

USGA UPDATE

# The Rain Continues

## Fall Cultivation Practices Critical

By John Foy

On Aug. 14, a tropical depression moved across Florida and dumped another 1-3 inches of rain on a good portion of the state. After reaching the Gulf of Mexico this depression gained strength and became the fifth tropical storm of the season. We are approaching the peak of the Atlantic hurricane season, and while no major storms have threatened, frequent and at times heavy rains have occurred throughout the

eration rotation should be performed on greens, tees, and through the fairway and primary rough areas so that adequate time is available for a full recovery. While active bermudagrass growth is occurring, recovery from aggressive cultural management practices can be slow because of the additional environmental stresses that prevail. It is suggested that coring



times no larger than 0.5 inch be used on greens. The importance of these late-summer and fall practices cannot be over emphasized for preparing for and surviving the winter play season. This is true regardless of whether winter overseeding is conducted.

*Editor's Note: Tropical Storm Henri inundated the southwest Florida coast with nearly 7 inches of rain in some areas in early September.*

ronments and have been increasing in numbers on golf courses throughout Florida. Frequent rainfall makes it difficult for herbicides to be applied as they often require a rain-free period of several hours following treatment. Herbicide application following heavy rainfall also is difficult due to tire rutting caused by chemical sprayers. With all of these factors, forecasting the weather and scheduling herbicide treatments becomes difficult.

Routine rainfall brings with it extended cloudy weather and the need to increase mowing heights on putting surfaces. Bermudagrass requires at least eight hours of sunlight each day and closely mowed surfaces such as putting greens are especially stressed due to less leaf area (chlorophyll) to intercept the sunlight. Increasing mowing height improves photosynthesis. Studies at the University of Florida have shown that increasing mowing height by only 1/32-inch increased photosynthesis by 17 percent on bermudagrass putting greens. This may slightly decrease putting speeds, but other cultural practices like double cutting and rolling can be implemented to



Summer rains have closed courses, delayed projects and grow-ins, and hampered normal maintenance routines and preparations for fall overseeding. Photo by Joel Jackson.

state. Many areas are 10-12 inches ahead of normal year-to-date rainfall.

As Todd Lowe notes in his regional update below, the rains have been quite favorable for the proliferation of weeds, and also have complicated post-emergent herbicide treatments. The frequent cloud cover and resulting reduced sunlight is impacting bermudagrass growth. After just a few days of no sun, bermudagrass begins to take on a chlorotic appearance and density declines. With a decline in density, algae invasion can quickly follow. I have not yet visited any courses that are having major problems nor have I received any "S-O-S" calls. However, it is summer, and providing peak winter-season conditioning during this time is not a realistic expectation. The late summer and early fall is often a difficult period for Florida golf courses because of the adverse weather during the hurricane season.

Along with just trying to survive and complete renovation projects, it is time again to begin preparing for the winter. After Labor Day, a final core

## Weeds Abound During Wet Summers Months

By Todd Lowe

Much of Florida has been experiencing periods of scattered, and at times heavy, rainfall since early June. This annual cycle brings with it challenges in maintaining quality turf, and among the most prevalent is the increase in weeds. The warm, humid Florida climate supports the growth of a variety of plants, and it is no wonder that Florida golf course superintendents spend nearly three times as much on herbicides as do superintendents elsewhere in the United States. According to a survey of Florida golf course superintendents, weeds are the second most-reported management problem after insects.

An increase in weeds has been observed on many recent visits, and routine rainfall has been a major contributing factor. Sedges thrive in moist envi-

improve playability. Remember, a long-term benefit of raising mowing heights at this time outweighs the short-term inconvenience and it will not be long before the weather will allow more aggressive practices.

Keeping up with bermudagrass growth on



fairways is difficult during periods of extended rainfall. Falling behind on daily mowing leads to increased clippings (baling hay once mowing resumes) and increased scalping of the turf. A common tool that many golf courses incorporate is the application of plant growth regulators (PGRs) to decrease vertical growth and clipping yield.

In addition to decreasing clipping yield, PGRs improve turfgrass quality by increasing shoot density.