

# TURF TWISTERS

## A SHADE PROBLEM

**Question:** I need some new thoughts on growing grass under the trees around the clubhouse. (Indiana)

**Answer:** We're not sure how "new" these are, but at least one or two of them ought to work for you:

- A) Try judicious pruning of some tree limbs to improve the amount of sunlight.
- B) Have a soil test (2 inch depth) made and check on pH as well as nutrients. The trees may be sitting at "the first table," the grasses at the "second table." Monthly fertilization throughout the season may be necessary.
- C) Occasional overseeding with a shade-tolerant grass is good business. *Poa trivialis*, the fine fescues, velvet bentgrass, even the zoysias do fairly well in the shade.
- D) Check irrigation needs frequently through the growing months. Feeder tree roots are notorious for using up soil moisture at the surface.
- E) Try aerification—check compaction.

## IS SOMETHING LESS THAN

**Question:** Lately we have been approached by a company selling growth retardants for turf on the premise that we could reduce our cost and labor requirement for all areas of the golf course. What is your opinion? (Maryland)

**Answer:** There are several growth retardants sold under a great many trade or brand names. The major ingredient in most of these is maleic hydrazide. Several new growth retardants may soon be available, but as yet few, if any, have practical application for fine turf areas. The rates of chemical, stage of growth of the turf, temperature and other factors are critical for good results, plus the fact that vigorous growth is what heals the wear and divot marks and makes the turf resist traffic. Take this away in favor of mowing more often and you have something less than fine turf.

## A BLESSING

**Question:** With the fertilizer shortage and what is available costing much more, I may be forced to use less fertilizer. Do you have any tips to help me use it more efficiently? (New York)

**Answer:** Yes. In your area of the country there are some good management practices you can perform to get the most out of your fertilizer dollar.

- 1) Take yearly soil tests so that you will know exactly where you stand, nutrient and pH wise. Use only those fertilizer elements your soil test calls for.
- 2) With acid soils, lime as needed to achieve and maintain a pH of 6.5. At this value fertilizer utilization is optimum.
- 3) Apply lighter amounts more often. One pound of actual nitrogen can be broken up into 1/4, 1/8, 1/16 pound increments. This "spoon feeding" really stretches out a pound of nitrogen and is good for the grass plant because it avoids peaks and declines of growth.

In reality, the fertilizer shortage could be a blessing in disguise because we may have to learn how better to utilize the fertilizer we have and still maintain quality turf.