

Do You Have “Accordion Roots”?—A Deep Root System Is Imperative Before Summer Stress

By Larry Gilhuly, agronomist, West Region

June 26, 2015

One views many very successful putting surfaces during three decades of conducting Course Consulting Service visits. While not always the case, nearly all successful putting greens have one thing in common – very deep and prolific root systems.

Whether the putting green turf is bermudagrass, bentgrass, seashore paspalum, fescue, zoysia or *Poa annua*, the goal of every golf course superintendent is to have the healthiest root system possible before the stress of the summer arrives. Superintendents know that a deep, healthy root system stores additional carbohydrates and allows the turf to draw on a larger reservoir of water in the soil that turf relies on during summer.

Deep roots are promoted through the careful use of water, surface management practices (topdressing, vertical mowing, etc.) and a fertilizer program focused less on color and more on playing conditions.

How do you know if you have the healthiest root system possible? If you can take a sample from the green using an 8-inch soil profiler and the entire sample is held intact, then it is safe to say you have a very healthy root system. In the Pacific



You know your greens are in good shape headed into summer if you have “accordion roots” that can be stretched like the action of the bellows of an accordion then replaced.

Northwest, this often is referred to as having “accordion roots” – where the entire sample can be stretched much like the action of the bellows of an accordion and then replaced. While “accordion roots” may not be attainable with *Poa annua*, a good 3-inch to 4-inch root system is a great starting point heading into the summer.

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