

TURF TWISTERS

LEASED YOU FORGET

Question: Our golf course needs new maintenance equipment. Should we purchase this equipment or lease it?

Answer: From a purely financial point of view, purchasing the equipment and committing to a regular equipment replacement program will be the most economical approach. Leasing offers some advantages, however. A leased fleet of equipment will be replaced on schedule every two to four years, which means the club will always have the most up-to-date equipment on the course. Also, the mechanics can spend more time focusing on quality-of-cut issues and reel maintenance. Finally, if the club needs a large amount of equipment and cannot afford to purchase all of it, leasing may provide an attractive alternative.

MOTHER NATURE

Question: What can we do to prevent frost on our greens and get golfers out on the course earlier? I've thought about using activated charcoal, synthetic turf covers, fans, or wetting agents. Do any of these things work? (Nevada)

Answer: Superintendents have tried a wide variety of products and practices to prevent frost or melt the frost earlier, all with limited results. Sometimes irrigation water is used to melt the frost during early fall and mid-spring when the irrigation system is charged. While the dark color of the charcoal should absorb heat and help melt the frost, the material is messy to use and actually does little to melt the frost. Fans and wetting agents are two other methods that sound good but are generally ineffective. Synthetic turf covers are effective to protect greens, but what about heavy frost on the fairways? Generally, you are better off being patient and letting Mother Nature melt the frost with good sunlight exposure to the turf surface. Be sure to address any situations that might be restricting morning sunlight and delaying the melting of frost, such as large trees on the east side of the green.

IS INTEGRAL TO THE GAME

Question: In South Florida, our bermudagrass fairway and rough areas never go fully dormant and off-color during the winter. Yet, because the growth rate of the bermuda is very slow for two to three months, cart traffic takes its toll and we inevitably get complaints from the golfers about very "tight" fairway lies and the loss of definition between the fairway and rough cuts. We have a continuous cart path system and our golfers, for the most part, are good about adhering to the 90-degree cart usage policy. Are there other suggestions for minimizing cart traffic wear? (Florida)

Answer: Golf carts have become an integral part of the American game and are an important revenue source at a lot of facilities. Yet, most golfers have a limited appreciation of their negative impact on course quality and conditioning. Cart traffic management must be viewed as a basic part of course management. This is especially true during Florida winters when the base bermuda turf is not actively growing. Along with directional control devices put into place prior to a pronounced deterioration in turf quality, it is recommended that all courses have multiple cart usage policies to distribute traffic over as much area as possible. At some golf courses with a continuous cart path system, restricting the carts to the path on one hole per nine for one week at a time has been very beneficial. This setup is rotated among the par-4 and par-5 holes, and it allows some additional time for turf recovery without drastically slowing the pace of play.

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