



When stress levels are high, water management is critical. Applying wetting agents and clear communication with staff can improve moisture uniformity.

COMING IN HOT!

BY PAUL JACOBS | AGRONOMIST, NORTHEAST REGION

After a relatively slow start to the season, which was largely characterized by cool temperatures and plentiful rainfall, summer has certainly arrived. The quick transition from a wet and cool spring to hot summer conditions presents several management challenges. The following points highlight management practices to keep in mind as we enter the heat of summer:

Water Management – Regular applications of wetting agents will help alleviate localized dry spot (LDS) and improve moisture uniformity. When LDS develops, trying to maintain uniform soil moisture becomes very challenging and often results in overirrigating adjacent areas. Wet conditions during extreme heat can be lethal to turf. The USGA article, “Factors to Consider When Developing a Wetting Agent Program,” explains the use of wetting agents and their benefits in greater detail.

Maintaining appropriate soil moisture is critical during periods of hot weather. Excessive moisture will elevate soil temperatures whereas too little will cause drought stress. In addition to making sure all employees are on the same page regarding hand watering technique and the quantity of water to apply,

calibrating moisture meters can also help improve moisture uniformity and avoid moisture-related turf stress.

Turf Health – Cloudy, cool weather and wet soil conditions this spring were not favorable for root growth. If your turf has weak roots, it will be critical to implement defensive management practices during hot weather. Raising mowing heights, switching to smooth rollers, and reducing mowing and rolling frequency can be the difference between healthy turf and turf loss when stress levels rise. Other cultural practices, such as topdressing and venting, should be implemented with caution. Performing these practices before periods of stress can be beneficial, but performing them during periods of stress can be counterproductive. If turf health is in question and stress levels are high, it may be better to play it safe. A few days of slower-than-normal green speeds can eliminate the need for a long recovery process.

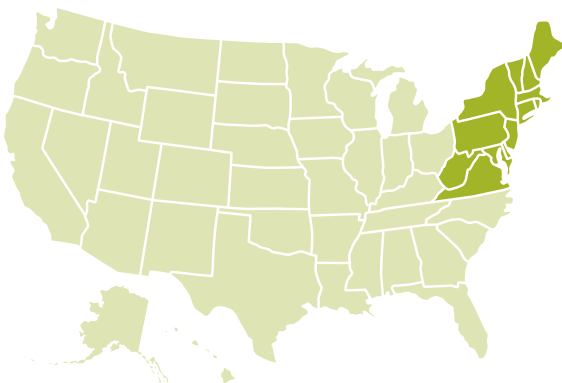
Disease Pressure – As expected, disease pressure from dollar spot and brown patch has been high. Anthracnose has been no stranger either, especially where mowing heights and fertility levels are low. Although unfortunate for most, periods of high disease pressure present a great opportunity to evaluate the disease resistance of newer turf varieties. Even under high disease pressure, and with no fungicidal control, many new grasses have been performing very well. If you are considering a regrassing project, speak with your regional USGA Agronomist to learn which varieties are performing well in your area and determine the potential return on investment from establishing a newer variety.



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As we enter the peak of the golf season, pressure mounts to provide playing conditions that meet or exceed expectations. Performing aggressive management practices that provide great playing conditions is acceptable only when turf can handle it. However, when turf is under stress, turf health should hold top priority. We still have a long season ahead of us.



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