



Unidentified, small circular patches are one of a few undiagnosed problems that are likely related to the poor weather that continues to linger in the Northeast.

COME ON GRASS

BY ELLIOTT DOWLING | AGRONOMIST, NORTHEAST REGION

Odd weather patterns continue to play a role in the underperformance of turf this spring. The year started poorly due to some extended periods of single-digit temperatures that caused significant winter injury to bermudagrass in the Northeast. Although superintendents have given injured bermudagrass a long time to recover, the slow recovery associated with a cool and cloudy spring has forced many to sod or sprig new bermudagrass.

Sodding or sprigging now seems like the easy part. The cool, wet and cloudy conditions have continued and recent problems have reared their heads on cool-season turf. Bermudagrass isn't perfect now because its growth is still slow, but courses growing bentgrass – especially new, more heat-tolerant cultivars of bentgrass – are experiencing slow growth as well. Bentgrass also is showing symptoms of mechanical injury at many courses. When grass is growing slowly it is not as tolerant of regular mowing, rolling and other surface management procedures. If your course is in this boat, reduce some of the more aggressive maintenance procedures that focus on improving texture. Your turf may need some time to grow and recover.

That brings us to our favorite grass – *Poa annua*. When *Poa* is good, it is really good. On the other hand, when *Poa* is bad, it's dead or seeding. Unfortunately, it seems like *Poa* hasn't been very good recently, primarily because of the weather patterns. Many *Poa annua* putting greens are exhibiting nondescript symptoms of injury. It appears that two or more different issues may be simultaneously occurring

Some *Poa* injury appears to be related to fungal or bacterial infection. Since the Northeast has had its fair share of rain, this would make sense. If you are unsure what is blighting your grass, and traditional control products are not providing relief, it is important to send soil and tissue samples to a laboratory for analysis. Do not force growth if grass appears sick, practice conservative maintenance instead – i.e., alternate mowing and rolling and raise the height of cut if necessary. Do not increase stress on already stressed plants.

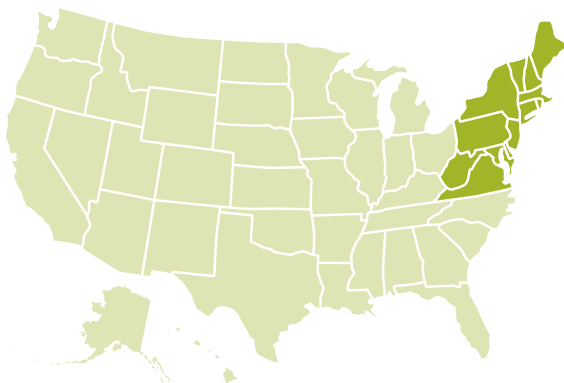
A lot of the injury on *Poa* appears to be moisture related and, in some instances, overregulation could also be occurring. Odd weather patterns this spring have forced superintendents to adjust spring plant protectant applications. Applying biostimulants or other products that initiate a defense mechanism by altering plant hormones can further complicate issues with turf that is already under stress, especially if the products are applied shortly before or after a plant growth regulator application. If problems appear to be moisture related, add drainage or adjust contours to allow water to flow freely from the playing surfaces.

The season feels like it is shaping up for some interesting problems. The amount of rain received thus far has delayed growth, prevented superintendents from getting sod if needed and stressed plants heading into summer. Special attention is always needed, but this is a year during which we all are going to have to be on our toes.



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