

Sometimes Less Means More

Ideas for preserving water quality and developing better turf.

by DAVID A. OATIS

ALTHOUGH SOME PEOPLE may have difficulty admitting it, the environmental movement has actually been very good for the game of golf. It has raised our level of environmental awareness, and it has caused us to reexamine our golf courses, management philosophies, and maintenance programs. The environmental movement has prompted us to initiate many positive new programs, such as the establishment of natural areas and buffer strips.

Another positive result has been the development of better turfgrass through more exacting management. My three turf tips this year fit well with the theme of better turf and protection of the environment. These actually are some old ideas that have some new twists added to better meet today's needs. The turf tips come from three individuals.

- Timothy K. Garceau, golf course superintendent, The Tuxedo Club, Tuxedo Park, N.Y.
- Glenn A. Miller, golf course superintendent of Manasquan River Golf Club, Brielle, N.J.
- Richard E. Christian, Jr., golf course superintendent, Pine Valley Golf Club, Pine Valley, N.J.

The environmental research funded by the USGA has demonstrated that care must be taken when applying fertilizers and pesticides near bodies of water. Many courses have created buffer strips around their water features to further safeguard water quality. This is a simple and practical solution that actually saves money at the same time.

Tim Garceau had another simple but effective idea designed to preserve water quality when treating fairways. The Tuxedo Club, like many others, has drain lines in a number of fairways that empty directly into bodies of water on the golf course. In this situation, fertilizer or pesticide applications made to fairways have the potential of affecting water quality. To prevent such problems, Mr. Garceau simply made covers for the drainage receptacles. The covers are placed on top of the drainage grates immediately prior to the

fertilizer or pesticide applications, effectively preventing materials from entering the drainage system during and immediately following application.

Glenn Miller also had a good idea regarding the application of fertilizers. Many superintendents regularly spoon-feed their turf because it provides a quick, economical, and exact method of controlling growth. In itself, this isn't a new idea, but Superintendent Miller added a simple, but effective new twist.

Glenn initially used his sprayer to spoon-feed and apply wetting agents to high-traffic areas that needed additional growth and recovery, such as the beginnings and endings of cart paths. When all 18 greens were expanded last spring to recapture lost area, Glenn needed a way to fertilize the expansion areas independently from the rest of the greens. This task was accomplished quickly and easily with his sprayer equipped with a hand-held nozzle. In many cases, the applicator did not even have to get off the sprayer to make the applications. This may not be quite as easy at your course due to the proximity of mounding and bunkering, but it provided an accurate

and efficient method of accomplishing the task at Manasquan River.

Concentrated traffic and the resulting wear and compaction problems are some of the most common problems faced by superintendents. Pine Valley Golf Club is world-renowned, but its stature doesn't exempt it from the wear problems most other golf courses experience. Superintendent Rick Christian Jr. has several techniques aimed at combating turfgrass wear injury, and spot fertilization is one of the keys.

For years, Rick has made supplemental applications of fertilizer to high-traffic areas, such as constricted or shaded walk-on and walk-off areas around greens and tees. Often these applications are made with a backpack sprayer and soluble fertilizers; however, natural organic fertilizers also are used and are applied by hand or with a small spreader. Unfortunately, fertilizer alone sometimes cannot stimulate enough growth and recovery, so Rick has expanded the program to include the use of geotextile fabrics and dormant seeding.

The process is fairly simple. Sometime after Thanksgiving, when play has diminished, Rick aerifies and overseeds the worn areas. This practice is followed by fertilization and covering. The covers extend the growing weather and provide for germination, growth, and recovery. An added benefit is that the covers are helpful in keeping golfers off the renovated areas, which otherwise would recover more slowly.

These techniques alone are not likely to solve all your wear problems, nor will they provide foolproof protection of the environment. When combined with other strategies, however, they should give you better turfgrass with less fertilizer and reduced environmental impact. I hope you will find them useful to your operation.



Temporary covers for drain inlets can be made from a variety of different materials. When installed prior to pesticide and fertilizer applications, they can help protect water quality.

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