



A Spring With Four Seasons

By Addison Barden, agronomist, Northeast Region

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The wacky weather during March may have actually been good for golf courses. In early March, all signs pointed to an early, abnormally warm spring. After consecutive bitterly cold springs, an early start to the golf season was a welcomed prospect for many golf facilities. Spring also is an important time for maintenance staffs to perform special projects and cultural practices. These projects could have been very difficult to complete if golfer-friendly weather had persisted. However, the mix of warm and rainy days has created lulls in rounds, giving golf course superintendents uninterrupted opportunities to complete important spring work. The mixed weather this spring ended up being a fair trade-off between golfers and superintendents.

This spring's variable weather has affected several seasonal agronomic issues:

Annual Bluegrass Weevil (ABW):

Active ABW adults have been found throughout the region. However, conditions are not yet optimum for adulticide applications in much of the Northeast Region. Continue to monitor forsythia bloom in conjunction with active adult ABW sampling. When forsythia bloom is at half green and half gold and air temperatures are conducive for adult movement – i.e., warmer than 50 degrees Fahrenheit – adulticide applications can be made.



Soil temperatures are not yet optimum for turf to recover from aeration. Some courses have delayed scheduled aeration until the weather is more favorable.

Aeration:

Recovery has been slow for courses that already performed putting green aeration. Despite a few warm days, soil temperatures are not warm enough for active turf growth. Unfortunately, the only catalyst for recovery will be warmer soil temperatures. Making additional fertilizer applications in an attempt to promote growth may only cause more problems once soil temperatures warm. Patience is important during unpredictable springs.

Turfgrass Slow to Grow:

Some cool-season turfgrasses, such as bentgrass, have been slow to emerge from winter dormancy. On the other hand, bermudagrass was actively growing as far north as Philadelphia, but growth has dramatically slowed with the return of cooler weather. Again, remain patient with turf growth until consistently warmer weather arrives. After all, it is only April.

Bentgrass Injury:

Because bentgrass has been slow to grow this spring, beware of overdoing normal maintenance practices such as mowing, rolling, brushing and topdressing. Bentgrass is very susceptible to wear injury at this time of year. Be aware that bentgrass discoloration due to excessive mechanical wear during prolonged periods of cool and wet weather is frequently misdiagnosed as disease

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