

## WINTER TURF COVERS

A. J. Powell, Jr., Extension Turfgrass Specialist

When covered, bermudagrass sport fields and golf tees will generally green up two or three weeks earlier in the spring. The main benefit however is that winter covers minimize the risk of winterkill. The following information relates to the selection and usefulness of all cover types:

- Winter covers are generally used from early December until late March.
- Covers should be permeable to air and water.
- Thicker covers generally give best winter protection but are more difficult to remove (if they retain water).
- Fabric color has not been proven important relative to winter protection. However, if bermuda is overseeded with perennial ryegrass, and the overseeding is intended for spring use, maximum light penetration is important. If not overseeded, dark covers that reduce light penetration are preferable in order to reduce weed germination and establishment, i.e. *Poa annua*, chickweed, henbit, garlic, etc.
- Bermuda under clear covers generally green up earlier in the spring. Therefore, the clear covers may need to be removed two to three weeks earlier.
- Because of potential damage from strong winds, all synthetic covers must be secured with metal pins, wooden stakes, plywood strips with nails, or with 4" x 4" square plywood pieces with a large nail in the center.
- Do not expect winter covers to improve spring recovery in heavy traffic areas that are totally destroyed during fall play. Almost all spring recovery comes from bermuda stolons located at, or above, the soil surface. These stolons are frequently destroyed during the fall when fields are played upon when very wet.
- If you must skimp with covers, consider omitting them from field corners and end zones. Bermuda under low traffic and high mowing height seldom, if ever, winter kills.
- If bermuda is overseeded with ryegrass and mild weather use is intended, or mowing becomes necessary, you can employ the 'Put and Take' method, i.e., remove the synthetic cover during mild winter periods, then reapply the cover when temperature is expected to drop below about 20° to 22° F. Overseeding bermuda with ryegrass does not protect bermuda from winterkill.
- For conventional seedbeds, covers that allow light penetration can also be used for germinating cool season grasses in spring or fall.

Listed below is information on several types of covers. This is not a complete listing and only gives general specifications and approximate prices.

**1. TYPAR** - Spunbonded Polypropylene, 5-year warranty

White - allows light penetration

#3201N - 1.9 oz/sq yd

Available sizes: 188' x 300', 45' x 100', 60' x 100, 75' x 100', 90' x 100'

Custom fit available

Black - allows little light penetration

#3301B - 3.0 oz/sq yd

Available sizes: 151' x 300' and custom fit

Minimum size and advertised price:

#3201N - 188' x 300'=4700 sq ft=522 sq yd=\$0.51/ sq yd=\$2468/Acre

#3301B - 151' x 300'=3700 sq ft=419 sq yd=\$0.68/ sq yd=\$3291/Acre

**2. SUR-LINE TURF** - Polypropylene, continuous filament, needle punched, non-woven geotextile.

Gray - allows light penetration

#SL-420 - 3.6 oz/sq yd

#SL-500 - 4.2 oz/sq yd

Minimum size and advertised price:

#SL-420 - 15' x 360'=5400 sq ft=600 sq yd=\$0.65/sq yd=\$3146/Acre\*

#SL-500 - 15' x 360'=5400 sq ft=600 sq yd=\$0.70/sq yd=\$3388/Acre

\*Additional charge for freight and sewing larger custom size.

Black - allows minimum light penetration

#SL-15 - Price approximately same as above

Expected life - 6-8 years if stored properly.

Contact: Skip Lambert/Brenda Campbell - 1-800-362-1976

**3. COVERMASTER - EVERGREEN COVER** - Woven ribbons of clear fabric with reinforcing polyethylene tapes and UB stabilized polyethylene coating. Does not retain water when removing.

2.4 oz/sq yd

Size: Custom sized in multiples of 12' (length and/or width)

Price: \$1.17 per sq yd, or \$5663 per acre.

Warranty: 7 year on UV protection

Contact: Larry Moreland - 1-800-387-5808

**4. WHEAT STRAW** - Locally purchased straw (wheat or other small grain straw). A bright color and little or no residual small grain seed in seedhead indicates high quality.

- Need approximately 300 bales per acre to give 4 - 6 inches of fluffed straw cover. Straw can be fluffed and scattered by hand on small areas, but a straw blower is necessary for large areas. Straw must be anchored with netting or twine and held in place with metal pins or wooden stakes.

- In some spring seasons, straw stays very wet and must be removed by hand. If it dries sufficiently and the soil below does not track with heavy equipment, straw can be easily removed with typical hay rake and baler. If dry when baled and if

properly stored, a portion of the straw can be used the following year. Also, if allowed by local fire code, dry straw can be easily removed by burning.

- Straw cost is approximately \$3.00 per bale or \$0.19/sq yd of covered turf, or \$920 per Acre.