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Ecology, pathogenicity and management of Bipolaris and Curvularia fungal species associated with decline of ultradwarf bermudagrasses in Florida.

Ultradwarf Decline

By Dr. Lawrence E. Datnoff, Dr. Carol Stiles, Dr. John Cisar and Matthew O. Brecht, Ph.D. Candidate, Principal Investigators

Rationale/description of problem:

In the Southeast, an increasing number of putting greens consist of the new ultradwarf bermudagrass (Cynodon dactylon X C. transvaalensis) cultivars, including Champion, Floradwarf, and TifEagle. These grasses rival traditional creeping bentgrass (Agrostis palustris) greens in part because of their higher shoot densities, faster ball roll and tolerance to lower mowing heights (Hanna, 1998). Recently in the Gulf Coast region (Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi), more than 70 golf courses in 2000 and 130 golf courses in 2001 reported significant disease problems in their ultradwarf bermudagrass putting greens (Unruh and Davis, 2001). Diagnostic labs, which received turfgrass from the diseased greens, attributed the damage to spring dead spot (Ophiosthaphella spp.) and Curvularia blight (Curvularia spp.). Damage in some of the samples was attributed to Bipolaris species. Curvularia blight was the most prevalent reported disease from late spring to late fall.

The fungus was isolated off of the major-}

from zoysia with blight symptoms, was pathogenic at 30° C in zoysia, bentgrass, and bermudagrass. Turfgrass canopies in Florida consistently reach these temperatures used for the previous pathogenicity studies from late spring through the fall.

While Bipolaris species are more often attributed to causing a disease in turfgrass (Couch 1995), little information is available about the role these fungi play in affecting ultradwarf bermudagrasses (Pratt, 2001). In fact, very little is known about the pathogenicity, etiology, and ecology of Bipolaris and Curvularia species and no disease research has been conducted on the ultradwarf bermudagrasses.

Basic information on the biology and ability to cause disease by Bipolaris and Curvularia species in the ultradwarf cultivars is critical for developing accurate and rapid diagnostic procedures and for creating optimum, long-term integrated disease-management strategies that the superintendents can use to please their membership.

Benefits of research to golf course superintendents:

This research will determine whether or not Bipolaris and Curvularia species are directly responsible for the disease problems in putting greens comprised of ultradwarf bermudagrasses in Florida. By understanding which fungi are pathogenic, diagnostic procedures can be developed to more accurately identify the true cause of disease, and allow superintendents to correctly manage the situation. Integrated disease management strategies that included cultural (such as mowing heights) and chemical approaches can then be developed for superintendents, giving them more options for prevention and control of the disease problem.

Objective 1: Determine the influence of mowing heights and fungicides on the decline of ultradwarf bermudagrass.

(Editor’s note: The report on objective one can be found in the March/April 2005 Issue of the Florida Turf Digest. Dr. Datnoff was gracious enough to let us publish his update report on the other two objectives of the overall project as a timely follow up.)
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Objective 2: Determine the occurrence of Bipolaris and Curvularia on ultradwarf bermudagrass greens in Florida golf courses.

A statewide systematic study was undertaken to determine the true extent of Bipolaris and Curvularia and other fungi associated with disease problems on golf courses with ultradwarf bermudagrass greens (TifEagle, Champion and Floradwarf) in Florida. Every other month samples were collected from eight golf course greens located in four geographical regions of Florida, USA (northeast, northwest, central, southeast), with each region having a Floradwarf and TifEagle cultivar. This research actually began in 2003 and is ongoing in 2004. The data shown herein are from 2003 and a portion of 2004.

