



## Closing The Chapter On Winter And Preparing For Spring

By Steve Kammerer, regional director, Southeast Region

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As the Southeast Region transitions from a strong El Niño winter to the early days of spring, a host of agronomic challenges and opportunities are facing superintendents. Given the diverse climate of the Southeast Region, observations will be broken down into areas with bermudagrass dormancy and areas with no bermudagrass dormancy.



**Trees can cause problems and potential hazards to turf and golfers alike. Occasional tree assessments help justify periodic trimming and thinning efforts.**

### Areas With Bermudagrass Dormancy

This winter has been milder than years past and has resulted in less winter kill pressure. However, with good to overabundant moisture, winter weeds like *Poa annua* are beginning to break through fall-applied preemergence herbicides. Most herbicides break down faster under warmer temperatures – especially when coupled with greater soil moisture – reducing length of control. Additionally, crabgrass and goosegrass may germinate earlier than normal. Keep in mind it is likely that insects and pathogens also have benefited from the mild winter. Preventive pest-control measures may need to be conducted earlier than in years past.

## Areas with No Bermudagrass Dormancy

The winter has not been kind in areas where bermudagrass did not go dormant, specifically Florida and other southern or coastal areas. Depending on locale, significantly reduced sunlight – coupled with greater-than-normal rainfall – has resulted in poor growing conditions for seashore paspalum and bermudagrass, especially on greens. Also, existing tree issues have magnified shade problems while areas with poor drainage and air flow have become especially noticeable.

## Planning for the Spring

Now is an excellent time to address the following:

- Identify weak or thinning turf areas. It may be better to replace these areas with sod versus struggling with slow recovery over the spring to early summer.
  - Measure areas that require sod and place early orders.
- Address winter annual weeds before they produce seed to help delay or prevent future herbicide-resistance issues.
- Identify problem trees on the course. Assess trees in regard to shade, root encroachment, structural issues and any obstructions to play or line of sight.
- Evaluate drainage and check irrigation heads, their placement and water-delivery issues.
- Evaluate bunker drainage and possible reconstruction options.

The best recipe for high-quality, healthy turfgrass is good sunlight, favorable temperatures and good agronomic practices. Winter offers an excellent opportunity to document problems and to build a plan/budget to remedy issues while they are still fresh in everyone's minds.

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