

# Nursery Rhymes

*Damage to greens can be quickly repaired with putting green nursery sod.*

by DARIN S. BEVARD

*The hydraulic oil killed our green in streaks.  
The damage could be visible for many weeks!  
The members want the green fixed fast,  
That putting green nursery will save my . . . green!*

SEVEN YEARS AGO, David Oatis, director of the Green Section's Northeast Region, wrote a *Green Section Record* opinion article regarding the need for golf courses to have a high-quality turfgrass nursery as an insurance policy (Sept./Oct. 1994). Evidently, some things are worth repeating. Most golf courses still do not have a putting green nursery, and many that do still manage the nursery as an aside rather than as an important part of putting green management.

A putting green nursery can be critical for maintaining the quality and playability of putting greens in the face of unseen adversity. A sod source that matches a course's existing greens in the event of something as simple as a scalped cup or as major as an act of vandalism can be a good safety net. Some very basic guidelines for establishment and maintenance of a putting green nursery must be considered.

## Size

The bigger a nursery green is, the better – within reason. While it is not always possible, the nursery green should be at least close to the size of

the largest green on the golf course. In this way, a reliable sod source is available for repairs in the event of a catastrophe or to address numerous small problems that may arise.

## Construction

Construction of a nursery green does not need to be elaborate, but it should be done in such a manner that high-quality grass can be maintained. Good drainage is very important. Several inches of a soil mix can be spread over the area where the green is to be established. It is not necessary to use a soil mix that exactly matches the existing greens; however, a *compatible* mix must be used. The particle size of the mix must not provide the chance for surface sealing or other drainage and water movement problems when the nursery sod is used for repairs on the golf course greens. An accredited physical soil testing laboratory can compare samples of the soil mix from the existing greens with potential construction mixes to ensure compatibility. On new projects, a nursery green can be included in the initial plans, while

older properties must pick an area that is out of the way of play.

Irrigation also should be installed at the time of construction to provide adequate overhead and hand-watering capability.

## Matching the Existing Grasses

One of the biggest benefits of a nursery green is the ability to establish a sod that matches the turf on the existing greens of the golf course. On older courses, replacing damaged areas that contain a mix of older creeping bentgrasses and *Poa annua* with new creeping bentgrass sod will cause the repaired areas to be very visible for several years. Shredded aeration plugs from the existing greens can be used in conjunction with a low rate of creeping bentgrass seed at the time of establishment for a cool-season nursery. This nursery turf should provide an acceptable turf match with the existing greens. For new greens, simply use the turfgrass variety established on the greens. Aeration cores or sprigs from the existing greens should provide the desired result for bermudagrass greens.

## Maintenance

Maintenance of a nursery green is simple. Use the same management practices on the sod nursery that are used on the golf course greens. Aeration and topdressing practices should be the same. Thatchy sod does not perform well! Mowing heights also should be the same. With the same maintenance practices in place on the nursery green, the sod will be ready for immediate use when it is needed.

A nursery green provides a great backup plan in the event that unfortunate damage does occur to a putting green or greens. Also, new employees can be trained and new maintenance techniques can be used experimentally on the nursery green prior to use on the golf course greens. With a good putting green nursery in place, potential uses are many.

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*During times of unforeseen adversity, a putting green nursery can be a critical sod source that matches a golf course's existing green.*