



## Time To Recharge The Batteries

By Jim Skorulski, agronomist, Northeast Region | September 15, 2017



*Eliminate shade and begin raising mowing heights to maximize sugar production and help plants begin to acclimate for winter.*

September's warm, sunny days and cool nights provide ideal growing conditions for cool-season turf by stimulating photosynthesis and the generation of simple sugars that plants use for growth. Increased production of sugars and reduced energy consumption by plants during cooler weather creates a surplus of sugars. The surplus sugars are stored in the form of simple starches in warm-season grasses or complex carbohydrates in cool-season turf. Plants use the carbohydrates and starches, stored in crown and root tissues as turfgrass plants acclimate for winter, to protect cells from cold temperatures and prolonged periods of ice cover. It is not always easy – especially for facilities that remain busy or are pressured to produce peak conditions late in the season – but do not overlook basic maintenance practices that allow turfgrass plants to take advantage of optimal growing conditions for carbohydrate production.

Basic requirements for optimal fall turf growth and winter acclimation include sunlight, good drainage and sufficient nutrition. Hopefully, drainage issues have been addressed through sound aeration and topdressing practices or the installation of drainage. The nutrient program should also be relatively easy to manage, taking care to keep plants vigorous but not lush and using supplemental applications of potassium to ensure it is readily available in the root zone.

However, the sunlight requirement is of utmost importance to sustain fall growth. Much like solar panels placed in the shade are not very reliable, neither is turf. Shade reduces the efficiency of putting green turf photosynthesis, resulting in a shortage of sugars that act as an energy source for plants. Address shade issues by removing trees that block sunlight. Also, slightly raise mowing heights to increase leaf-tissue surface area and improve the ability of plants to absorb sunlight. Raising mowing heights in small, weekly increments of 0.05 inches will prove beneficial and hardly noticeable to golfers. Final mowing height adjustments can be made during late October, but begin the process of raising mowing heights now to take full advantage of favorable growing conditions.

Many of us also enjoy the coming of fall as it provides a chance to recharge our own batteries after a long season. Put your turfgrass in a position where it too can take advantage of optimal weather and begin acclimating for the winter ahead. [Contact your local USGA agronomist](#) if you would like to review your fall and winter maintenance programs. Enjoy the fall season and begin recharging those batteries.

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