



## No Relief In Sight For The Drought-Stricken South

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In early November, scientists with the National Weather Service confirmed that a weak [La Niña](#) has developed, and forecast models predict it will likely continue until spring. That means wetter and cooler conditions are likely across northern states and drier, warmer-than-normal weather is likely for southern states. This is bad news for the South because courses there are already struggling with drought stress after several weeks of unseasonably warm, dry weather.

A golf facility's water allotment may be fixed, but the superintendent still determines where and when water is used. Experienced turf managers know that high-traffic areas – e.g., greens and fairways – require the most water. Suspending or reducing irrigation in out-of-play areas can help conserve water for the most important parts of the golf course. Visit the [USGA Water Resource Center](#) for more information about managing water resources.

Along with prioritizing irrigation, pruning tree roots that compete with turf for water and nutrients can also help golf courses get the most from limited water resources. Many tree species have shallow root systems that extended well beyond the dripline. The impact of tree root competition often goes unnoticed



*The effect of tree root competition is obvious during periods of dry weather.*

until an extended period of drought occurs and the turf around trees begins to show signs of stress.

A variety of tools such as trenchers, rock saws, vibratory plows or specialized root-pruning tools can be used to sever shallow tree roots. A root-

pruning machine or vibratory plow is the most efficient option because there is little or no cleanup required. For the best results, prune tree roots every two or three years. Otherwise, the problem may quickly return because cutting roots encourages a flush of new root growth. If you can't remember the last time you addressed tree root competition it is probably time start pruning roots.

For more information about managing tree roots, read the article "[Getting to the Root of the Problem.](#)"

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