Turf Operations that Assist during COVID-19 Downturn

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The goal of this interim management strategy is to minimize maintenance without causing long-term damage to golf course. With that in mind, consider the following:

***For permanent cool-season golf courses (not overseeded)***

* Cool-season grasses in during April and May exhibit maximum growth with respect to both foliar and root growth. It is important to protect root growth in spring. However foliar growth can be successfully reduced without affecting root growth with the appropriate plant growth regulator such as paclobutrazol, trinexapac, or Anuew. These PGRs can effectively reduce foliar growth by 50% generally 10 -14 days after application. Remember that the “rebound” effect will take place usually around 30 days so make sure a repeat application is used at the appropriate interval for your particular product.

***For bermudagrass overseeded with perennial ryegrass (not permanent cool-season)***

* Use a plant growth regulator at the full maximum labeled rate and repeat the application at 30 days to prevent the rebound effect (as noted above).
* Consider removing the overseeded cool-season grass earlier than normal to reduce spring maintenance. Many products can be used such as several of the sulfonylurea (SU) herbicides as well as pronamide (Kerb) and even older products like metribuzin. However, the speed at which they remove ryegrass varies with metribuzin being the fastest, followed by SUs and Kerb being the slowest. Also, if the decision is made to transition in early to mid-April, a repeat application will probably be needed. Also keep in mind that bermudagrass is not going to grow very well in April. From a maintenance standpoint, this is desirable but where overseeded, bermudagrass may be thin.

***For bermudagrass not overseeded***

* Refrain from using PGRs on bermudagrass and other warm-season grasses that are not actively growing. Typically bermudagrass should not be sprayed with the appropriate PGR until it is close to its full summer growth phase. This does not normally occur until early June (perhaps a bit earlier on putting greens).
* Refrain from over-fertilizing warm-season grasses during the green-up phase. Use a moderate rate of fertilizer and refrain from other maintenance practices that promote rapid growth. This is includes moderate irrigation, etc.
* Where possible, increase mowing heights to reduce growth rates. This will also reduce turfgrass stress and increase competitiveness against pests.

***Other cultural practices***

* Stick with the fundamentals and stay away from the fine details. For instance, aerification should proceed as this is a fundamental practice that will offer rewards once the courses open back up. Fine details such as edging can be postponed.