



## Guarding Against Winter Injury

By John Daniels, agronomist, Central Region

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As temperatures cool, turf managers in the transition zone will begin deploying covers to prevent winter injury to warm-season grasses. Covering greens and tees before cold weather sets in has become an annual ritual because low-cut turf is especially susceptible to winterkill and golfers have little patience with the slow recovery of injured turf during spring.

There are numerous options available when it comes to turf covers including various materials, colors, thicknesses, permeability, etc., but all covers serve the same basic purpose – to retain a little heat from warm soils and prevent rapid drops in temperature ([Preparing for Winter: Turf Blankets for Cold Weather Protection of Bermudagrass Putting Greens](#)). A durable, lightweight cover is expensive but a good investment despite the added cost of labor needed to install and remove covers throughout the winter.

The increased use of ultradwarf bermudagrass into its northernmost zone of adaptation puts more warm-season turf at risk for winterkill. Research at Oklahoma State University indicates bermudagrass maintained at putting green heights will have little tolerance to temperatures below 20 to 24 degree Fahrenheit. Research at Mississippi State University and field observations suggest that covers should be employed to protect bermudagrass whenever



*Bermudagrass has little tolerance to cold temperatures. Covering it before a cold spell occurs provides a reliable level of protection from winterkill.*

temperatures below 25 degrees Fahrenheit are predicted. It makes sense to use covers even earlier on areas of weak turf or turf that has a history of winter injury.

It is definitely a challenge to choreograph the installation and removal of covers at courses where play occurs year-round. However, preventing turf loss that likely will affect putting surfaces for weeks, if not months, during spring will far outweigh the revenue generated by a few days of winter play.

For more on the topic, please watch the following webcast: [Turf Covers For Cold Weather Protection Of Bermudagrass Putting Greens](#)

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