Twenty different species of fungi and one actinomycete were recovered from the two ultradwarf cultivars, including Alternaria sp., Acremonium sp., Bipolaris cynodontis, Bipolaris hawaiiensis, Codinaea sp., Choanephora sp., Curvularia lunata, Curvularia geniculatus, Cylindrocarpon sp., Epicoccum sp., Fusarium spp., Gaeumannomyces graminis var. graminis, Hansfordia sp., Leptosphaerulina trifolii, Myrothecium leucotrichum, Pestalotia sp., Penicillium sp., Pythium sp., Robillarda phragmitis, Ramicloridium subulatum, Rhizoctonia zeae and a Streptomyces species. The incidence of Fusarium sp., Curvularia lunata, Hansfordia sp., Bipolaris cynodontis, Alternaria sp., Acremonium sp., and Ramicloridium subulatum was significantly different depending on the season (P<0.05) (Figure 3.). Fusarium and Alternaria species were recovered significantly (P<0.05) more often on leaves during the winter and spring months than on other plant parts and times of the year (data not shown). Acremonium sp. were recovered significantly (P<0.05) more often on leaves during the spring than on other plant parts and times of the year (data not shown).

The incidence of Bipolaris cynodontis, Codinaea sp., Curvularia lunata, Curvularia geniculatus, Epicoccum sp., Fusarium sp., Gaeumannomyces graminis var. graminis, Hansfordia sp., and Robillarda phragmitis was influenced significantly by the location of the turfgrass in the state of Florida (P<0.05) (Figure 4).

Objective 3: Ascertain which isolates of Bipolaris and Curvularia obtained from the statewide survey are pathogenic and determine disease development.

Isolates of Bipolaris and Curvularia species obtained from the statewide survey will be used to test their ability to cause both foliar and root disease in Champion, Floradwarf, and Tifeagle. These tests are currently under way.

Literature Cited:
Beeman's Nursery

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A St. Patrick’s Day Adventure

Nobody Does Green Better Than Superintendents

By Bill Davidson

An annual adventure in March is for my family to go to the Naples St. Patrick's Day parade. Last year, after seeing the local Republican Club march by, the local boating store promoting its business with a shiny new boat being towed down the parade route, and my good friend’s Mommy Club pass by; I thought there is nobody that is greener than golf course superintendents and we should be out there promoting ourselves as well. After a few minutes on our local government’s Web site, I found all of the contact information I needed. Signing up for the parade was simply a phone call and a small entry fee of $100.

My original thought was to get some fairway mowers and triplexes to ride down the parade route, but logistics made that too difficult so we used carts and trucksters. In promoting what we do, I wanted to come up with something that brought the recognition of our hard work right to the community’s door step and to let people know who we are. To accomplish this, I had two 4x4-foot signs made — one said, “If you like playing your golf course, thank your Superintendent” and the other had the Everglades chapter’s name & logo and attached them to our ride.

A quick stop at a local party supply shop for decorations and we had bona fide mobile floats. Some phone calls to friends and I had a small group organized in no time. I wanted this to be a family event for the kids as well (who else is better to promote you than your kids?) and when they found out there were golf carts and candy involved (It’s a tradition at the Naples parade to throw candy to the crowd as you pass) it was an easy sell.

The reception we got from the crowd was fantastic! I think most were even surprised to see us. If you think about it, a large percentage of the people who are here this time of year play golf or have something to do with a golfing community. One thing most people don’t do well is to promote themselves. This was a great, inexpensive opportunity to promote our profession, our association and the game of golf. It cost less than $800 for signs and supplies. Plus, we had a great time with our kids doing it!

Let’s face it: On St. Patrick’s Day nobody does green better than superintendents.
Native areas on golf course require less water and other maintenance inputs. They also provide food and cover for wildlife and visual contrast to the turf.

Congratulations to the winners of Category 3 – Native Areas:

First Place - “Hole No. 2, View from the Tee” by Jim Mandeville, Bear’s Club, North Palm Beach

Second Place - “13th Tee Wildflower Bed” by Scott Hornish, Royal Poinciana Club, Naples

Category 1 – Wildlife on the course: includes any critter on the course that walks, flies, swims, slithers or crawls.

Category 2 – Formal Landscaping: includes annuals and ornamental shrubs and trees planted in formal beds on the course or club entrance.

