The Spring of '85 — Verrry Interesting!

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It had to happen, sooner or later. There really **can** be a spring in this part of the country. It only took 24 attempts, but I finally saw one in year number 25. And what a spring it is!

Some forebodings came in midwinter with the super cold winds. While shoveling through deep drifts in my driveway it occurred to me that the excess had to come from somewhere and that somewhere was a steep slope in the lawn near the street (now brown). When warmup to the freezing point came with the wet, heavy snow, it brought more questions about the longevity of fall applied fungicides. The conditions of golf courses by May 1 answers the questions.

So far the season, almost everything imaginable can be seen. Dessiccation on knobs and north-facing greens runs from central Wisconsin to northern Wyoming. Snowmold damage, some **bad**, is still visible on unprotected fairways and some protected greens. Ice damage to trees was quite severe on scattered Michigan courses. And in the midst of these happenings are courses which have never looked better. Some patterns seem to exist, but none to hang your hat on.

Like every spring before, it is evident that those who prepare for the worst will fare the best. This includes protection for exposed areas subject to dessiccation. We should be able to easily identify these areas. The snowmold control materials we have available will not work unless they are applied in mid-fall, early winter and early spring. Much of the damage now visible occurred this spring and should have been expected.

So now spring has sprung. It was amazing to see the mowing activity in the Chicago area at the time of the CDGA Seminar at Butterfield, when the Milwaukee area was still that dingy tan of late winter and not much farther north the drifts were still big. In mid-April, Michigan trees were beginning to leaf out while we looked at bare branches. But then ...

The sun rose hot and heat records began to be set all over the place. An 85 in April? No way. (Wrong). Grass grew like crazy and rippled in the gentle breezes. When the breeze became almost gale force a frantic activity began in and around pump houses. Not only was some mowing equipment unready, irrigation gear was the last thing in anyone's mind, yet wilt was among us already.

How would you like to be a superintendent who is experiencing rather extensive winter dessiccation for the first time in 12 years? The early April temperatures in the high seventies may be in the low twenties tomorrow. You are in an irrigation district which supplies water to agriculture. And the farmers don't need the water until May and the best you can do before that is a hose and sprinkler setup to deliver about five gallons per minute. That's how it is in the high country, where a golfing season runs Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Living around the Lakes really isn't so bad after all.

Now what all this will mean later in the season is anyone's guess. In our haste to catch up with the surface soil moisture deficit, there will be a lot of overwatering to help the spring crop of **Poa annua** seed. And because of the hard soil, there will probably be some needed aeration "postponed". The wind will help delay herbicide application - perhaps until fall.

The early spring has put golf course maintenance farther behind golf play this year than any in memory. It is difficult to keep up with June weather with a February crew. And here come our patrons — delighted that they can play golf comfortably in April, yet. Not just the snowbirds this year. Every bad round brings gripes about unmown grass, untrimmed or unraked bunkers, tree branches in the rough ... ad infinitum. Such is the life on the grassy side of golf in the midst of an early spring.

If we look at the other side of the coin though, we have no room for complaint. Those folks out there flailing away are enjoying the best "people weather" that April has given in a long time. **They** make the wheels turn, the money mills grind and are the reason for our existence. The cost of golf is increasing at an alarming rate (look at your budget today compared with just five or ten years ago). The more rounds of golf attainable in a season, the lower is their overhead — as measured by club dues, assessments or daily fees.

This is the reason the USGA Green Section/GCSAA fund raising effort is so important to all of us involved in golf course management. The goal of reducing maintenance costs while maintaining golf course quality is understandable to everyone. Certainly it merits support by everyone in golf, **particularly** superintendents. It can be achieved only through a nationally coordinated, basic research effort. The piecemeal programs of the past are incapable of coping with the complex process involved in this task.

If you haven't already done so, talk up the CDGA proposal on fund solicitation, a portion of which goes to the Green Section Research Program. Golf course superintendents are key people in activating it, because if you are not interested, why should anyone else be? We have been singing to our own choir too long. Sing to the audience - the golfers who enjoy play on the turf you manage.

Lawn Fertilization with Sulfur-Coated Urea

Sulfur-Coated Urea, a slow-release source of nitrogen, has been found good for lawn fertilization by Agronomist Donald Waddington at Pennsylvania State University. Three Sulfur-Coated Urea materials have been evaluated on Kentucky bluegrass lawns. Rates at which the materials dissolved varied from a slow rate to a rapid rate. Two months after application to the lawn, about 95 percent of the nitrogen in the rapid release material had been made available to the lawngrasses. At that same time, only about 45 percent of the nitrogen in the slow release material was made available.

Recovery of applied nitrogen from clippings removed in mowing was greatest when the lawn was fertilized with the Sulfur-Coated Urea with the most rapid nitrogen release rate, showing that the plants were benefiting from the nitrogen. In this case, some 50 percent of the applied nitrogen was recovered. At the same time, only 30 percent of the applied nitrogen was recovered from lawn clippings grown with Sulfur-Coated Urea with a slow nitrogen release rate.

Formulations of slow and rapid release types of Sulfur-Coated Urea are made to create lawn fertilizers with sufficient available nitrogen to produce instant improvement in the lawn as well as to provide for the long range needs of the grass for nitrogen. The fertiiizer is activated in the presence of moisture and thus nitrogen is released when moisture is available for grass growth. As soils dry and growth rates slow down, less nitrogen becomes available. This nitrogen release pattern is ideal for lawngrasses.

Credit: The Lawn Institute