

TURF TWISTERS

AVOID

Question: Our course often floods during the winter rainy season. This year (with El Niño), the turf has been submerged several times and covered with sediment. Is there a concern with significant damage and can anything be done to avoid the damage? (California)

Answer: Damage from submersion is possible but difficult to predict because it depends upon several factors: turfgrass species, total amount of time submerged, depth of the water, light intensity reaching the turf, physiological condition of the turf, and water temperature. Of greater concern than the submersion damage is the potential for soil layering from the silt and sediment deposits. These deposits are primarily of concern on greens and tees, where pore space of sand-modified rootzones can be plugged by the fine-textured sediment particles. In such cases, the bulk of the material should first be removed with shovels and then the surface washed thoroughly with water using a pressure nozzle.

TREE DAMAGE BY

Question: Many important trees on our golf course suffered severe damage from an ice storm. The trees have been pruned to remove most of the damaged branches. Are there any practices that can be implemented to hasten the trees' recovery? (Maine)

Answer: Trees compartmentalize or isolate a damaged area and develop callus tissue that eventually encloses the wound to protect against outside agents. The rate at which the process occurs depends upon the tree's vigor and the extent of the injury. Therefore, take steps to assure that damaged trees are growing vigorously. Adjust soil pH to an optimum range for the tree species and fertilize any slower growing trees moderately with nitrogen to stimulate vigor. Keep the trees irrigated to avoid drought stress. Examine the pruning cuts and, where possible, repair those that have been completed improperly. Commercial wound dressings will probably not hasten the rate of wound closure and are not recommended.

A SOUND INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Question: In an effort to reduce the spread of diseases on our course, the Board of Directors has requested that golfers clean their shoes before teeing off. This practice is supposed to prevent fungal spores picked up on the soles of the golfers' shoes at other courses from being tracked onto the greens. Is there any merit to this practice or are we just kidding ourselves? (Arkansas)

Answer: Since fungal spores and bacteria are easily transported in raindrops or on the wind, it is impossible to prevent them from finding their way onto the golf course. At present, the best defense against fungal outbreaks is to develop a sound integrated management program and treat the greens, tees, and fairways with fungicides whenever appropriate.