



Cool And Soggy

By David Oatis, regional director, Northeast Region | June 2, 2017



Cool weather and abundant moisture have cool-season roughs jumping. Lost golf balls, slow play and aggravated golfers are common during these conditions.

April showers have become May showers this year, leaving courses throughout the Northeast Region wet and lush. If you recently made drainage improvements, you must be feeling good about that decision. However, if your rough mower isn't working overtime you may still have aggravated golfers. Vigorous rough growth is often a problem during spring, but it will subside once warmer, drier weather arrives. Unfortunately, it feels like one of those years where cool spring weather will transition quickly to the heat of summer. That transition can be difficult for humans and turfgrass alike.

Disease

Cool-weather diseases such as brown ring patch and pink snow mold are active in some areas, as is anthracnose. With the recent rains, summer patch infections also may be brewing. These will become obvious once hot, dry weather arrives and the turf experiences stress. With a wet spring, it could be a tough year for summer patch.

Insects

Annual bluegrass weevils (ABWs) are active, but the cool temperatures and abundant rainfall can mask their activity. Turf in low-stress growing conditions can tolerate more weevil activity without showing signs of damage than turf that is under stress. Don't be caught by surprise and don't make unnecessary insecticide applications. Scout intensively, especially if your course has a history of ABW activity.

Ball Marks

Golfers make them and according to golf etiquette they should repair them. Many golfers claim that they fix two or three ball marks on every green; but based on the numbers of unrepaired ball marks most courses are experiencing these days, someone's math is off. Unfortunately, many golfers repair ball marks improperly, only adding to the problem. Some instruction on [ball mark repair](#) may help and, if you want to drive home the importance of repairing ball marks, try this trick:

Put a white golf tee in the center of every unrepaired or poorly repaired ball mark on an especially damaged green. With the tees in the green, take a picture in the early morning or late afternoon when the sun angle is low – the effect will be shocking. Post the image in the clubhouse or share it online and you're sure to catch golfers' attention.

Mechanical Damage

In many areas, bentgrass still isn't growing vigorously because of the cool temperatures. This makes bentgrass playing surfaces more vulnerable to mechanical damage. The added moisture from rainfall just amplifies the problem. Soft playing surfaces are very susceptible to wear injury, regardless of the turf species, so try to postpone mowing for a day or two when surfaces are saturated. Keep in mind that skipping mowing for a couple of days may require a slight increase in cutting heights to avoid scalping when mowing resumes. Limiting mechanical injury now will help prevent stress-related disease activity when warm weather arrives.

Fertility

Courses with water quality and quantity issues should be in good shape for the start of summer. However, leaching losses should be considered depending on how much rain your course has received. Low nitrogen fertility combined with above-average rainfall can leave your turf underfertilized, leading to poor wear tolerance and slow recovery. If ball marks are slow to heal at your course, low fertility could be part of the problem. Turf will likely exhibit a surge of growth once soil temperatures begin to increase, but it may run out of gas if fertility is low.

Weeds

Weed encroachment is often worst the year after a drought. Nutsedge and kyllinga both seem to be getting a strong start with the recent wet weather. Crabgrass is slow to emerge farther north; but once temperatures warm, expect a flush of growth. If your course lost turf density due to drought or disease issues last year, anticipate higher-than-normal weed populations this year.

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