

Hazy, Hot, & Humid

by David Tennant, Superintendent, Mountainview GC at Lakeview Resort, Morgantown, WV. Reprinted from Greenletter, WVGCSA

Hazy, hot & humid with a chance of afternoon thunderstorms. Sound familiar? It should, it has been the weather forecast for much of the Ohio Valley over the past three weeks. With it comes a cornucopia of turf damaging problems. Water too much—you boil; water too little—you bake. It's a no-win situation for superintendents. Thrown into the puzzle is the Black Turfgrass Ataenius, which can eat you alive and send you straight to the help-wanted ads. And why the help-wanted ads? Because of an under-educated membership. And whose fault is that? Ours, meaning yours and mine, keepers of turf everywhere. How do I know this? See if some of these questions—or should I say "answers"—to turf-related problems haven't popped up around your club:

1. *You better get some water on those dry spots in the fairways or we'll be playing on dirt.* In fact the problem is really white grubs or nematodes.

2. *Why do you always have to water when I'm playing [anywhere from 1-6 p.m.]?* In fact, it's not just they who get wet, it happens every day—a practice we call syringing to cool off wilting turf in the hot afternoon.

3. *Why do you always have to spray on Tuesdays? It stinks! Sorry ladies, but out of all the days of the week, Tuesday is our slowest and that's when we can get the most done for the good of the entire membership.*

4. *I know it's 97 degrees, but couldn't you lower the height on the*

greens, say something below 1/8", for our tournament? Well sir, it's not that it is 97 today that matters, it's that it has been 97, hazy, hot and humid for the past three weeks that counts and if you want grass on your greens, I suggest you make a full shoulder turn when you putt.

5. I have saved the best for last—an overheard conversation: *That superintendent over on that "other course" lives on the edge. One morning a "heavy fog" is going to roll in and hang around until noon and he'll lose it all, it will kill everything.* Hummm. That is an interesting one. I don't know how to answer it except with a question. Has a new study been done, one I'm not aware of, which shows the damage that could be done by a fog hanging around until noon—could it have the capability to kill everything?

We have all heard these things and better ones I'm sure. Question is, how to educate our membership, especially those who really matter, like club managers, presidents and board members? Answer is: good question!

I suppose we could start by making sure these people read some of the same publications we read to keep abreast of the latest technology. But you

have to be careful here, what they read may work well at one club and not at yours and you may have to do some fast explaining as to why.

Another way might be to hold an "ask-the-superintendent night" at your club. A lot of misconceptions could be cleared up during this informal setting and a couple hours of your time. How about posting a sign at a certain project site to explain the reason for the slight disruption of play and how this project will soon make the course better and more playable. Maybe you could hold monthly meetings with your starter-ranger personnel to explain what's going on out on the course. After all, aren't they asked the most ques-

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tions, and how many of them really know the answers? These are just a few ideas; talk to your neighbors, I'm sure there more good ideas out there.

Getting back to the hazy, hot and humid thing, here are a few tips that may help you through this extended hot spell:

✓ Manage the greens edges where native soil and greens mix interface. For example, if you have a clay/sand interface, the clay will act as a sponge, sucking the water out of your green. Frequent hand watering of berms/collars in the morning can help manage the entire green with less water needed over the whole area. You would be surprised how a green can survive a hot afternoon by hand watering its edge and collar in the morning.

✓ What about controlling algae in hot humid weather? One good idea is to use a chemical control such as, mancozeb, Fore or Dithane, at 9.6 oz/1,000; or a combination of Fore (mancozeb) at 3/4 rate for algae and Daconil 2787 (chlorothalonil) at 3 oz/1,000, which is the low end of the preventive rate for brown patch, also a threat during extended wet and humid weather. If a light fertilizer application is scheduled during this period, try to time it about 7 to 10 days after the Daconil application. This will enhance the effectiveness of the Daconil for control of brown patch. If chemical controls are not desirable, aerifying the area is also a good method of control. Change the makeup on the surface and slightly below, and you'll change the conditions which encouraged

the algae or brown patch.

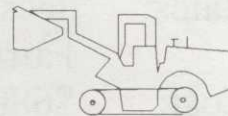
✓ For hard, dry localized spots a "water fork," which normally sells for \$350, can be fabricated in-house for about \$60. The idea of the "fork" is to enable saturation of the entire profile of which surface tension has not allowed water to penetrate. Trying to water these areas with your irrigation system will get other areas too wet and cause conditions to exist for the aforementioned problems. It is labor intensive but well worth the extra effort. (Water is actually injected through the fork tines into the soil subsurface.) These are just a few tips that work well for me. There are many more out there, don't be afraid to ask. With good monitoring practices and the "buddy system" we can provide better golf through better turf in West Virginia.



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