

# TURF TWISTERS

---

## HOW MANY TIMES

**Question:** Some golf courses topdress their greens once per week while others topdress just twice per season. Which is best? (Texas)

**Answer:** Topdressing frequency and the amount of topdressing applied to greens depends on many factors. Unless a major modification of the upper root zone is being attempted, the key to topdressing is to match the growth rate of the turf. On greens that are kept in a state of rapid growth, frequent and light topdressings will serve to keep the surface smooth while at the same time helping to prevent the accumulation of thatch. Very closely cut or slower growing greens should not be topdressed as frequently. To do so could result in the upper portion of the root zone becoming excessively sandy. A properly adjusted topdressing program will help keep the soil profile free of restrictive layers.

## DO WE GET WHAT WE PAY FOR

**Question:** Our golf course architect says he can save us a couple of thousand dollars per green by building greens to his specifications rather than the USGA's, and he claims that his greens work just as well. Any good reason we shouldn't go with his recommendation? (New York)

**Answer:** You often get what you pay for, and if it costs 5% to 10% more to build a USGA spec green, we feel it's worth it. Many architects who claim never to have lost a green have not been around five to 10 years later when the club gets so tired of the problems they've had that they rebuild. If you consider the poor-quality turf, the extra work needed to keep the turf in fair condition, the years of aggravation that goes along with maintaining poorly built greens, and the high cost of eventual rebuilding, cheap greens are no bargain. In saving a small percentage of the total cost of a green construction project, the risk of maintenance problems or turf failure goes up significantly. When all is said and done, we can't think of any good reason not to build to USGA specs.

## WHEN WE TREAD ON DORMANT TURF

**Question:** I am a club official from a course in northern Virginia. Please settle an argument. I have every confidence that the USGA will give me an honest answer. Does winter play on greens in this part of the country really increase the amount of *Poa annua* in greens? (Virginia)

**Answer:** An old adage states that "the best weed control is a dense stand of turf." Thus, any activity that thins the desired stand of grass on the greens, such as winter play, encourages the establishment of *Poa annua* and other weeds. Over the years we have seen a definite link between winter golf on dormant grass and the introduction of *Poa annua* into greens.