



Dead Or Alive?

By Bob Vavrek, regional director, Central Region

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Don't be lulled to sleep this winter by the absence of ice cover on the golf course. Most of the Central Region experienced extreme freeze and thaw cycles during December and January, and weather patterns have been equally erratic during the first few weeks of February. [Research](#) conducted on *Poa annua* and creeping bentgrass turf indicates that just a few days of mild temperatures during winter or early spring can trigger a significant loss of cold tolerance. In general, this rapid deacclimation process affects *Poa annua* far more than creeping bentgrass.

It wouldn't hurt to take a few samples from putting green areas that have a history of winter injury and bring them indoors to assess current turf conditions. Considering the relative absence of snow cover, it also makes sense to sample a few exposed, wind-swept sites for desiccation injury. This short [USGA webcast](#) describes a detailed procedure for sampling greens for winterkill.

Golfers are not particularly fond of surprises, especially when the surprise is temporary greens during early spring when they have been chomping at the bit to test a new putter. Identifying winter injury now provides an opportunity to warn golfers of potential putting green problems before spring. It also gives superintendents time to develop a plan for rapid recovery.



A simple grow light, available for less than \$100, can accelerate the growth of putting green turf samples and help identify areas of winterkill.

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