

SNOW AND ICE REMOVAL

Even though we need and like snow cover, there is a time to get rid of most of it and this should be done before it melts to form an ice sheet in the spring. Dr. Beard isn't sure how much is too much, and until his extensive research proves otherwise, he is advising Superintendents to remove all but one inch of ice or snow from March on. Incidentally, snow fence is also used to keep snow away from areas that would otherwise be too heavily blanketed.

Dr. Beard is particularly concerned about too much water in the crown area of the plant. In his work so far, cold tolerance hardiness is related more to crown tissue hydration (water content) than any other factor. Beard maintains if the crown comes through the winter in good shape we can lose all the roots and still get recovery. Conversely, if the crown is too wet, and thus not hardy, the condition of the roots and leaves makes no difference. The turf may die, even under moderate cold temperature, following "green up" in the spring.

Interestingly, he has good correlation data to back up his theory. For example, the least cold tolerant grasses like *Poa annua*, the creeping red or Chewings fescues, and the more bunch type colonial bentgrasses have the highest hydration (percent water in the crown) as winter approaches. His theory also helps to explain why the drainage swales and cupping areas, or areas that are heavily thatched and thus tend to hold water, suffer the most often from ice sheet injury.

It may also explain why a weak grass with high crown moisture content will survive over one winter and be clobbered the next. The critical point probably can be traced to the type of winter experienced. If the soil freezes solid in the fall and stays that way all winter with some snow cover to prevent desiccation and insulate against too much cold, survival will be high even for weak grass. But, when we get quick freezes followed by sudden thaws, then more freezes and thawing to increase moisture in the crown area, we can expect injury on even the highly cold tolerant creeping bents.

Editor's Note - The above comment prompted Dr. Beard to call some of the area Superintendents last month when we had the big thaw and rain. He was concerned about the standing water on the greens. His advice was to remove as much of the snow from the fronts of the greens as was possible to allow the excessive water to drain off the green. Many of us sent our crews out the next morning to remove the snow and ice from the greens. Our many thanks to Dr. Beard for his concern.

Credit - Patch of Green

From "Winter Injury" by Milwaukee Sewerage Com.

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