



## Thunderstorms Likely, Chance Of Rain 50%

By Todd Lowe, agronomist, Southeast Region

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Most meteorologists report rainfall as if it is an inconvenience to the public, but it is like music to the ears of Florida golf course superintendents. Maintenance staffs often hover around televisions or computer screens in the mornings, praying that the projected path of rainfall will move toward their area. Most of Florida has been in a severe drought over the past several months, but summer rains have finally begun and have been a Godsend for golf courses.

The recent rains have brought life to ailing turfgrass and a resumption of turf growth. While most of South Florida will remain under irrigation restrictions for some time, the thunderstorms are transforming the environment as they unload needed water onto parched grounds. Golf courses that have been brown from

lack of water are now turning a healthy green hue throughout the region.



*A record-setting rainfall deficit over the past several months has caused severe drought stress problems at many courses in Florida, but now that it has finally started to rain, resumption of cultural management programs is a key component in the recovery process.*

Summer rains in Florida are generally predictable in that, once they begin, you can count on a certain amount most afternoons. These rains are often scattered and isolated, so that some areas receive more rain than others. Many golf course superintendents feel as if there is a rainproof dome over their particular course, as adjacent golf courses on either side are wet while theirs remains dry. But, wait another week,

as fortunes often flip flop and the course that was dry this week can receive abundant rainfall next week.

Summertime cultivation practices (verticutting, core aeration, scalping) of tees, fairways and roughs have been postponed with the prolonged drought conditions. These aggressive practices open up the turf canopy and soil, encouraging water loss and increased drought stress. Many golf courses will now be busy catching up on agronomic programs to reduce thatch and maintain good golf course playability. Core aeration is particularly important when rains resume for improving percolation and reducing runoff.

The aquifer in South Florida is still low, and Phase-1 irrigation restrictions will remain until water levels rise. With luck, the recent rains will continue to fall through the summer and fill up the depleted aquifer so that a lack of water does not continue to be an obstacle to maintaining appropriate turf health and playing conditions.

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