



## Our Rough Is Too Thick: It Must Be Spring

By David Oatis, regional director, Northeast Region

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It is a sure sign of spring when golfers start complaining about the thickness and height of rough. Comments like, “what, did the rough mower break down” or “can’t we afford to mow the rough this year?” are commonplace every spring. The truth is, in the Northeast Region rough normally is



healthiest this time of year, resulting in high density and rapid growth. In areas receiving timely rainfall – particularly in the southern part of the region – rough may be extremely penal even when it is being mowed 2-3 times per week. Currently, rough is healthy and conditions for growth are nearly ideal so, for the next few weeks, turf managers need to mow and golfers need to be patient. Growth of roughs will abate and rough density will moderate once the flush of spring growth passes.

Playing conditions are rounding into top form in the central and southern portion of the region. However, plenty of courses are still struggling with recovery from winter injury. Cold water temperatures in the Great Lakes and Atlantic Ocean are keeping temperatures cool in coastal areas, slowing turfgrass recovery. Too often the calendar dictates when damaged greens are opened, and rushing weak greens into play too quickly results in more problems later in the summer. It is often observed that golfers are aggravated when greens are kept closed in the spring, but they won’t remember that the greens were opened a couple of weeks early when the greens don’t perform well in July or August.

Remember, one critical function of the committee is to protect the course from the golfers. Doing what is right for the turf now will pay dividends later in the season.

Recent data from the U.S. Drought Monitor shows that much of the northern half of the region is “abnormally dry” and some areas are slipping into “moderate drought” conditions. The dry weather is taking a big bite out of water allotments in some areas; and, while our dry conditions cannot be compared to what is being experienced out west, they serve as a great reminder that we must be mindful of our water use and water supplies. The best time to develop a drought emergency plan is long before a drought actually hits. Waiting too long to cut back and prioritize water use results in waste of our most precious resource. For more information, see Pat Cross’s article [Developing a Drought-Emergency Plan](#).

Annual bluegrass weevil (ABW) damage is beginning to pop up around the region and, given the dry weather, the damage will be more severe or possibly misdiagnosed. A little ABW damage is beneficial for courses that are committed to growing creeping bentgrass. However, ABW populations increase dramatically in a short period of time. ABW can also cause injury to creeping bentgrass, so monitor damage and scout carefully.



**Figure 1 - ABW damage can look exactly like stressed annual bluegrass that has just gone through the seeding cycle. If ABW populations rapidly multiply, they can damage bentgrass when annual bluegrass populations are exhausted.**

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