

SPRING FERTILIZATION

Building Up the Nutrient Bank



With spring temperatures just starting, the snow and cold temperatures beginning to fade into our rear-view mirror we need to start planning for our spring time maintenance routine. Just like snowflakes all golf courses were not created the same. Each golf course and soil profile presents its own set of challenges, thus there is not a fertilizer program out there that fits all golf courses. There are many different theories on how to properly fertilize as well as different application methods, however one thing remains a constant is that to grow and stay healthy all living organisms require some form of nutrition.

When we take our soil tests whether it be yearly, every other year or even less frequently we are provided with a snap shot of what is in our soil. It is very similar to looking in your fridge on a Friday afternoon and seeing what you need to get at the grocery store on Saturday morning. When we visit the grocery store we often buy things that we are going to eat that day/week/month, milk, eggs, bread, fruit, vegetables things that have an expiry date on them and cannot be stored for extended periods of time. Conversely we also buy things we plan on using over the course of a few months or up to a year, things such as ketchup, sugar, flour and many other items which generally get used up before they expire. I think you can see where we are going here, quite often the turf that we grow needs some readily available nitrogen often in the form of Urea, Ammonium Sulfate or even Potassium Nitrate. These quick release forms provide an excellent response in quick green up from the turf, however if there is no demand for some of the nitrogen from the plant it quickly can be lost to the environment, just like buying more bananas than you can eat before they go rotten.

It would be safe to say that as far as consumption goes by plants and humans that this is where we start to differ greatly. Humans consume small amounts of food about three times a day in order to combat hunger and keep our bodies strong. Plants can utilize a similar method by spoon feeding, however this is not always an option. It is often necessary to provide the soil (the pantry for turf grass) with enough nutrition to maintain itself over extended periods of time, often we only get a chance to fertilize certain areas 1 or 2 times per year. Therefore it is important to know what is going on in your soil to address the deficiencies before they become a problem. When selecting a product for your spring fertility application we must look for one that addresses as many of these deficiencies that may be present as possible. We often reference Liebig's Law of the minimum and that if our maximum potential for plant growth is limited by the nutrient that is most deficient. If we have a perfect balance of the required elements in the soil we generally can work with our typical nitrogen applications in order to keep the plant supplied with enough nutrition to promote even top growth.

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Building Up the Nutrient Bank (continued)



Nitrogen being the most commonly applied nutrient to turf grass in its raw form is very difficult to keep in the soil profile for extended periods of time. However, over the years many new technologies have been developed to help combat this problem, such as UMaxx, Methydure, Nutryon-S and Nutryon. Products like this help to provide us with Urea that is in either a stabilized form, slow release form or controlled release form, we commonly refer to these products as EEF's or Enhanced Efficiency Fertilizers. By using a combination of these products with highly mobile nutrients we are also able to build up the bank of nutrition in our soils with Nitrogen in combination with other less mobile elements that we apply to address our deficiencies in the soil.

Spring is a good time to begin to build up our nutrient bank in the soil, the environment during the spring months often provides natural irrigation to help water in granular fertilizer applications before the pumps are fired up. A granular fertilizer application is sometimes the best option during this period of time as the sprayers can cause rutting on typically loose soils.