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# TURF HACKER

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SATURDAY, 25 AUGUST 2018

## Lets try this organic thing again

When I told a local superintendent my intentions to try Civitas on my greens again he threatened to kick me in the nuts. Here's why and please note that this post does not contain any paid promotions although I am probably broke enough now to finally start selling out.

Hey, I also started a vlog, [check it out here](#).



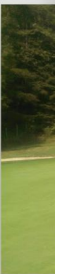
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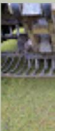
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Back in 2012 I started using Civitas on my greens. It worked amazing. Back then only my 8th green was dominated by bentgrass and I went an entire year without any traditional pesticides on that green. Just mineral oil.

The only problem was that on a few of my shadier greens they turned to dirt and for the first time in my career I was forced to deal with winter kill.



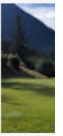
Winter Kill of 2012 caused by a number of factors that mineral oil certainly didn't help. Shade much?

It turns out that when you apply oil to your greens every few weeks while the turf isn't growing and combine that with almost daily rolling of the greens that you will get dead grass.

Lesson learned?

Nope.

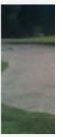
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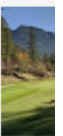
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via GIPHY

The following year I decided to try it again. I wrote about that [here](#). Long story short, I couldn't see the true colour of the turf due to the pigment and was shocked to see the yellow grass after mowing the grass for the first time in a few weeks. I panicked, invited the local supers to come see only to have them call me an asshole for inviting them to see my perfectly healthy "dying" greens. They wanted to see carnage and all they got was good grass. I was just tricked into thinking they had suddenly taken a turn for the worse because I was used to seeing them nice and green from the pigment and not their true yellow winter colour.

I had a few jugs left over and I used them up without much thought in 2014 and since then I haven't used the product because I couldn't find a benefit for its use.

During the time period from 2012-now my maintenance practices took a radical shift as this blog will clearly show if you go back to some older posts. All of the changes I made were to have healthier, lower maintenance grass that required the least amount of inputs to sustain quality playing surfaces (on greens at least). For the most part I was successful. In the past few years I have never used less pesticide as I learn how to best manage the diseases my course typically suffers from, dollar spot and fusarium patch.

With the exception of 2 of my greens, I have only applied 2 applications of a traditional pesticide this year. This is the best I have ever managed my greens. Of course some of it can be attributed to luck but for someone to find success who tries as hard as I do it makes you wonder if I'm actually on the right track.

I still have issues every now and then and need some outside help from pesticides to keep damage to a

minimum.



Despite managing disease pretty good without pesticides, I still need some help

So why go back to Civitas?

There are a number of reasons why I have decided to try this product again and I doubt that the local superintendent will have to knock any sense into me this time.

It works. When I saw that I could go all year without traditional pesticides on my only bentgrass green it was amazing especially considering how bass ackwards my disease management strategy was back then. Now all my greens are mostly bentgrass so this gives me hope that maybe we can go all-in. I use almost no traditional pesticides anymore and only need a slight advantage to be successful. I have optimized the maintenance of our greens for disease management and think I might find success with what Civitas can offer.

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Last year the impact of nitrogen was very apparent on my green collars. By treating collars with more nitrogen this year they are clean.

It's OMRI certified. I know what you're thinking and believe me, I'm thinking it too. I've even wrote **about how dumb organic is**. So why try to go the organic route?

Public perception is why. Maybe I'm wrong but I believe that there is a distinct advantage to be able to claim that all pest control is organic on a golf course. We all know that this isn't likely the case but as far as perception is concerned, organic is better than not organic and there's nothing you or I can do to change that. We see this all the time and it's a big deal. Take nuclear power. It's clean, emits no carbon, and no one wants it. Same goes for pesticides. They work, are miracles of modern science, but still, consumers don't want them.

So as far as my customers are concerned, Organic > not organic as long as I have quality playing surfaces and I think I can do that.