Category 3 – Native Areas: includes beds of native plants including trees, shrubs and grasses used in naturalized areas to reduce turf inputs and aquatic vegetation plantings used to create habitat and protect water quality.

Category 4 – Scenic Hole: includes any view of a golf hole (panoramic or close up) that demonstrates the scenic beauty of a golf course.

Easy Rules

Color prints or slides. Prefer prints. Only one entry per category. Digital images: Digital image entries must be taken at a resolution setting of 300 dpi or higher and saved as Jpeg or Tif format images. Images taken, saved and sent at lower resolutions will not qualify for the contest. If you’re not sure, send a print instead. Photo must be taken on an FGCSA member’s course. Photo must be taken by an FGCSA member or a member of his staff.

Attach a label on the back of the print or slide which identifies the category, course and photographer. DO NOT WRITE DIRECTLY ON THE BACK OF THE PRINT. Each print shall be attached to an 8.5 x 11-inch sheet of paper using a loop of masking tape on the back of the print. Slides should be in plastic sleeves for easy access for viewing. Digital images must be accompanied by the same information in an email or document, or on a CD.

A caption identifying the category, course and photographer should be typed or printed on the sheet of paper below the mounted print.

Judging will be done by a panel of FGCSA members not participating in the contest.

Mail entries in a bend proof package marked “PHOTOS DO NOT BEND” to Joel Jackson, 6780 Tamarind Circle, Orlando, 32819. Entries postmarked after August 1, 2005 will be automatically entered in the 2006 Photo Contest.
As It Lies

Who is Number One?

By Jim Walker

Being number one in a lot of things in this world is very important: Number-one-ranked player in the world, World Series champs, Super Bowl champs, NBA champs, NCAA champs in football and basketball — all can have life-changing ramifications. The list goes on and on.

There are exceptions, however, to being number one. It is not cool to be the first one to arrive at a party, or the first one to leave. It is not polite to be the first one finished a party, or the first one to leave. It is not something we consider long started or why.

When I arrived five years ago, I discussed the concept of doing away with this goofy situation with my assistant and many of the greyhounds who comprised this group. My idea was to let people reserve these times in a more civilized manner like on the phone or in person. It was not something I considered long because the hangman's noose was quickly thrown over a large limb of an oak tree adjacent to the putting green. Being a perceptive person and having gone further in school than Jethro Bodine, I knew that the rope was for me and the tradition was not to be trifled with.

Having been dealt a hand of lemons, I decided to make lemonsade. Since I failed in my attempt to change tradition, I paid very close attention to the ins and outs, whys and wherefores, and studied the psychological profiles of the greyhounds. Keeping score for these people seems to be measured in how fast they play, not how well they played.

But, let me begin at the beginning of the day, which for these people begins at 4:30 a.m. That's correct. I know because I am at the course before 4:30 a.m. each day because we host 70,000 rounds a year, and every piece of equipment with wheels on it also is equipped with lights. Mowing greens, tees, fairways, roughs, slopes, and even spraying projects are done “under the lights.” My crew reports between 4 and 5 a.m. each day, and everybody hits the ground running.

If we don't stay ahead of the first group, we'll get buried in players and not be able to mow anything.

And there's another phenomenon at Greynolds Park: early bird joggers and cyclists. People run and bike in the dark. They also wear very dark clothes so they are difficult to see and that keeps you on your toes as you enter the park each morning before your first wake-up cup of coffee.

The other day I arrived at 4:10 a.m. and Tin Cup Jr. “aka” Sneaky Pete was already in the parking lot. How the heck he got in is a mystery because I use the back gate, and the security guard doesn't open the front gate until 4:30 a.m. When I inquired, the early bird said he left his car there overnight and entered through one of the pedestrian gates which are never locked.

