USGA Florida Region Update

Wetting Agents Effective in Battling Drought Stress

Water on many Florida golf courses is becoming scarce, and superintendents are forced to prioritize the water being applied.

Localized dry spots are worsening with the drought and are becoming more apparent on many of our Turf Advisory Service visits.

These brown spots range in size from one to two feet on greens, and up to 10 or more feet on tees, fairways, and roughs. Decreasing the amount of water at each irrigation cycle exacerbates the problem and reestablishing adequate soil moisture becomes difficult.

Wetting agents are effective tools during these dry times and preventive applications are much better than curative. Fertigation units can efficiently apply preventive treatments. However, granular wetting agents also are successful.

It is very important to keep an eye on the winter overseeding during this dry period. The overseeding has been transitioning over the past few weeks, but some courses (central to north Florida) still contain 50 percent to 60 percent overseeding.

Several courses experienced rapid transitioning as the ryegrass/bluegrass became too dry during a recent warm spell. The overseeding burned out before the bermudagrass was actively growing, and this created thin spots on several putting greens. Ample water and fertility should continue on putting surfaces to allow for a smoother transition and to encourage sustained bermudagrass growth.

Although forecasts are not optimistic, we're all hoping and praying for a normal rainy season this summer.

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Credit: USGA Links On Line

2001 Florida Plants of the Year - Part 3

Editors Note: *The Florida Plants of the Year program was launched in 1998 and has been beneficial to both consumers and growers. Purchasers are introduced to under-utilized but proven Florida plant material. This program is sponsored by the Woody Division of the Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association (FNGA). This group of plants deserves consideration for their drought and stress tolerances and wildlife attraction.*

COMMON NAME: Indigo Spires

BOTANICAL NAME: *Salvia 'Indigo Spires'*
HARDINESS: Zones 7-10
MATURE HEIGHT AND SPREAD: 3'- 4' x 3'- 4'
CLASSIFICATION: Herbaceous perennial
LANDSCAPE USE: Long lasting color in perennial border or accent plant
CHARACTERISTICS: This herbaceous perennial does well in sun or light shade. It is a butterfly and hummingbird plant that blooms for a long period of time. The vigorous plant has cuttable flower spikes of deep blue with gray-green foliage and responds well to pruning.

COMMON NAME: Miniature West Indian or Singapore Holly

BOTANICAL NAME: *Malpighia coccigera*
HARDINESS: Zones 10-11
MATURE HEIGHT X SPREAD: 2.5' x 3'
CLASSIFICATION: Evergreen shrub
LANDSCAPE USE: Low hedge or groundcover
CHARACTERISTICS: The spreading branches with shiny dark, holly-like leaves are a backdrop for 1" white flowers in spring followed by orange edible berries. Sun or part shade are best, and the plants have a tolerate high pH and some salt exposure.

COMMON NAME: Varigated Dwarf or Asiatic Jasmine

BOTANICAL NAME: *Trachelospermum asiaticum 'Tricolor'*
HARDINESS: Zones 7-10
MATURE HEIGHT X SPREAD: 6'-12' tall and 5'-6' wide
CLASSIFICATION: Groundcover
LANDSCAPE USE: Groundcover for sun or shade
CHARACTERISTICS: This is a rapidly spreading evergreen viney ground cover. It has varigated white, green and red foliage and rarely blooms. Good for partial shade or full sun, this plant grows in places where other can not. As in all Dwarf Jasmines—the first year it sleeps, second year it creeps and the third year it leaps.

COMMON NAME: 'Summer Wave' Torenia

BOTANICAL NAME: *Torenia fournieri 'Summer Wave'*
HARDINESS: Zones 8-11, sensitive to frost
MATURE HEIGHT X SPREAD: 12" x 12"
CLASSIFICATION: Perennial
LANDSCAPE USE: Bedding plant for partial shade, containers and hanging baskets
CHARACTERISTICS: This perennial spreads quickly and can tolerate sun and partial shade. Deep blue color is hard to find in heat tolerant plants. will be available in other colors soon—deep purple and pink.

USGA Links Online Update

Drought Strategy Can Mitigate Damage

Editor's Note: The following information is excerpted from a USGA Links On Line Update. I edited out references to snowfall and mountains, which weren't pertinent. I found the remaining information useful and I hope you do to. The parentheses are mine.

Drought conditions are again predicted for much of (our area). Below-average precipitation this spring has (us under) water restrictions. Developing a plan early could help mitigate widespread damage across the golf course if water will be a limiting factor.

1. Develop a traffic control program if one is not already in place. Drought-stressed turf will not tolerate traffic very well.

2. Evaluate your irrigation system. Inefficient operation wastes water.

3. Use water sparingly during spring. Deep and infrequent watering will promote strong root development, and deep roots will allow for water conservation later in the season.

4. Employ a judicious fertility program to avoid excess top growth in the early part of the season.

5. Consider plant growth regulator use if you are not using any already. PGR use can improve root development and conserve soil moisture through top growth reduction.

6. Evaluate irrigated areas and determine which portions of the course are most important to play, i.e. up the middle from tee to green.

7. Establishing more drought-tolerant species across the golf course may be an option for the long haul. (When regrassing in-play or out-of-play areas, check with the University of Florida for possible drought resistant alternatives)

These are but a few tips to keep in mind heading into this season. Trees and other plantings also need attention during drought. Some species of trees require considerable amounts of water and may slowly go into decline during years of drought. Assess tree conditions regularly. Deep soaking periodically may be necessary to save desirable trees.

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USGA Pacific and the Northwest

Seashore Paspalum Looks Very Promising

Editor's Note: You may be wondering what in the world news from the Northwest Region has to do with Florida. Read on and check out the comments on Paspalum in Hawaii.

What are the two words heard most often when the following question is asked, "What is the biggest challenge facing golf maintenance in the fu-

ture?" The answer is "water and the environment."

Covering the vast and distinctly different regions of the Pacific Northwest and Hawaii, both of these topics are of utmost importance.

At this writing, the western Washington area has experienced approximately 60 percent of normal rainfall and snow pack in the Cascades.

This may impact golf courses that are coming under increased scrutiny for water issues and our beloved salmon. Despite the negatives of a rainy day, the Green Section office in Gig Harbor has done its rain dance.

Across the ocean, Hawaii continues to deal with its own water issues. Starting this summer, the entire Ewa plains (a large area near Pearl Harbor) will begin delivering all of the golf courses treated water.

This will be interesting to watch since a golf course on the North Shore (The Links at Kuilima) has been dealing with this issue since the time of construction in the early 90s. Effluent water-use on golf courses is not earthshaking news, but The Links at Kuilima may become the poster child for environmentalists and the golf course industry.

What makes this golf course so different? Tell me the last golf course you played or visited that had gone more than four years without fertilizing some of its fairways? Show me the fairways that have not received any fertilizer and also never had a herbicide or other pesticide applied? Then let's see what kind of playing quality these fairways provide for the players.

As you may have already guessed, the grass is seashore paspalum and the effluent water provides all of the nitrogen necessary for regular growth. Superintendent Mike Honma reports that this grass is rapidly taking over the entire golf course, including the greens. The more I see of this grass, when it is managed properly, the more exciting it becomes. Is seashore paspalum the grass of the future? No, it is the grass of today!

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Credit: USGA Links On Line