

TURF TWISTERS

IT'S NOT DEAD!

Question: How does golf car traffic damage bermudagrass in winter when it is dead? (Mississippi)

Answer: When bermudagrass goes dormant, only the foliage dies. The crowns and roots are still very much alive. Therefore, stress from traffic is detrimental to bermudagrass during dormancy due to the lack of recuperative ability. Also, as freezing and thawing of the ground proceed in winter, the crowns and roots can be bruised and crushed from traffic.

THE EARTH'S SOD

Question: We have a difference of opinion here regarding the handling of sod. What is your recommendation regarding the optimum thickness of cut sod, and what's the best way to move it, i.e., in rolls or as flat pieces? (Idaho)

Answer: To a large measure, the thickness of sod cut will depend on the quality, type, and purpose for which the sod will be used. In most cases, a thickness of three-quarters inch seems about right as long as the sod and soil hold together and handle well. It will root rather rapidly at this cut and produce a smooth surface. Thicker sod, on the other hand, will not "peg down" as fast, but will not require the pampering and close attention that thinner sod does during initial establishment. It will usually not produce as true a surface, either.

As to means of transport, flat sod pieces are best for quality work (putting greens). Flat sod pieces do not have the problem of stretching and distortion one finds when sod is rolled. The flats not only fit better and tighter, but, when cut about 18 inches long, one person can easily handle each piece.

IN THE NORTHERN CLIMES

Question: Does winter golf harm the regular greens? Also, what can be done to remove frost from the golf course on mornings when the members want to play? (Minnesota)

Answer: Let's face it, winter play can hurt! It certainly doesn't do any good. Agronomically, it is one of those things that on one day causes little, if any, damage, but the next day causes real and permanent damage. It depends on soil types, soil moisture, weather conditions, and how much golf is actually played. (Be sure to read the article "The Winter Golfers Cometh" by Superintendent Paul O'Leary, in this issue.)

As to frost removal, there are only two safe ways:

- 1) If the temperature is near the freezing point (and rising), run the irrigation for two to five minutes.
- 2) Hold up play until the sun and warmer temperatures melt the frost.