Half of these people are millionaires who should be members at one of several nice private clubs in the area and could have civilized tee times. We have a former owner of a trash-hauling company in New York, a nice Italian gentleman. In the winter we have the largest importer and exporter of chocolate in Canada, yes, all of Canada. There's a retired hairdresser and owner of several upscale salons in Connecticut, and a retired jockey and thoroughbred trainer from Saratoga, who retired before age 50. I could go on and on, but I think you get the picture.

These people are in the parking lot before the milk is delivered and last call is made at the local watering holes. What in the name of God do they do for the rest of the day? I'm telling you, shouting matches have occurred over who was first, third or sixth on any particular day, since this is all done on the honor system.

Evidently none of the previous managers felt this Greek drama in three acts was worth monitoring. Can you imagine? What do you do at work? Well, I monitor the first ten cars in the parking lot so they don't kill each other. Keeping track of who is number one at Greynolds Park is a dirty job, but somebody has to do it.

In my 30 plus years of running golf courses, this is the most bizarre behavior I have ever seen. Maybe you have some goofy goings-on at your course too. If so, I would like to hear from you. Just remember, all the guys I'm talking about are retired, so they don't have anything else to do each day except go home.

GREEN SIDE UP

Rules of the Game

By Joel Jackson, CGCS

I'm not talking about knowing the USGA Rules of Golf verbatim, like Rule 36 — immovable hazards. Although knowing that rule did allow Tiger Woods to have the gallery move a boulder for him in the Phoenix Open a few years ago. I'm talking about some common-sense rules to avoid obstacles in our career path.

The Human Condition

Tirades, tantrums and terminations are not substitutes for training, coaching, discipline and self control. Treat others as you would have them treat you — including suppliers — and do it with respect.

One rotten apple spoils the whole barrel, and we're all in the barrel.

Always give credit to others: the crew for doing the work, a peer for providing problem-solving information, the green chairman for spearheading the approval for a project, a supplier for
The process.
Howard AccuBlend is our technologically advanced, custom blending system. It's a proprietary, state-of-the-art process through which we develop all our fertilizer mixes.

The difference.
In blending, the most scientifically-accurate, computerized measures are utilized while constant agitation is applied to our made-to-order fertilizer mixes. We've totally taken out the human error factor. AccuBlend ensures that as little as each spoonful of your order contains accurate proportions of each element to create your perfect blend.

The results.
No matter how you cut it, our mix is perfectly blended and promises more consistent, healthy growth. Whether you're spreading AccuBlend fertilizer on the turf or using one of our finely blended mixes on the greens, you can be assured of even and accurate distribution every time. All this means a greener course via greater products.

The reason.
Contact your sales representative today to schedule an appointment. And take advantage of our computerized system. You'll receive an on-the-spot custom assessment, AccuBlend recommendations and product pricing via our cutting edge custom software.

For more information on all our Howard AccuBlend fertilizers, including those featuring Nutralene, call 888-668-5868, or visit howardfertilizer.com.

AccuBlend—a mix so accurate it has no match.
making a special delivery, volunteers for helping with ACSP projects. You will be seen as unselfish and a true manager and facilitator.

Dress for Success
Working superintendents don’t have to wear blue jeans and a Copenhagen cap to a local chapter meeting. A polo shirt, sport coat and Dockers from Sears are perfectly fine attire when visiting another course’s clubhouse as a guest.

The curse of Casual Friday is that it is now Casual Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc. Wearing shorts and boat shoes at work doesn’t mean you can’t grow healthy turfgrass, provide excellent playing conditions or manage a multi-million dollar asset. After all, a fishing guide is trained professional too. It’s OK to jump in the hole and fix the leak if you have to. Just don’t go to the clubhouse looking like a ditch digger or a fishing guide — you are the superintendent.

Communicate or Abdicate
Don’t let the rumor mill do your talking. Tell the truth and tell it often to everyone on the staff from the pro shop, valet parker and waitress in the restaurant. Then tell your boss, committee chairman, the influential golfers and even the “squeaky wheels.” If you don’t spread the facts, someone will offer to fill the void with their opinions.

