



GOLF TURF NEWS

BRUCE J. AUGUSTIN
Extension Turf & Water Specialist
AREC Ft. Lauderdale

CHARLES H. PEACOCK
Extension Turf Specialist
Gainesville

WINTER TURF PROBLEMS

Florida's subtropical climate should provide ideal conditions for plant growth. This past winter has proved that growing grass under wet, warm conditions can be a challenge and problem.

Overseeding is never easy since competition between grasses is keen. Bermudagrass is tough and aggressive. Successful overseeding depends on timing the seeding of ryegrass at a period when temperatures favor germination and growth. Normally this is mid-November to December. This year overseedings did not establish early because soil temperatures during November and December never fell below 50°F, the cut off point for Bermudagrass growth. Temperatures were still in the mid 60° range at the end of December. Bermudagrass out-competed the ryegrass and management could not correct this. Cool days and nights in January and February allowed overseeding to become strong. While there were warmer temperatures in November and December than usual (averaging 5° higher) January, February and March were cooler (averaging 2-6° lower). This has favored the ryegrass later into spring and delayed active growth of Bermudagrass. Night temperatures at Gainesville were still in the low 40° range in early April.

At this time of year ryegrass is in good condition at the time overseeding grass should be going out to effect a smooth transition back to Bermudagrass. The transition period is thus more critical and detailed management for transition should be practiced.

Temperature problems were not the only climatic influences on turf growth this winter. Decreased sunshine (down 12% in November, 16% in December, and 15% in January from 1981) affected turf growth and pest problems. Bermudagrass does not grow well under cloudy weather and an early cool snap set the Tifdwarf into semi-dormant state from which it has not recovered. Many greens which were not overseeded were severely damaged by wear since Bermudagrass requires sunshine for optimum growth.

Through December, 1982 there was 25 more inches of rain than in 1981 and 6 inches above the 70 year average. This has been more severe in south Florida, with averages in certain areas considerably more than 60 inches of rainfall for the past 12 months. Decreased sunshine, warm temperatures, and high humidity

increased the incidence of *Rhizoctonia* brown patch, *Holminthosporium* leaf spot, and *Pythium* through last December.

Wetter weather also may have increased nematode populations. Several people noted nematode problems during January. Wet conditions favor sedge growth, therefore selective control for sedges might be considered in certain areas.

Rain reduces irrigation requirements, but excessive rainfall leaches nutrients from sandy soils. Fertilizer applications often were delayed where fertigation was utilized, thus soil nutrient levels of certain elements may be low.

Summary and Prognostication

Climatic factors have favored a strong overseeding into April, meaning a slower transition. This means more detail to transition management must be practiced. Soil testing for fertility and possible nematode problems should be done as early as possible so cultural practices can include corrective measures. No one controls the weather, and even the best superintendents can have unpredictable problems which relate directly to climate. As temperatures warm and turf growth is fully active, take a long hard look at problems this unusual weather has created. Plan to adjust management where necessary to bring the turf into a healthy, vigorous condition. ■

(305) 581-0444

SPREAD-RITE, INC.

CUSTOM SPREADING
FERTILIZER • DOLOMITE • ARAGONITE

LAMAR SAPP

5500 S.W. 3rd STREET
PLANTATION, FL 33317