

TURF TWISTERS

DIVERSITY PRODUCES

Question: I have accepted a superintendent's position at a new golf course where the greens are built to USGA recommendations. The greens were fumigated and are approximately one year old. What organic materials should I apply to increase microbes and boost microbial activity in the sterile sand root zone? (Connecticut)

Answer: Research completed at the University of Florida and Clemson University show that sand-based root zones are not sterile environments as once believed. Bacteria and other microbes are present in large and diverse communities in those sands, even after fumigation. Bacteria and microbes are reintroduced into the fumigated profiles naturally from surrounding soils, windblown contaminants, irrigation water, grass seed, fertilizers, and equipment. Organic fertilizers offer a controlled release of nitrogen that can be helpful during the establishment period and may help to increase the CEC of the profile, but will probably have little influence on the overall numbers or activity of microbes in the root zone.

THE RIGHT COMBINATION

Question: I need to repair some thinned turf from the drought last summer and also will be seeding two new greens this fall. If I seed at a rate higher than the recommended 1-2 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft., say a 4-5 lb. rate, will I be able to open the green sooner? (Wisconsin)

Answer: The results from several independent research studies indicate that excessive seeding rates only produce an abundance of weak, crowded seedlings. The rapid cover over the green provides a false sense of security. The heavily seeded green is generally not ready to accommodate play any sooner than a green seeded at a more appropriate rate. The dense stand of crowded seedlings is often more susceptible to a variety of disease pathogens and matures more slowly compared to turf on a green seeded at a lower rate. Stick with the recommended seeding rate.

OF LOOKING AT THE FUTURE

Question: We need a person with agronomic expertise to visit our course to whip our superintendent into shape or recommend a change. Who would you suggest to complete this task? (Oregon)

Answer: First, there is not a professional agronomist who can or would visit a golf course and determine the hiring or firing of an individual in a single day. There are simply too many factors involved in the operation of a golf course to make this type of snap judgement. However, if you wish to have a positive experience for both the golf course superintendent and the golfers at your course, the USGA Green Section agronomists are a great choice. This unbiased group of trained agronomists offers agronomic consultation throughout the U.S. with only one thing in mind — improving the playing conditions at your golf course while keeping your budget in mind. They are not there to “whip someone into shape.” They are there as your on-course source for information!