Learning and Investigation Is What We Need

By Dave Doherty

Why do we have underperforming turf on our golf courses? That's a question that learning and investigation answers for us.

Recently while speaking at a couple of sales management seminars, one for a liquid sales fertilizer company and the other for a management company with about 20 different golf properties, a couple of interesting aspects arose.

The research the worldwide fertilizer company does and the components the company uses in the production of their products are in my opinion unmatched in the industry, while agronomic properties remain one of the top priorities of the management company servicing these worldwide properties.

And although the seminars for these companies – one from the **consumer** side and the other from the **supplier** side – focused on the agronomic science of physical properties, the approach needed to be tailored to the specific needs of each group.

For example, the production side of the industry stressed the importance that the finest chemical products in the world cannot function properly if the physical properties of the root zone are not in balance within themselves and with their microclimates.

The management company has had to address the major issues of repairing and/or rebuilding golf course greens.

But this company has not rebuilt one green since embarking on an agricultural program designed in part to balance physical properties and to totally check drainage using new age equipment and techniques. I'm informed that the quality of the greens has never been better, and that some of the greens being considered for rebuilding are now some of their healthiest and best greens.

The company saved millions of dollars by investigating the reasons for the greens' failures and not just accepting the fact that there were issues involved that no one understood and therefore the greens needed to be rebuilt – that's really something we have a tendency to do in this industry.

The reason for the management company's success is two-fold. 1) The mental uniformity and tenacity of the staff of each course to find out why these particular greens were resisting all efforts to improve, and to investigate the physical properties, in addition to all of the normal causes for weak turf, such as sun amounts, air movement, quality of irrigation water, diseases etc. is a major strength.

2) The support of management in two areas: Financial and bringing in the help to assist their staffs in their investigations into the physical side of the equation.

So with the financial and moral support of management, the dollars and resources spent were minuscule in comparison to the results.

This deeper investigation into the reasons for stressed turf has allowed for quality products on the chemistry side to perform in the manner they were intended.

Yes, it's time we as an industry started going the extra mile into investigating why we sometimes have underperforming turf. What this management company succeeded in achieving over these last few years seems miraculous today.

However, it should be common in the future if we use the resources at our disposable along with a determination to find the cause for turf failure beyond what we suspect today.

So never stop learning and investigating.

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