

(Oak Wilt cont'd.)

ings of oaks it may be advisable to sever root grafts to create a barrier between the apparently healthy trees around an infection and the next healthy trees, just in case the disease has already moved through root grafts.

Diseased trees should be removed immediately unless such operations would injure nearby healthy oaks.

Wood from diseased trees may be used as firewood, but should be burned or debarked before spring.

There is speculation as to the reasons for increased incidence of the disease last year. There may have been unusually high populations of sap beetles because of the mild winter. Or, trees which were previously infected simply showed no symptoms until stressed; Appearance of a new vector is possible, as well.

Keep a close watch this spring as your oak trees develop. If you see suspicious symptoms, be prepared to take appropriate steps to protect nearby oaks. If you need assistance in diagnosis, contact our office or the Cooperative Extension Service office in your county.

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“Walking the Tightrope with Ultra-Fast Putting Greens”

Dr. R. T. Kane, Turfgrass Advisor

Over the last few years, new standards for putting green quality has emerged, with the primary emphasis on green speed. Mowing heights for greens are now commonly in the 1/8 inch range (.125”), and other management practices such as frequent sand topdressing, verticutting, and brushing are used to accentuate speed and improve smoothness.

However, these same management techniques can be quite detrimental to the bentgrass and *Poa annua* plants that comprise the putting surface. Low mowing heights and the abrasive action of sand, verticutting, and other grooming activities reduce the leaf surface available for plant growth which, in turn, reduces root depth and volume. The result is a weakened plant which lacks vigor and is much more susceptible to environmental stresses and pathogen invasion (e.g. bacteria and nematodes). During summer heat and humidity, the superintendent must balance water, pesticide, nutrition, and other inputs in order to insure survival of the green.

De-emphasizing green speed as a determinant of putting quality would make the superintendent’s life easier. Ultra-fast greens are not required to test the ability of the average golfer on a day-to-day basis. Raising the cutting height as little as 1/32” (to 5/32”) will reduce plant stress and help insure a healthy, green putting surface through the entire season. Improved plant vigor will add a safety net of sorts to the tightrope walking routine.

Credit: “The Score Card”, Spring 1987

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