



Golfers' Perspective On Bermudagrass In The Spring: "It's Green! Just Fertilize it."

By Bud White, regional director, Mid-Continent Region

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Bermudagrass approaches, tees, and fairways are unpopular with golfers during the spring. These areas on the course usually start green-up in early March, but do not begin to thicken until later in May. Why is this? Golfers see the green-up and complain that the superintendents are not fertilizing and watering enough to spur the fairways to grow.

Bermudagrasses, like all warm season grasses, are almost completely temperature-driven in the spring. The rule of thumb is that until the daytime high temperatures and nighttime low temperatures add up to 150°F, there will be no strong bermudagrass growth. Neither fertilizer nor water can challenge this fact --- temperature is the determining factor in spring. Iron applications can improve color and spring green-up, but it will not increase spring growth. Golf course superintendents would love to promote bermudagrass growth and see improved fairway density in March and April, but this is beyond their control. With luck, golfers will understand and be patient!

Spring cart traffic can affect turf quality as well. Some courses confine the use of carts on fairways in early spring to improve surface quality, and these restrictions do make a significant difference. Many courses have seen good early-June fairway quality in early May, due to better cart traffic management in March and April.



Early spring bermudagrass fairway just starting green-up.

Special Announcement: Beginning this year, the GCSAA will award education points for Turfgrass Advisory Service (TAS) visits. Golf course superintendents and assistants who subscribe and participate in a USGA TAS visit at their golf course will earn 0.3 points for ½-day visits and 0.6 for full-day visits.

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