



*Sampling for winter injury can alert you to damage and provides the opportunity to plan for recovery.*

## HOW TO SAMPLE FOR WINTER INJURY ON PUTTING GREENS

BY BOB VAVREK | REGIONAL DIRECTOR, CENTRAL REGION

- Severe winter injury to putting green turf can cripple a golf facility.
- Sampling for winter injury before spring arrives allows superintendents to communicate any issues and plan for recovery if needed.
- Bring turf plugs indoors and place them in a warm location to check for growth.
- If there is no growth, that area has experienced winter injury.

Winter injury is a concern for most golf courses in the U.S., with damage to putting greens having the biggest potential impact on playability and revenue. Even with the best prevention programs in place, winter injury may still occur. If you are concerned about possible damage, it is worth gathering information before spring so that you can communicate the issues and develop a recovery plan if necessary. Bringing turf samples indoors and attempting to stimulate growth is an effective way to scout for winter

injury. The best locations to sample are those that have a history of winter injury or areas that are especially at risk. Anywhere water collects and pools on the surface and areas affected by winter shade are all good candidates. To take samples, remove any snow and ice cover to within 0.25 inches of the putting green turf, being careful not to inadvertently damage the turf with any tools used. A cordless drill equipped with a 2-inch diameter hole cutter can then be used to cut through the frozen, exposed turf. Use a flathead screwdriver or chisel to remove the turf sample. Repeat this process in as many locations as desired to obtain a representative sample of potential problem areas.

Bring the plugs indoors and plant them in small pots filled with sand or potting soil. Label each pot with the location and date of sampling and place them on a sunny windowsill – south facing is best – and apply a little water several times a day. A high-intensity fluorescent grow light is an affordable way to accelerate the process if desired. These lights typically cost less than \$100 and are readily available online. If the turf does not break dormancy, you know there is winter injury. Taking more samples will allow you to assess the full extent of the damage and begin planning for recovery.

Identifying winter injury before it appears in the spring gives you time to alert golfers and decision-makers at the facility to the problem. This prevents surprises on opening day and allows time for consensus to be reached on a recovery plan. Having extra time to plan also makes it easier to organize resources for a quick recovery in the spring. Turf suppliers can be contacted to order covers, seed or sod and seasonal staff can potentially return to work earlier than usual to aid in recovery work.