



Summer Recovery Tips

By Bud White, regional director, Mid-Continent Region

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Without a doubt, this has been one of the worst ten months on record for the turfgrass industry, as seen in my 32 years as an agronomist, and the winter season had the worst bermudagrass kill since 1989. The spring was cloudy and cool, which slowed bermudagrass recovery measurably. The summer began with heavy rains throughout much of the lower Midwest, and many areas quickly experienced the shock of 100°F temperatures, humidity and stagnant air conditions. I recorded many soil temperatures at the two inch depth in the low 100°F, with surface temperatures sometimes as high as 116°F.

So the scramble for recovering from the summer began September

1. Superintendents must be judicious in their fertility, cutting heights, and other management factors to help the plants recover and grow as strong as possible this fall. Don't forget dormant feeding in December as well.

Many areas on greens were sod-patched for quick recovery. When a quality sod is purchased, this technique is very successful with proper installation. However, some of the most damaged areas this year were where the sod was not properly aerated. Consequently, this turf was completely lost. For greens that have already been sodded this fall, core aerate these areas with the ¼" side eject tines, followed by an additional four, small-tine aerations next spring along with the normal spring aeration process.

These four, ¼" side eject tine aerations are only done to the sodded areas and are not disruptive to the golfers. However, this rigorous coring is essential for sod health during the summer following its installation because it is the only way to break up the sod layer, encourage good rooting, and discourage water restriction at the bottom of the sod layer.

Educating golfers also is a critical step for superintendents, both this fall and next spring. Golfers should be well-schooled on the following points:

- In the spring, preparation for the worst-case scenario of summers is essential to ensure healthy bentgrass throughout the summer.
- Summer maintenance begins in early summer – not after the 4th of July. By July 4th, 2010, we had experienced so many environmental stresses on the bentgrass that it was too late for recovery.
- You must utilize protection management strategies at the beginning of summer.

These protection strategies include:

- Use of rolling instead of mowing to reduce stress.
- Skip mowing operations one or two days per week during the summer.
- Raise cutting heights to nominal levels.
- Use the smooth front roller.
- Lightly topdress about every three weeks and water in.
- Properly spoon feed nitrogen throughout the summer months to maintain plant health.

In the next few weeks, we will conduct a webcast about planning for the 2011 summer and provide some tips for educating golfers and course officials about properly utilizing protection management strategies on putting greens. The education process for golfers, course officials, and owners should begin now. A notice will be sent out later to alert you to the webcast.

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