Example: “With the cloudy, rainy weather the greens are a little thin right now. I’ve raised the height of cut, which is recommended by the USGA Green Section as a first response to thinning. I’ve sent out soil samples to check for nematode levels and soil pathogens. I’m going to solid-tine aerify and lightly topdress and fertilize them also. If they don’t perk up, I’d like to have Bill Smith and Tom Jones, the superintendents at Posh Hills CC and the Platinum Club, come over and take a look and see if I’ve missed something. It would really help if the sun would come out.”

Don’t miss the chance to post announcements in the clubhouse or write an article for the club newsletter. You don’t have to be a novelist. There are boiler plate articles you can copy from GCSAA and others to spread the word about what’s going on in your department and on the course. Just remember to tell who, what, why, when and how and you’ll be fine.

Business Savvy
Run your operation like a business, not a bottomless money pit. Don’t covet the newest bells and whistles without showing the cost and benefit of everything… from purchasing new equipment to using new products. Have a plan in hand, not your hand out every year for more dollars. The devil is in the details. If you were the owner, wouldn’t you want to know where every dime was going? Be creative in finding ways to lower costs, like reducing out-of-play turf areas and multi-tasking employees.

Continuing education
If you aren’t learning something new, you are falling behind. The best scenario is being able to go to conferences, seminars and chapter meetings. Regardless of the formal education, the networking is worth the effort. Being around other superintendents always raised my spirits and my intelligence on growing good turf. After you go to a conference or even a local meeting, write a short report or note to your boss and tell him something you learned that will help you do your job. They might get the idea that it’s good for you to go to these things.

Public Relations
It’s harder for a club to fire a nice, friendly and positive person who is seen often and participates in club functions or at least shows his or her face around the course.

“Good morning Mr. Smith. How are you hitting them? I know you often bring guests out to the course. I just wanted to let you know we will be doing our spring aerification next week.

“Hello Ms. Jones. Did you see the new butterfly garden on No. 6? We just joined the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System and we are working on becoming certified. Would you like to serve on our Resource Committee?

Health and Fitness - You Are What You Eat
Coffee, donuts, soda, burgers and fries or cereal, fruit, juice and salad?
You don’t have to deny yourself treats. Just consider variety and moderation in all things, especially alcohol at your club and local chapter functions. Find a way to exercise. It relieves stress and keeps you around for your family.

Perceptions
It may look like a barn. It may smell like a barn. But in reality, it is the turf management operations center. A broom, a blower and a couple of gallons of paint may be all the tools you need to make your shop look organized and efficient. Sloppy is as sloppy does from clutter to record-keeping.

Mix/load and/or equipment-wash areas that drain directly into ditches, creeks and wetlands look exactly like what they are, pollution generators. Pour some concrete. Recycle the rinsate. It isn’t rocket science. It’s called stewardship and gives the perception that you and your club care about the environment.

Ethics
Resist the temptation to respond to comments or questions about another superintendent’s golf course condition, practices or even problems when asked. You may or may not know all the facts. Usually you don’t and their comments are often uneducated hearsay. Don’t agree to make a visit to that course if they invite you without calling that superintendent first. It looks real bad if the other superintendent gets fired, and you end up some-where involved in that operation.

Don’t get caught in clandestine poaching of your neighbor’s employ-ees. Good equipment managers and technicians are in demand. It’s a free country and everyone has a right to seek the best deal they can get. However, the industry is too small and your reputation is at stake if you don’t give your professional peers at least a heads-up on pending negotiations. He may not like it but at least it wasn’t done on the sly.

Follow these rules and stay in the game. The score you earn here is more than just a number.

It may look like a barn. It may smell like a barn. But in reality, it is the turf management operations center. A broom, a blower and a couple of gallons of paint may be all the tools you need to make your shop look organized and efficient. Sloppy is as sloppy does from clutter to record-keeping.