



Remembering Spring to Prepare for Winter

By Addison Barden, agronomist, Northeast Region

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With the light at the end of the tunnel just in front of many superintendents and their crews, preparation for next year has been everyone's focus. However, while courses in the northern Northeast Region welcomed light rains that added to deficiencies in late-summer precipitation, recent heavy rains prevented much work from being performed at courses in the southern Northeast Region.



This area of damage contained over 120 white grubs.

In preparation for winter, many courses have begun slowly raising cutting heights on *Poa annua* and bermudagrass putting greens and fairways. Increased heights of cut only slightly affect playability and can help reduce the potential for winter injury. However, raising mowing heights is not a silver bullet for avoiding winter injury. Making minor sacrifices in terms of playability this fall can pay massive dividends next spring when your course is able to open with healthy, winter injury-free turfgrass.

It is difficult to give a target height when raising *Poa annua* putting green height of cut. Current cutting heights are lower than ever before so although raising cutting height from 0.100 inch to 0.150 inch may be a significant increase, it is still below cutting heights from our not-so-distant past. A good target is to raise your *Poa annua* putting greens to at least 0.150 inch by mid to late fall. Higher mowing heights allow turf to store more carbohydrates and, when it comes to storing carbohydrates before winter, the more the better. Additionally, research

has shown a decrease in winter injury on *Poa annua* when potassium levels are sufficient.

Recent white grub activity also has been observed throughout the region. Direct damage from white grubs has not been as common as damage from mammalian foragers. Turf can tolerate high populations of white grubs by outgrowing their feeding; however, as few as one white grub can cause an animal forager to rip through turf, causing significant damage. Research conducted in the Southeast found that Milorganite can deter mammalian foragers when applied and not watered in.

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