

## **How to Give Your Lawn that Country Club Look**

*Courtesy of ARA Content*

Golf courses must look good day after day all season long. With more than 35,000 players using a single course during the year, this challenge is great. How do golf course superintendents keep their fairways and greens looking so good? One of their "tricks" is to follow a sound fertilizer program. By consistently feeding the grass with the right products, they not only fertilize their course but also help manage weed, disease and insect problems.

### **Use the right fertilizer**

The right fertilizer for a golf course, or any lawn you want to look great throughout the season, is one that releases organic nitrogen into the soil only as grass uses it. This helps prevent excessive top growth, which can encourage disease and insect problems. It also helps prevent polluting groundwater and nitrogen runoff into lakes and streams.

### **Fertilize regularly**

Superintendents fertilize their courses on a regular basis. Feeding their turf is as important to a superintendent as feeding a pet to a pet owner. Fertilizing should be done regularly, using the right product. If you have a large lawn, you may want to sample and analyze your soil. If not, you can ask your local nursery or extension agent for fertilizers that are commonly accepted in your area. The important thing to remember is to fertilize your lawn before it undergoes stress.

Wayne Otto, retired golf course superintendent from the Ozaukee Country Club (Mequon, Wis.), says, "I found that using a successful fertilizer program is a simple way to make sure my course was in its best playing condition. Slow release organic fertilizers are gentle on grass. They favor healthy growth and during hot, dry summer months, helped my fairways to look their best."

### **Use fertilizer with iron**

Another tip is to use fertilizers that also contain iron. While iron is not a nutrient that plants need a lot of, it will help create a deep even green color to your lawn. And it doesn't cause a lot of top growth like fast release nitrogen does. Iron is available in two sources -- sprayable liquids and dry granules.

### **Control weeds without worry**

Golf courses often do not have the weed problems with which homeowners contend. This is due to the tight, thick turf that grows on fairways and greens.

Weed seeds only germinate when they have plenty of moisture and light. If your lawn is thick with grass, it's hard for weeds to get started. A successful fertilizer program will fill in thin spots in your lawn so weed seeds will not have the light and moisture they need to germinate. Then you can have a weed control program with little or no spraying or hand digging.

### **Discourage disease and insects**

When a golf course fairway grows rapidly, it produces an abnormal amount of top growth. This top growth provides a luscious meal for insects and disease. Superintendents use fertilizers with a high amount of slow release nitrogen, which helps limit the amount of top growth. This helps discourage insects and disease. Plus, if insects and disease do attack their grass, it is ready to grow back because it is being evenly fed. This limits the amount of damage that can occur, and keeps the course looking great.

## **Mow with sharp blades**

Superintendents make sure their mower blades are always sharp. Sharp blades cut the grass rather than tearing it. Tearing blades of grass gives it a grayish color and opens the door for disease to enter. They also only remove one-third of the grass blade at any one time. This doesn't stress the grass as much as removing half or more. Frequent mowing is less stressful for lawns.

## **Water less**

Turf professionals stress that watering less often and deeply will result in a greener lawn. Deep watering helps roots grow deeper into the soil, allowing them to better take up nutrients and water during times of stress. Frequent, shallow watering keeps grass roots near the surface. When hot weather comes, they are more likely to go dormant, giving your lawn a straw color.

Take the advice of Wayne Otto and other turf professionals for growing a deep green lawn that will give you enjoyment all summer long.