Why Use Fertigation?

Accelerated Grow-In

To demonstrate this benefit, I believe that a picture (or two) is worth a thousand words. The pictures above were taken of a new golf course that had just been grassed. Both pictures were taken while standing in the same spot. The layout of the golf course required that there were two different irrigation systems. One was for the upper holes, and one for the lower holes. Due to construction delays, and lack of electricity at one site, we were only able to install the fertigation system on one of the irrigation systems. Both of these holes were sprigged with Sea Isle 2000 paspallum at approximately the same time. The picture on the left had no fertigation, and the picture on the right did. You can clearly see the difference. The hole on the left is only 50%-60% covered, and is still very much in a grow-in mode, while the hole on the right looks like it is almost ready for golfers.

Labor / Water Savings

Fertigation cannot be used in all instances to fertilize all things, but as a baseline nutrient package, it saves a considerable amount of labor, freeing maintenance people up to do other things. It also doesn't interrupt usage of the facility as granular applications often do. Additionally, because it doesn't need to be watered in, it saves unnecessary watering caused by granular applications.

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Better Performance vs. Cost

With fertigation, you can give your plants a steady dose of fertilizer continually every time you water. This enables you to get the type of smooth, even results that would normally only be achieved using expensive time-release fertilizers. The great thing is that you can get these results using inexpensive readily available liquids. Here's a comparison.

Cost to apply 1 pound of Nitrogen to 100 acres of turf using a coated time release fertilizer vs. Urea-Ammonium-Nitrate 32%.

Total N Needed = 1(pound) x 100(acres) x 43.56(1000/acre) = 4356.00
Using Methylene Urea (Dry) 39-0-0 it would take 4536 / .39 = 11,630 LBS
11,630 / 2000 = 5.81 tons @ approx. $1200 per ton. = 5.81 x 1200 = **$6978.00***

Using UAN-32 = 4536 / 10.6lbs/gallon / .32 (% N) = 1337.26 Gallons Liquid
1337.26 Gallons @ $1.50 per gallon = **$2005.89***

In many cases, a fertigation system can be paid for in just a couple of applications.

- Both methods offer slow release nitrogen over time.
- Fertigation saves the labor to put out the application.
- Fertigation allows rates to be adjusted as you go.
- Fertigation is 1/3rd the price.

(pricing was obtained from a large vendor in Phoenix, AZ in June of 2004)

Smoother Fertility Profile

Due to its cost, most people don't actually use the new time-release fertilizers. As a result, they get a roller coaster effect from their granular applications. Immediately after fertilization, they get a growth spurt, and mowing frequency must go up to compensate for the added growth. Then, a little later, the turf looks good, and mowing is manageable. Then, later still, the nutrient levels drop off, and the color looks bad. A little while later, a new application is put out, and the cycle starts again. A spoon feeding approach to fertigation eliminates these problems.

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