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# Turf *Twisters*

**Q:** Each year, our fairways decline during the heat of summer due to disease and stress problems. We simply do not have the resources to treat often enough with fungicides to keep diseases from greatly impacting playing conditions. Once the summer heat goes away, we spend most of the fall waiting for the fairways to recover. Basically, our fairways are only in good condition for the spring and early summer. What options are available to improve our fairways? (Maryland)

**A:** The development of finer-textured fairway bermudagrass cultivars that also have excellent cold tolerance has led to several golf courses converting their fairways to bermudagrass, which requires far less fungicide inputs than its cool-season counterparts. These bermudagrasses provide excellent playability for many months of the growing season and require 50-60% less water than cool-season grasses. The downside of bermudagrass is the "brown" color during the late fall and winter season when the grass goes dormant. Nonetheless, these grasses provide a great alternative to cool-season grasses in the transition zone, especially when resources are limited.

**Q:** Our practice tee is practically unplayable by midsummer due to the excessive number and slow recovery of divots. I know the tee is too small for the amount of play it receives, but is there any way to improve the condition of this popular area of the course? (Wisconsin)

**A:** Even the best tips about divot recovery will have relatively little effect on improving the condition of a small, heavily used tee. You can try to passively reduce the amount of practice by providing range balls in small bags instead of providing an unlimited amount of balls at each practice station. Unlimited balls at the station definitely will encourage more practice and produce more divots. Installing a strip of concrete or asphalt to support a set of high-quality artificial turf mats can be a very good investment as well. Practice from outside events can be restricted to the mats, and members can be limited to the mats for a day or two each week to reduce the amount of wear on the natural portion of the tee.

**Q:** I irrigate with a saline water source and have been on a regular leaching program to remove salts from my greens, but my water costs are going up significantly this year. How do I manage the salts and save water at the same time? (Nevada)

**A:** New technology has become available for golf course superintendents to remotely monitor soil salts, moisture, and temperature through sensors that can be installed throughout the golf course. The sensors provide data on a continual basis and can actually email a superintendent. The advantage is that sensors monitor salinity and moisture as it accumulates in the soil, as well as the ability to quantify the reduction in salinity following leaching events. Some courses have gone from semi-monthly leaching events to as few as four to six per year following the installation of such devices, saving a substantial amount of water. The technology provides the superintendent with the necessary information for maintaining good turf quality.