156-5813) is published biweekly via electronic mail by the United States Golf Association©, Golf House, Far Hills, NJ 07931.

USGA Green Section
USGA Green Section
908.234.2300