

TURF TWISTERS

HOW NOT TO SPEND MONEY

Question: The past few years we have been fertilizing our *Poa annua* greens with a variety of high nitrogen fertilizers and using a balanced fertilizer in between. Do you think a balanced fertilizer on a regular basis for *Poa annua* greens is better? (New York)

Answer: Not really, but the final answer would depend on a couple of present unknowns. For example, have you had soil tests taken at a two-inch depth recently? If the lab is familiar with samples taken from turfgrass areas and shows adequate phosphorus and potassium levels, there's no need to spend money for more and more phosphorus and potassium.

Grasses are high users of nitrogen, and nitrates are also highly soluble in the soil solution. They are readily lost through leaching (as is potassium). Therefore, *Poa annua* will do well with light and frequent applications of nitrogen and usually one or two balanced fertilizer (N-P-K) applications yearly. You might want to go to three or four balanced applications yearly if you get a pronounced response, but we would not expect this to happen unless your soils are very sandy or there is need to germinate new *Poa annua* seedlings at every opportunity.

ON PEARL

Question: Pearlwort. What is it and how can I get rid of it? (Iowa)

Answer: Although to some, pearlwort may resemble *Poa annua*, it is actually a broadleaf weed that can contaminate putting greens. It is often treated after it has emerged with a combination broadleaf herbicide. Field observations have shown that those who use the fungicide Rubigan are also getting post emergent control of the pearlwort with the fungicide spray. While not labeled for herbicidal control of pearlwort, Rubigan is labeled as a herbicide for *Poa annua*; its behavior as a herbicide is no secret. Indications are that the manufacturer may, at a later date, amend its label to reflect a warning concerning pearlwort.

AND BECOME A MILLIONAIRE

Question: Last year the salt index of our irrigation water had begun to rise. What can we do to counteract the detrimental effect of the salts? (Florida)

Answer: Salt problems in the soil can best be handled through applications of gypsum and elemental sulfur. Gypsum, applied at 400-500 lbs/acre three or four times a year helps break up the salt radical in the soil to a leachable form. Elemental sulfur at 1½ lbs per 1,000 square feet (60 lbs per acre) will lower soil pH. The soil amendments are best applied in early spring and fall, but they are spaced about a week apart to prevent burning. Heavy irrigation or leaching occasionally will also help keep salt concentrations below the root zone. As to the irrigation water itself, there is no inexpensive way to lower the salt index. Invent one, and you will be a millionaire!