



Be Careful What You Wish For

By David Oatis, director, Northeast Region

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Most of the turf I have observed in recent weeks has been performing well. Root development has been stronger than normal and cool-season brown patch and Waitea patch that was evident a few weeks ago seems to have subsided. Not surprisingly, the biggest problem I have seen and heard reported involves feeding damage from annual bluegrass weevil, but even that has been less significant than in the past. Thus, for most courses, it has been a good spring and a good start to the season.

Unfortunately, there are always some exceptions. For instance, winter injury was experienced in a few parts of southern Canada just north of Toronto and on fairways in the Montreal area. In other areas, drought conditions continue. Where rainfall has been heavy, fortunately, temperatures have remained moderate. Some courses may be wet, but for the most part turf is still performing well.

Undoubtedly, temperatures will rise in the coming weeks, and our traditional disease problems, namely summer patch and anthracnose, will likely begin to show themselves. The wet weather certainly can be a predisposing factor to the emergence of both diseases, and if rain continues, various *Pythium* problems will also begin to show up. All that is required is a stretch of really hot weather to cause turfgrass root systems to die back and increase disease pressure.

Observations:

- Most of the courses I visit are now using soil moisture meters with great success. If you have not purchased a moisture meter, do so as soon as the budget allows. These tools eliminate subjectivity when assessing soil

moisture and they are rapidly becoming one of the most important tools for golf course superintendents and their staff. Used correctly, soil moisture meters can make everyone better water managers.

- Between the extreme weather conditions, i.e., rain, heat, floods, etc., we have experienced in the last couple of years, more courses are installing drainage and/or deeply modifying soil-based putting greens. The benefits of such work have been clearly evident with improved drainage and better turf health following recent rainfall events this year. If you don't have internal drainage in your soil-based greens and/or have not deeply modified them with sand, you may want to consider this for the future as it is paying dividends for those that have.
- I have already visited several courses this year that removed a significant numbers of trees this past winter. For those that have done so, keep in mind that greens often suffer additional stress and wilt more quickly during the first season after extensive tree work has been performed. The radical change in the growing environment is similar to moving the green several hundred miles south, and it will take the turf some time to adjust. In the meantime, be prepared to hand water and syringe more frequently. The change to more air movement and a sun-filled environment ultimately will benefit the turf, but it will take time before the turf completely adjusts.

Northeast agronomists will help conduct a variety of USGA National Championships this year including the Women's Amateur Public Links at Neshanic Valley Golf Club in Neshanic Station, N.J. (June 18-23), the U.S. Women's Open at Blackwolf Run in Kohler, Wis. (July 5-8), the U.S. Junior Amateur at the Golf Club of New England in Stratham, N.H. (July 16-21), the Men's State Team at Galloway National Golf Club in Galloway, N.J. (Sept. 19-21) and the Senior Amateur at Mountain Ridge Country Club in West Caldwell, N.J. (Sept. 29-Oct. 4). If you find yourself at one of these championships, be sure to say "hello" and if you have time help your fellow superintendents out by volunteering or allowing some of your staff to volunteer. Working at a national championship is an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

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