

TURF TWISTERS

COARSE TOPDRESSING

Question: I would like to topdress my greens with a slightly coarser material than I am currently using. However, the sand I wish to use has too many large particles and literally destroys my mowers. Any ideas on this rocky problem? (Arizona)

Answer: The chief problem with large particles is that they tend to lie on the surface and interfere with mowing. If you drag greens with a steel mat following topdressing, rig a piece of canvas (the width of the drag mat and about three or four feet in length) as a trailer behind the mat. As you drag the green, the larger particles will tend to bounce up through the mat and collect on the canvas. They can then be discarded from the green. You may need to use something like a 2 x 4 at the back of the canvas to keep the large particles from falling off the "trailer" onto the turf.

CAN TIE-UP IRON

Question: I just received my latest soil analysis results. The pH was 7.3 and the Fe level was rated as very high. Would supplemental applications of Fe to bermudagrass have any effect? (Florida)

Answer: Yes, the available form of Fe tends to be tied up in the soil very quickly, especially when the pH is above 6.7. While the response to Fe is not as dramatic as it is with the cool season type grasses, recent research has shown supplemental Fe to be beneficial in reducing color loss from temperature stress, and it also promotes a faster green-up after stress exposure.

WITH A BITTER LEAF

Question: I continue to hear more and more amazing evidence of a plant's ability to defend itself against insects, parasites, and disease. What do you hear? (California)

Answer: This subject area is developing rapidly; the reason is biotechnology. With new techniques and instruments, scientists are now finding the so-called secondary chemicals, discovered in plants many years ago but believed to be unimportant, are, instead, of major importance. Sugar maples and oak trees, for example, are known to quickly change the chemical composition in their leaves within a day of or even a few hours after being attacked by pests. Toxins and other chemicals are increased, or important nutrients are lowered in varying degrees from leaf to leaf when they are under attack. Sugar maple leaves can raise tannic acid levels, which interferes with digestion in pests, by 300 percent. A chemical response system, similar to the immune system in animals, seems to be in plants, and science is going to find out more about it and, if it is possible, turn it to man's benefit.