

TURF TWISTERS

HOW'S THAT AGAIN?

Question: Over the past ten years we have experienced very good germination on our bermudagrass greens with our winter overseeding program. However, during the three to six weeks following seeding, we experience a rapid decline in stand density. I am only allowed two weeks after seeding to maintain the elevated mowing height at $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. The membership objects to the "shaggy and slow" putting surface, and it is necessary to reduce the mowing height of the greens back to $\frac{3}{32}$ to $\frac{3}{16}$ inch. Is the quick reduction of the mowing height the cause of the loss of stand density that we've experienced? (Florida)

Answer: More than likely it is. Reducing the mowing height too quickly on an establishing turfgrass can result in a loss of stand density. At least $\frac{1}{4}$ inch mowing height must be maintained for four to six weeks after seeding to allow good seedling establishment. This is particularly true when extremely warm daytime and nighttime temperatures persist during establishment. Explain to your golfers that an elevated mowing height during establishment is critical to obtain the best possible winter greens.

ADD NEW VARIETIES

Question: Following construction of our USGA spec greens, they were established with Penncross creeping bentgrass. Now that several new varieties have been released, should we select one for overseeding instead of Penncross? If so, is there any potential for segregation and a subsequent reduction in putting quality? (Washington)

Answer: Research studies have shown the newer creeping bentgrass varieties to have improved heat, drought, and disease tolerance. It would be to your advantage to introduce some of the newer bentgrass varieties via overseeding. In regard to a possible decline in putting quality, it is unlikely that individual plants will noticeably express themselves in terms of color, texture, and/or growth habit, that would affect putting quality.

TO MAXIMIZE YOUR RETURN

Question: The school terms in this area now extend from Labor Day well into June, so our normal seasonal labor supply is not what it used to be. What source is being used at other courses? (Iowa)

Answer: Look to retirees! There are many people in their late 50s and 60s willing and able to help out. They take instruction well, enjoy the early morning work, prefer seasonal employment, and often outwork many of the younger set. Those who play golf have the added advantage of having some idea of what you are trying to achieve.