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Jason's Productivity Files

THURSDAY, 20 JUNE 2013

Looking Back and Forward

About 1.5 years ago the golf course industry in British Columbia was facing a real threat of an outright cosmetic pesticide ban. At this time I wrote a [post](#) about how I thought we should focus our efforts not just on fighting the ban but also on alternative pest control strategies just in case the ban became a reality. Ever since writing that post my blog has taken on a different purpose. It once started as a way to communicate with my members but changed into a tool for me to share my experiences as I try to reduce my reliance on pesticides on the golf course.

I would be lying if I said the past 2 years had been easy. It has been a journey filled with highs and lows. Highs such as seeing the [possible effects that rolling has on fusarium patch](#) and going [360 days without a synthetic pesticide application on my 8th green](#) have overshadowed the lows of losing grass and being ridiculed by my peers for being different and maybe a bit crazy. I have experienced great success and also great failure but in the end I have started to accomplish what I originally set out to do in September of 2011. Just to be clear I didn't set out to find a way to eliminate the use of pesticides, I just wanted to find a different way of doing things that reduce the need to use these products in case of a pesticide ban. I was sick of all the pesticide haters saying we should ban these products without offering real alternatives. I set out to find an alternative way.



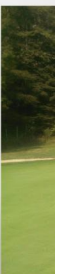
yep, that didn't work....

I'll admit, a lot of what I have written about has been a bit or a lot haywire. When I first started out I had

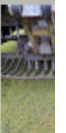
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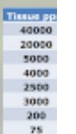
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no clue where I was going. All I knew is that I wanted to make a real effort to reduce my reliance on synthetic pesticides (a term that I hate by the way. It would be nice if we could come up with a unified term for the "safer" pesticide products that have recently been released). I was trying anything I could from **simply not applying pesticides** and seeing what happened to **extreme cultural practices** (rolling 2x daily for a month straight). Hey! I wonder if this works?



yep, that also didn't work. hmmm...

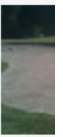
I found it pretty interesting to see what I was concerned with when I originally wrote the **post** 2 years ago. My main issue was getting turf in my location to survive the winter without traditional synthetic pesticides. I was also concerned with managing for a certain level of turf death, something that I now think isn't necessary (in my climate anyway).

My primary pesticide reduction strategy was withholding pesticides and powering the turf through the damage. This worked to a certain level as I had managed to cut my pesticide use in half using these methods but it didn't work from late fall, through the winter, and into early spring when the turf growth rates in my climate were very slow. It actually seemed that the more I tried to push growth during these periods, the worse the disease would be.



Sometimes it works!

In that post I talked about the importance of sharing what I was doing in order to learn and move forward. This has easily been the most important factor in any of the success I have had this past year. Through sharing I have been able to learn a great deal from a lot of very generous and smart people. Through these people I was able to learn about alternative pest control products (phosphites, civitas), growth potential fertility, and many other tricks and technologies (water management) that allowed me to make progress with my traditional pesticide reduction plans. If I had kept quiet I would still be blasting my



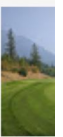
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greens with nitrogen to outpace the fusarium damage.



Success!

I cannot express my appreciation to these people enough! They saw through my craziness and gave meaningful input. They saw my passion and wanted me to succeed. For this I cannot thank them enough. The past few years have been incredibly exciting for me.

Because of what I had learned I was able to somewhat answer my original questions in that post. Yes, we can get turf to survive the winter in my climate without the need for traditional pesticides in most cases. We can expect that the quality of these putting surfaces will not significantly drop and will remain competitive with surfaces that need traditional pesticide applications to survive. We can possibly do this with the long hated *Poa annua* with tools that we possess today. Of course none of what I am doing will work in every location but for me, it works.

Looking forward I know I still have a long way to go and that makes me happy. What I have learned might not be repeatable in other locations or even my location. Many challenges still await and I plan to keep on sharing them with you as I continue to learn. I know there is no cure-all solution out there but my hope is that you can take from what I share and maybe use it in a meaningful way.

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What's going on here? It appears that something is killing the moss? Crazy? Totally!

Posted by [Jason Haines](#)



Labels: [Pesticide Ban](#), [Pesticides](#), [Sustainability](#), [Turf disease](#)

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