



The Summer Heat Is On!

By Stanley Zontek, regional director, Mid-Atlantic Region

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The second heat wave for the summer of 2012 is upon us. Almost no one has been unaffected by the heat, the humidity and the resulting thunderstorms which have occurred. Nearly the entire continental United States is being affected by hot weather; record breaking heat in fact.

First, kudos need to be extended to the staff at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland for being able to complete this weekend's AT&T National Tournament. It took a herculean effort to return the course to play and then to provide a great venue for the galleries that came in spite of many of their own issues with power outages, fallen trees, broken limbs and general disruption to one's life. The distraction was good and the golf course was at its best.

Much has been written about the need for common sense turfgrass management when it's hot. This update is to remind everyone that the basics of agronomy, plant health, and maintenance never change. Raise mowing heights, mow less, do not apply large amounts of nitrogen, compress your fungicide spray rotations and increase fungicide rates.

Do not be concerned about short-term niceties like how fast the greens are rolling on a given day. That will come with time and more reasonable weather.



Preserving roots through the summer stress period is a high priority for any turf manager. Overwatering damages roots. Aeration/surface venting generates new roots. Raising mowing heights also contributes to improved rooting and better turfgrass density.

Sometimes it is what you **do not do** that is as important as what you actually do. Do not over stress the grass with double cutting, grooming or abrasive topdressings. Hand water, back-off general maintenance and focus on keeping the turf healthy and alive. Surface aerate, roll versus mow and generally follow a defensive, conservative maintenance and management program when turfgrass is under oppressive heat. It's a time to be careful. There is always a time to become more aggressive but that takes cooler weather.

No one knows what the future holds but following a conservative and careful putting green and golf course maintenance and management program now can help maintain better turf throughout the rest of the summer.

There are no new flashy agronomic bright ideas mentioned here. It's all common sense maintenance and management practices. Managing stress early in the season should help prolong the health of the grass for more of the summer. Be careful...it's hot out there!

PS - Remember to use that sunscreen and reapply every two hours.

The Mid-Atlantic Region agronomists are part of your agronomic support team. If you have a question or concern, give us a call or send an email.

Northeast Region Agronomists:

David A. Oatis, regional director – doatis@usga.org

James E. Skorulski, agronomist – jskorulski@usga.org

Adam Moeller, agronomist – amoeller@usga.org

Elliott Dowling, agronomist – edowling@usga.org

Addison Barden, agronomist – abarden@usga.org

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