I have the tools to better assess plant health. Now that I measure the clipping yield on individual greens, I can see if certain greens are growing as expected. This "extra set of eyes" will help me even though I

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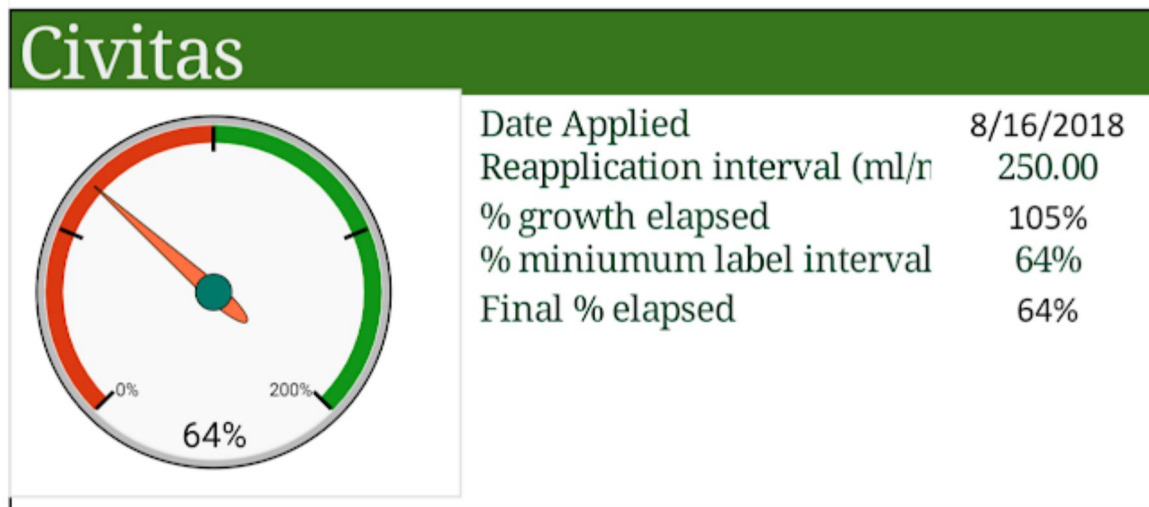
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can't see the actual colour of the grass due to the horrid pigment colour that Civitas has. Seriously, it's a gross shade of green and I'm not a fan.

I also think that I can better manage the issues I had with traffic combined with Civitas during the winter. I have 2 possible solutions that will help reduce the potential for winter damage.

Apply it either on a GDD calendar or based off of clipping yield.

In the summer we average about 200GDD per week. The label suggests an application interval of about 14-30 days therefore if I use 400GDD as the target application interval that will give me about 14 days between applications in the summer months. In the winter that leaves me with an application interval of 3-10 weeks which is more reasonable for times of little to no growth. Overall this would require about 10 applications per year. I found success at the 0.250ml/100m<sup>2</sup> every 14 day application interval last time so this would require about 2.5L of product per 100m<sup>2</sup> per year which is well under the 7L maximum stated on the label.



The oil-o-meter on my HUD based off clipping yield

If I applied it based on clipping yield I could also increase intervals through the winter. If I applied it after every 250ml/m<sup>2</sup> of grass harvested that would also leave me requiring about 10 applications per year.

I think the GDD method is more useful during the summer but basing applications on clippings in the winter might be safer because even with low daily GDD in the winter, there is virtually no growth and I wouldn't want to start applying oil on top of oil. Either way, I will be comparing the two application strategies this winter to see what works best in practice.

I'm not really one to put so much faith in one product or one specific disease management strategie. It takes a broad spectrum of strategies to be successful so who knows, maybe I'll only use this product during specific stress periods.

I'm cautiously optimistic that maybe now this will all work. I barely need help compared to back in 2012. All I need is a little nudge to get me through a few tough times each year.

Fingers crossed.



Posted by Jason Haines

No comments:



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