

by: Anne Morris as seen in the Superintendent Magazine July 2008

Summertime can be brutal for golf courses. The chance of diseases such as dollar spot and brown patch showing up on your course rises along with the temperature. It's often difficult to find natural solutions backed by solid research results.

One answer that's been around for awhile is compost tea. It's not a quick fix, but part of a natural, organic approach to improving turf health. Compost tea is made by steeping compost in water.

The Presidio Golf Course in San Francisco (www.presidio.gov/experiences/golf.htm) has been using compost tea for years now, with success. The course's environmental policies have been praised by the Golf Course Superintendents Association and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Christa Conforti, integrated pest management (IPM) coordinator for the federal organization that manages the land, said that while they have not run any tests since they first conducted a field trial seven years ago, the compost tea does help discourage disease. That initial field trial showed that turf treated with compost tea had longer root length and less disease than the untreated turf.

"We've had three different superintendents," she said, "and each one has been surprised by how well the compost tea works. They were skeptical at first, but then they see that they don't have to spray as much, and the compost tea is definitely worth their time."

The Presidio has been using 1 gallon per thousand square feet weekly on its greens. "It's a good setup - we make it