

(Gentle Ben cont'd.)

When Paul Butler built his monster golf links in Oak Brook, he selected Art Benson, Sr. and Ben Warren as his turf advisors. The fairways would be sprigged with a new dwarf hybrid bluegrass, Warrens' A-20; the greens would be stolonized with Toronto C-15 bent. How distressing it must have been for Ben Warren to hear the touring pro's cursing as they hit "flyers" from his bluegrass fairways. Follow that with the downfall of Toronto C-15, as it succumbed to the dreaded bacterial wilt disease. Ben related, "This means the end of vegetative creeping bents, but ... tomorrow is another day."

In 1982 at the National Turf Conference in New Orleans, President Mike Bavier presented Ben Warren the GCSAA Distinguished Service Award.

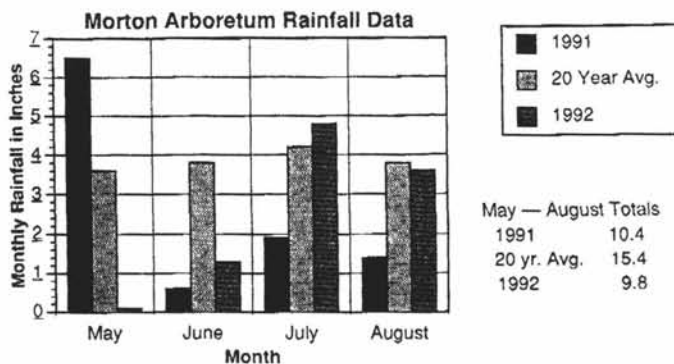
A quiet, attentive scientist, "Gentle Ben" was a giant in our turf profession.

His widow is our former MAGCS executive secretary, the charming Dorothy Carey Warren. Please write Dorothy at her home: 1900 W. Sage, Tucson, Arizona 85741.

The Season of 92 — What Happened?

by Rex A. Bastian, Ph.D.
Hendricksen, the Care of Trees

The spring and summer of 1992 have been another "abnormal" year. If we look at the rainfall data from the Morton Arboretum, we can see that 1992 was indeed very dry. Weather patterns greatly affect pest populations. This is not new information, but I would like to discuss a few principles that we should remember concerning the relationships between tree pests and the weather.

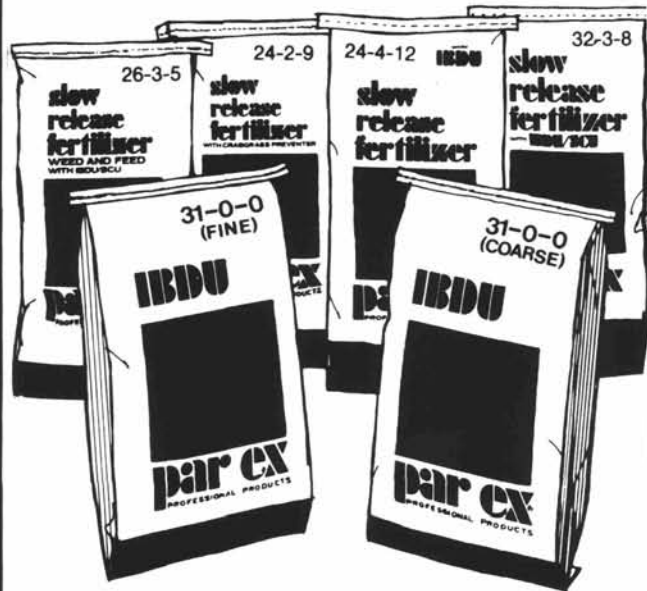


We observed quite a decrease in tree diseases this year compared to last year. As with turf, most tree diseases are caused by fungal pathogens. As arborists, the most bothersome diseases we deal with are the scabs, rusts and anthracnoses. Scabs and rusts cause the most problems on crabs and hawthorns. Anthracnose diseases cause the most problems with sycamore, ash and maple.

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(The Season of '92 cont'd.)

Because of the dry spring weather, scab, rust, and anthracnose were not much of a problem this year. These diseases didn't go away completely because they can always be found where air circulation is poor or where overhead irrigation is common. Over the general landscape, however, fungal disease populations were low.

We notice that when diseases are absent for a year, people tend to forget about them. This can be a serious mistake. Just because a disease was not present this year doesn't mean it will not be present next year. If May of '93 is as wet as that of '91, rest assured that foliar diseases will be back in force.

When we consider plant diseases, we know that preventive fungicide applications can be very important. Once established, it is almost impossible to "cure" diseases of woody landscape plants. When looking at budgets for the upcoming season, don't forget to include a slot for disease management on susceptible trees in crucial locations. If you know your trees are resistant to a certain disease (i.e., 'Donald Wyman' crabapple is scab resistant) it is reasonable not to treat. The same holds true for trees in out of the way locations where a diseased tree will have little visual impact. For those trees that are important or their susceptibility is unknown, the adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," holds true.

A similar situation applies to insect pests as well. Remember last November? During the early part of the month there was a rapid temperature drop from the 50's into the teens. A couple of weeks later, many of our Scots pines began to turn brown as a result of cold temperature injury. A similar situation occurred during the early part of March. As the trees began to leaf out, we observed substantial dieback in many species. Hardest hit were the Siberian elms, willows, maples, cotoneasters and spireas.

What does this have to do with insects? Well, if the winter weather is hard on plant materials, it is usually hard on overwintering insects as well. Even though last year was one of the mildest winters on record, rapid temperature fluctuations injured both the trees and the insects. I predicted heavy soft scale infestations this year based on last year's observations. It didn't happen. Soft scale populations were very low this year. Why? The overwintering crawlers could not handle the rapid temperature changes. Other insects, such as the honeylocust plant bug and leafhopper, were unaffected. Their overwintering eggs are located inside the twigs where they are more protected.

The moral of the story is to pay close attention to the weather. It has a significant impact on both insect and disease populations. Spending a little time learning the life histories of the common pests in the area can help us determine what impacts, if any, we might expect from the weather.

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