



## After The Snow, The Grass Will Begin To Grow

By Stanley Zontek, director, Mid-Atlantic Region

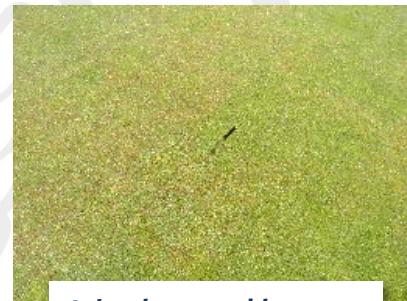
**March 29, 2011**

Golfers are asking their superintendent to core aerate, either earlier in the spring or later in the fall in order to maximize the number of days that golf can be played on the best possible putting surfaces. Unfortunately, recent cold weather has resulted in this important work, either being deferred, which is not good in the long term, or delayed, which means that some aerator holes will be open when spring golf will be played. As much as we might not like to believe it, so much of what we can and cannot do is affected by the weather.

In reality, there is very little that can be done. Dark-colored topdressings and dark-colored natural organic fertilizers absorb heat due to their dark color, helping to increase turf growth. In some rare cases, turfgrass covers can be used, but generally only for areas where you are trying to germinate seed.

Our best guidance is to simply understand the situation, appreciate the limitations caused by the unseasonably cold weather, and be patient. Simply said, the grass will grow when temperatures rise.

This image describes a fairly typical putting green in the Washington, D.C. area. It is a pure stand of bentgrass that shows the effect of turf being frozen or frosted while in semi-dormancy. These colors are the grasses' natural response to temperatures, and there is a sign of phosphorus deficiency or leaf spot disease. Also, the yellowing on the bentgrass is not anthracnose. When putting greens take on this color, they are still semi-dormant. As temperatures warm,



*It has been a cold spring. Note the natural color variations in the grass on this green.*

the grass begins to grow, the plant physiology changes, the discoloration goes away, and a more even and consistent stand of grass occurs.

Nevertheless, there are exceptions to everything. Intense yellowing of *Poa annua* in small dime- to quarter-sized spots can be an indication of carryover from fall or early spring anthracnose. The base of the grass stems may be discolored, brown to black. The scientists at Rutgers University need samples from you. The disease most commonly occurs in areas where anthracnose has been a problem in the past. Send cup-cutter sized plugs to:

Dr. Bruce B. Clarke,  
Dept. of Plant Biology and Pathology  
59 Dudley Road  
School of Environmental and Biological Sciences  
Foran Hall,  
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8520  
Office: (732) 932-9375 Extn. 331

We thank everyone in advance for helping Rutgers find samples of early anthracnose, which is active now.

The longer this cool, damp and cloudy weather continues, the greater the likelihood that cool-weather diseases will be active, including pink snow mold, cool temperature brown patch and *Waitea* patch. In most cases, the greens should be treated with a blend of fungicides labeled for their control.

One of the more interesting parts of the industry is that there are no two golf courses alike. However, while we love all of these different golf courses, some golfers compare one course to the other, even though these comparisons are seldom valid. Just because one golf course has or has not aerated their greens, it does not mean that this is something that is best for you. Discuss the options, develop a plan, communicate that plan to the golfers, and do what is best for the grass and soils on your course.

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[Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service](#)

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