



Converting golf courses to Kikuyugrass

Stover Seed Company has been selling kikuyugrass seed to the golf course industry for over 10 years now and we've seen many conversions/upgrading to kikuyugrass either using AZ-1 or Whittet varieties. The golf courses range from municipal courses to U.S. Open and PGA Tour venues. The desire to convert or enhance the existing turfstand has been driven by economics, consistency or even playability. While each golf course has gone about using kikuyugrass for it's own reasons, the decision to promote kikuyugrass for use involved many people with varied opinions.

The first courses to use and develop kikuyugrass conditions did so because the grass invaded the property and proliferated throughout. By developing management techniques, these courses were able to create a quality playing surface that had many positive attributes over the other grasses. While it is a warm season grass, it doesn't have the off color look of dormant Bermuda except in the coldest areas. Most of the time it may have a yellowish/green color inland while along the coastal regions, it might retain a green color year round. The proper use of fertilizers, mowing and



other treatments at certain times aids in color retention. It also has the ability for earlier spring greenup and later winter dormancy than Bermuda which gives it some added competitive strength. During the summer months when cool season grasses are under stress or checking out, kikuyu continues to actively grow. These conditions are what we use for timing the conversion to kikuyugrass if desired.

Some notable golf courses like Riviera CC in Pacific Palisades, Santa Ana CC, Newport Beach CC and Hillcrest CC in Los Angeles were a few of the earliest to convert/promote the development of solid kikuyugrass fairways. While they may have had varying amounts of existing coverage, the decision was made to create pure kikuyugrass fairways. Santa Ana CC and Newport Beach CC went so far as to overseed Kikuyu into newly sodded Bermuda before there was kikuyu sod available to the market. The completed conversion made it easier for the course to maintain and provide a high quality product to the golfers.

There have also been cases of the years where courses originally designed and planted to other grass species changed converted them after a few years of opening. Mission Viejo CC went through numerous turfgrass applications before settling on conversion to

kikuyu. Black Gold GC in Fullerton while planted to perennial ryegrass began interseeding and sodding kikuyu a couple years ago and are looking to have complete conversion by next year. This is a far departure from the thinking just a few years ago to eradicate kikuyu because of its competitive nature.

Stover Seed has been at the forefront for many of these conversions and continue to develop techniques that will aid courses wishing to convert/promote kikuyugrass as a replacement for the other turf

species used. Seeding rates, methods of application, timing and desired outcome are discussed not just with the regional sales manager but instead a collective group of other company employees familiar with kikuyugrass to develop the best method possible for successful conversion and best management practices for the proliferation of kikuyugrass on site. The desire is to create the most playable course while reducing many inputs required by the other turf species for growth and survivability.

