

Turf Twisters

Q: We play golf at a course along the Gulf Coast that is considering regrassing the putting greens with an ultradwarf. Just exactly what is an ultradwarf? (Alabama)

A: The term *ultradwarf* refers to the latest generation of bermudagrass varieties being used on golf courses today. Varieties such as Champion, Miniverde, MS Supreme, and TifEagle are all considered

ultradwarfs. They were developed to replace Tifdwarf bermudagrass, which was the industry standard for almost 40 years. Although each of the ultradwarf varieties is slightly different,

they all tolerate lower mowing heights better than Tifdwarf and they can provide superior putting surfaces, too.

Q: We have experienced a very harsh winter with lots of snow and ice, and our putting greens sustained severe damage. Now we are in a recovery period and we've not been allowed to play on the greens. My question is, if the greens are dead, why the heck can't we play on them? We have a short season already, and what difference can it possibly make? (Impatient in New York)



A: A little patience now will yield big dividends in the long run. Winter injury is unfortunate, but it creates a terrific opportunity to in-

crease populations of the more desirable grass species, creeping bentgrass. Annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) is always more susceptible to winter injury,

whereas bentgrass rarely suffers injury. However, bentgrass is slower to germinate and establish, and it is particularly susceptible to wear injury during the

recovery period. Establishing a temporary green (pictured) is never popular, but it speeds up the recovery process dramatically, perhaps even cutting it in half. Thus, keeping the greens out of play until density is reestablished and the turf achieves a modicum of maturity can have a significant and long-term impact on the turf composition of your greens.

Q: We are in the fourth consecutive year of drought. Our superintendent says our turf is yellow because we haven't had enough rain. What is the story? (Arizona)

A: We have been seeing drought-related turf problems for the past several years, and it is primarily due to salt concentration. Nothing moves salts deeply into the soil and away from the turf better than ½" to 1" of natural rainfall. Drought-stressed turf (having small amounts of rainfall) will

actually wick salts up into the rootzone and cause the yellowed condition seen throughout the Southwest. The natural flushing action of rainfall also eliminates the hydrophobic (or water repelling) problems seen in drought-impacted soils, making subsequent irrigation much more effective at

moving into and through the soil. Although this condition can be seen year round, it is most prevalent in winter on overseeded bermudagrass since the cool-season grasses are less salt tolerant, as a rule, than warm-season turf species.

