

Ultradwarf Bermudagrass Sales Upward Again in 2008

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Conversion of bentgrass greens to ultradwarf bermudagrass varieties will happen across the SE Region again next summer.

Sales of ultradwarf bermudagrass plant material for golf course putting greens continued to escalate during 2008 according to the producers and initial signs indicate similar sales for the 2009 season. Conversion of older bermudagrass varieties and bentgrass greens to the ultradwarf bermudagrasses that include Champion, TifEagle, and Miniverde was robust last summer again in the SE Region. Approximately 60 golf courses in the SE Region converted last year, just about the same number as the 2007 season.

The no-till change over technique remains popular to the customers. This technique is a speedy process with the turnaround time at 8 to 10 weeks in most instances from the planting date to the re-opening day. This time line is a reasonable goal and is achievable with healthy sprigs, proper temperatures, and a sound establishment program.

Due to the economic crisis, numerous golf course renovation projects have been postponed for next season. However, it seems that putting green renovation and conversion work to the no till method will not be adversely impacted. Renovation costs of \$50,000 to \$60,000 remain a bargain at courses with average size greens for no till putting green conversion. Renovation costs should remain fairly stable next season with the economic slowdown and fuel prices now easing somewhat.

Next summer seems may be a good time to convert if play/revenue does slow down with the recessionary economy predicted. It is an opportunity to improve one's competitive advantage once the economy turns around.

The geographical range of the plantings of the ultradwarfs also continues to expand north. More golf courses in Raleigh, Greensboro, and High Point, NC are considering the ultradwarfs and there is no reason they won't work in this climate provided covers are used at the proper times during the winter season.

With the favorable performance of the ultradwarfs over the past 10 years in the SE Region, it appears the conversion business will flourish over the next 10 years as more courses make this shift to these popular putting green varieties.

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