

TURF TWISTERS

CAREFULLY EVALUATE

Question: We are in the early planning stages of a sand bunker renovation project and wish to obtain a copy of the USGA specifications for bunker sands, but we are having difficulty finding these specifications. Where can we obtain a copy of your sand specifications? (Vermont)

Answer: The USGA has never had specifications for bunker sands. The article "Selecting and Handling Sand," *Green Section Record*, November/December 1983, provides general guidelines regarding the sand's particle size, shape, composition, color, and other factors that will be helpful for the initial selection process. Remember that a sand's playability is subjective. It is a good idea to develop a test bunker so that several of the potential sands can be installed and sampled by the golfers. This will help to form a general consensus that will be useful in the ultimate selection of the sand. Keep in mind that bunker sand becomes firmer over time, as it becomes contaminated with soil and organic particles.

VARIOUS RESOURCES

Question: Over the past several years, we have heard of problems in acquiring top-quality bermudagrass planting stock (sprigs and sod) for new construction and renovation projects. A nine-hole addition has been proposed at our course. Is there any way to guarantee that we get what we pay for? (Florida)

Answer: Purchasing and using certified *Blue Tag* bermudagrass planting stock offers the highest degree of assurance for genetic purity and quality stock. Unfortunately, at this time not all states have a bermudagrass certification program. There are also differences in the standards utilized by the organizations administering turfgrass certification. The Georgia Crop Improvement Association has conducted a thorough review of their certification program of bermudagrasses, and their standards are considered the most up-to-date.

If certified planting stock is not available in your location, request from your area producers a list of courses they have supplied during the past five years. Visit these courses and interview the golf course superintendent about the general performance and quality of the bermudagrass supplied. Also, arrange a visit to the production farms. While determining genetic purity in the production fields is difficult, it would be worthwhile to find out what measures are utilized to control off-type bermudas and other pests, as well as general management practices and quality-control standards. Given that the quality and purity of the bermudagrass planting stock is a major factor in the success of new construction and renovation projects, and that the cost of planting material is a small percentage of the total project cost, basing decisions only on the cost of the sprigs or sod is not advised.

TO EFFICIENTLY COMPLETE PROJECTS

Question: Our golf course operates on a relatively low budget. An article written in the *Green Section Record* (July/August 1995) described golf courses that are operated on a shoestring budget. We fit this category! My question is, do you have a tip for eliminating some hand labor, thus freeing-up resources to use on other areas of the course? (Pennsylvania)

Answer: You're right, hand labor is terribly expensive and inefficient. Begin by evaluating each and every teeing area. Near the ball washers or benches, eliminate all of the rotary mowing or weed-eating work. This can be done by using a non-selective herbicide and then mulching the area. Design the contours around these areas so that larger equipment can flow through the site without creating a great deal of turf stress (no tight turns). Look for the small things first — they can add up in a hurry to save labor resources for larger, more critical projects.