

## Getting the Seed Down Right

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**I**N CENTRAL and South Florida, the use of bentgrasses for winter overseeding of bermudagrass greens has been practiced for the past 10 to 12 years. Also, over the past few years, *Poa trivialis*, either alone or in combination with bentgrass, has gained popularity as an overseeding material for greens on southern golf courses. The main reason for the increasing use of these varieties in overseeding programs throughout the South is the better quality putting surface they can provide.

Back in the “old” days, when perennial ryegrasses were the dominant overseeding material, high seeding rates of 30 to 50 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. were commonly practiced. These high rates and a large seed size made uniform application and development of a consistent turf cover relatively easy. However, with the use of much lower seeding rates (3 to 15 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft.) and the smaller seed size of the bents and *Poa trivialis*, uniform application and stand development can be a problem.

At the Bay Hill Club, in Orlando, Florida, Dwight Kummer and his staff have attached paint guns to their spreaders to help them “see” their application patterns. Bicycle brake handles are located on the handlebar of the spreader so that dotted lines can be put down each time a pass is made across the green. I have observed the successful use of this simple setup at a number of courses in Florida.

A different approach for achieving uniform seed application is used by David Oliver and his staff at Martin Downs Country Club, in Stuart, Florida. They topdress the greens before applying the seed. The wheel tracks made in the sand are used as a guide for ensuring uniform overseeding application. Following seeding of each green, a brushing operation is conducted to work the seed and topdressing into the green surface.



*Paint guns mounted on a spreader with bicycle brake handles and cables provide a simple setup for marking where seed has been applied.*

While the seed application methods I have just described generally provide very good results, skips and overlaps can still occur. This is especially true when windy conditions prevail. This past fall, while on a TAS visit at Royal Oak Country Club, in Titusville, Florida, Superintendent Bob Snapp described a unique method of seed application that has been very successful for him. Mr. Snapp has been practicing a straight *Poa trivialis* overseeding program and has been hydroseeding his greens for the past several years.

The basic setup used is a Hahn sprayer with a centrifugal pump and a number 50 Floodjet nozzle. The only modifications made to the sprayer are removal of the jet agitation bar and screens inside the tank and any screens in the filter housing. Then, 100 to 120 gallons of water, a quart of surfactant, and the seed are put in the tank. Mr. Snapp has found that 60 lbs. of seed per tank is the maximum amount to use to maintain good seed suspension. After all the seed has been added, sufficient water is put in to fill the tank to the 150-gallon mark.





*(Top) At Martin Downs Country Club, in Stuart, Florida, the greens are topdressed first and the wheel tracks of the spreaders are used as guides to achieve uniform seed application. Note that two passes are made at 90-degree angles.*

*(Above) A number 50 Floodjet nozzle is used by Bob Snapp, golf course superintendent at Royal Oak Country Club, in Titusville, Florida, to apply *Poa trivialis* for winter overseeding of bermuda greens.*

Calibration is simply a matter of knowing the area of each green and multiplying that number by the desired seeding rate to determine the total amount of seed to apply. For example, if a seeding rate of 12 pounds per 1,000 sq. ft. is to be used and a 5,000 sq. ft. green is to be seeded, 60 pounds of seed is required. Once the sprayer is loaded with the desired amount of seed, the operator sprays the green surface. Typically, three to four replications are required to empty the sprayer and apply all of the seed.

While this method of application is not completely wind-proof, it is not as affected by the wind as seeding with conventional spreaders. Also, a problem can occur with this hydroseeding method when sharp lines are desired. If a wall-to-wall overseeding program is not practiced, a pre-emergent herbicide treatment must be made to produce sharp lines between the overseeded and non-overseeded areas.

If you have had a problem producing uniform overseeding stands, one of these application methods can be used to "get the seed down right."