

Three supers earn their GT stripes

Scotts spoke to three golf course superintendents who are using the newly released Scotts fertiliser for fine turf branded Sierraform GT. While their courses are different, the three men agree on one thing: Sierraform GT has given their greens the strength they needed with slow release potassium.

Scotts is occupied constantly with the improvement of our products. This devotion to developing the latest technology means turf managers and our distributor partners benefit greatly from the most up-to-date insights in the field of turf nutrition.

There is no better example of this dedication than in the new Sierraform GT range of slow release fertilisers. It took eight years of research to create the new chemistry that gives this formula its power.

Sierraform GT is an upgraded version of the familiar Sierraform with one major improvement. GT now features a unique, dual slow release of nitrogen and potassium.

Sierraform GT minimises leaching

It is only recently that chemistry developments have enabled production of a slow release potassium in a plant-available form, ensuring a bank of available potassium in the soil profile for an extended time. Thus for turf professionals in the past, the application of K presented problems of leaching and raised salinity in its present form K_2SO_4 , particularly in low CEC profiles.

Sierraform GT has solved that problem.

After applying Sierraform GT to the green, a sufficient quantity of nitrogen and potassium is released immediately for up front use by the plant. Following the initial release, additional potassium is released as the grass needs it and the grass can draw on a bank of K that, in the form of potassium sulphate, would otherwise be leached.

Weeks after treatment, higher potassium can be found in the leaf tissue of turf treated with Scotts slow release K compared to potassium sulphate.



With Sierraform GT, you can choose various different analyses all with a longevity of around eight weeks – depending on environmental conditions – and feel confident that you are maintaining your turf at the optimum level.

Judging by the reaction from turf professionals, Sierraform GT is a winner.

Kane is very able with GT

“We’re finding we don’t need to use as much Sierraform GT and it looks like we’re getting more life out of the fertiliser,” says Kane McDonald, Course Superintendent for the Devonport Golf Club in Tasmania.

“We get frosts here so it helps to have a stronger grass, and the slow release of potassium gives the turf that resilience.”

Kane’s course maintenance program includes a twice yearly renovation of the greens. Comprising bent grass with winter grass on a sandy loam base, the greens are cored in autumn and given a Vertidrain treatment in spring.

“We’d always used a slow release granule instead of a liquid fertiliser because we get better longevity,” says Kane. “But we were looking for a slow K mix. Then Doug Ollington from TAS Turf suggested we give this Sierraform GT a trial.”

“With the latest renovation, the greens were pretty compacted and looking a bit dry beforehand. But we got nice, strong growth with GT and were seeing results in a week.

“The members gave us some good comments about how well the greens recovered.”

High performance for Smith despite heat and humidity

For Peter Smith, Tewartin Noosa Golf Club Course Manager/Superintendent, the continuous supply of K from Sierraform GT was just what he wanted. "Our course is heavily utilised. We need to have turf that can handle the high rounds of golf. A regular course of potassium gives the greens their strength."

Peter uses GT as the base of his total maintenance program. His greens consist of 328 couch grass on a sandy profile. Given Noosa's summer climate of high temperatures, high humidity and high rainfall, the fine turf is under pressure to keep performing as a putting surface.

"Sierraform GT was chosen for its slow release potassium over an extended period and the fact that it stayed in the soil. We were after consistency and maybe to go longer between fertilising. We've been using the Anti-Stress GT and the greens are sustaining a good colour."

Peter also commented that besides the slow K release pattern, the uniform prill size of GT was another big advantage as it gave a uniform spread of nutrients across the turf.

"Of course, we do use other products on the greens but GT is definitely contributing to the good result. If we talk longevity of product, good results, a homogenous product that releases evenly across the area at a smart percentage of release, then GT has the goods."

"Having said that, everything's price sensitive and GT is up there in the top end. We always look at the economics and we'll review how it's gone at the end of the program. In the meantime, members are happy with the overall condition of the course. And so am I."

Peter Smith works closely with Scotts distributor Jason Pollard at M&K in Queensland, who put him onto GT. "He keeps us informed of things, not only with Scotts products but with what's happening around the place," says Peter.

Potassium is a personal trainer for turf

Greens fertilised with Sierraform GT are more resilient under stress conditions such as frost, heat, drought and intensive wear. That's the potassium doing its stuff, giving grass more strength. Potassium's role in drought tolerance is like that of a personal trainer: it regulates hydration and transpiration.

Leaching has always been a major concern when applying potassium to turf grasses, especially for greens near waterways and ecologically sensitive areas. Using liquid K products exacerbates the problem.

GT has overcome that problem by keeping an available bank of K in the soil profile, safely away from water runoff and mowing. There is virtually no risk of scorching and practically no leaching. This is not only beneficial for the environment, it is also extremely economical. The plant receives a trickle feed of N and K as it needs them.

A royal decree for GT from Steve

Steve Lewis, course superintendent of the Royal Hobart Golf Club, has a special problem to contend with when fertilising.

Running under the Royal Hobart course is a big, natural lake – an aquifer – two to three metres under the surface (leaching of nutrients presents a major problem for polluting the local waterways that the aquifer flows into).

"Royal Hobart is rated the best club in the state," says Steve. "Members have high expectations of high quality greens and fairways so we use good products to get the best results. But we have to be mindful of what sits under the grounds."

"GT gives us the slow release of potassium with little leaching into the aquifer. There are not many products like this on the market so it's perfect for us."

In summer in Tasmania, Steve faces a problem known to many course supers around Australia. Sand under the greens can become hydrophobic – water repellent – so smart fertilising combined with controlled irrigation are vital for retaining nutrients in the soil profile.

"We have greens made of pencecross creeping bent grass mixed with Poa annua on dune sand. Low K is pretty much a standard reading on sandy soils. But GT is equal or better than most of the products I've tried. It keeps K in the soil longer. That's what we want, to have potassium levels up for the high stress conditions of summer."

Steve's advisory comment for other turf professionals was that GT can suffer the same fate of other granular fertilizers when you are general fertilising. "Without the benefit of core holes," says Steve, "the prills need to be worked into the grass quickly."

Three course supers made a decision to trial Sierraform GT on their greens and the great results may leave other course managers green with envy.

9 Advantages of Sierraform GT

- Dual slow release of N + K
- Uniform granules for even spreading
- Chemically uniform NPK + TE in every granule
- Maintains a higher bank of available K in sand/soil profile
- Protects against stress of frost, heat, drought and wear
- Guaranteed even growth and even colour
- Safe to use with no risk of scorching and virtually no leaching
- Disease activity is reduced
- Slow release mechanism not affected by mowing or aeration