



From Pain To Pleasure

By Patrick O'Brien, agronomist, Southeast Region | July 21, 2017



Rough mowing can be disrupted by wet weather. Plant growth regulators help keep roughs playable when mowing cannot be performed on a regular basis.

Since early June, most of the Southeast has received more than 10 inches of rain. This wet weather has interrupted mowing schedules at many golf facilities, especially rough mowing. Rough comprised of warm-season grasses grows aggressively during periods of hot, wet weather. With most golf courses having many acres of rough turf, catching up after a period of rainy weather can take weeks – especially if extra labor and mowing equipment are not available. Rough that normally is playable becomes painful when regular mowing is interrupted, negatively impacting golfer enjoyment.

Here are just a few examples of the negative impacts that occur when rough cannot be mown on a regular basis due to wet weather conditions:

- Pace of play slows
- Golf balls become more difficult to find
- Excessive grass clippings must be managed when mowing resumes

- Turf scalping may occur when mowing resumes
- Labor is diverted from other areas of the golf course to manage roughs

The good news is that plant growth regulators (PGRs) are available to help slow down rough growth and minimize these problems. Monthly PGR applications to warm-season roughs during summer months will induce a regulated growth rate that is much slower than natural growth rates. Many courses already use PGRs on fairways, tees, approaches and putting greens. It is worth considering their use in the rough as well.

Preliminary results from research conducted at Clemson University suggests that using PGRs on rough turf can reduce mowing requirements by up to 75 percent. With rough turf growing slower, it is easier to maintain good playability even if mowing operations are interrupted by frequent rain events. Along with the less-frequent mowing requirements, regulated turf also generates fewer clippings and is less prone to scalping. Slower turf growth in roughs also allows more time to be focused on other playing surfaces.

[USGA agronomists](#) in the Southeast Region are happy to assist superintendents with PGR programs for their rough turf. A [Course Consulting Service](#) visit will help to optimize PGR programs for the specific needs at your facility.

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[Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service](#)

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