

TURF TWISTERS

AVOID OVERIRRIGATION—NO MATTER WHAT!

Question: My present (automatic) irrigation system does not give uniform coverage. The area near each pop-up head becomes too wet if I extend the time to green up the outlying areas; i.e., between heads. What's the answer? (Arizona)

Answer: Assuming the pop-up heads are operating at optimum efficiency: i.e., pressure is adequate, nozzles are not plugged, rotating mechanism is working properly, etc., the irrigation schedule should be adjusted so that the close in areas receive a proper amount of water (not flooded) and the more distant areas are allowed to survive as best they can. This will mean some dry, brown areas. But for golf, "green" does not necessarily equal "good." Most golfers prefer a dry, firm course (even though there is some brown) to a wet, green one. Of course, spot watering the brown areas with hose and hand set sprinkler may smooth out the pattern. Avoid a wet course no matter what!

RETURN OF THE BUG

Question: Last year irregular brown spots developed in our fairways. The loss of turf was diagnosed as chinch bug damage. Will these bugs come back again this year? (Michigan)

Answer: Chinch bugs are always with us. The amount of damage they do in one season depends on the temperature and moisture present. When conditions are favorable, they can do considerable damage. Keep your eyes open for the first sign of irregular brown spots and then look for the small insects in the brown perimeter area. When the symptoms develop, spray an insecticide such as Diazinon or Sevin. These insecticides will also curb sod webworm that is very damaging to turf.

CIRCULAR YELLOW DISEASE PATTERNS

Question: Last summer our greens developed some circular yellow disease patterns, and the turf seemed to need more fertilizer than usual to maintain proper growth and color. Any ideas? (Virginia)

Answer: According to research at Rutgers University, observations at other research stations and on golf courses, a certain type of basaatiomycete is activated by the excessive use of systemic fungicides: These fungus fruiting bodies are yellow and quite often develop in circular patterns much like brown patch disease in size and shape. Lack of proper growth and a general yellowing of the turf could be signs of excessive use of systemic fungicides.