

Mother Nature

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cause of the drought," Zierden said. "All that's over, and ocean temperatures in the Pacific are back to normal. From that, we expect normal rainfall for at least the next nine to 12 months."

HOUSTON FLOODING

In the Houston area, Tropical Storm Allison landed a punishing blow dumping nearly three feet of rain that stirred deadly floods. The damage and extensive clean-up process was something superintendent Randy Dayton at the Northgate Country Club will not soon forget.

"We've had weed pressure and insects -



Hoses and squeegees were required to remove layers of silt from greens at the Northgate CC.

especially mole crickets - on the course all summer that got washed in with the silt and infested areas covered by the flooding," said Dayton. "We used MSMA [herbicide] to help control the crabgrass and goosegrass. All we could do was keep trying to suppress them."

Trimec was applied to areas with broad-leaf outbreaks, but grassy weeds were the bigger challenge. "The cooler weather is helping us out now, but there were locations this summer we had to battle it out with weeds. There's a weed called Johnson-grass which is commonly used along roadsides, and we had that all over," described Dayton. "It grows so fast it can look like corn growing out on the golf course. It took a couple of applications of MSMA to control, surprisingly. It's a really tough weed."

The course, situated along the banks of Cypress Creek, lost some large areas to erosion. As much as 10 feet to 15 feet of property slid down into the creek, according to Dayton. "The flood washed away ground underneath the creek banking that we had not noticed before," he said. "There wasn't much we could do about it. Areas just started dropping off into the creek 30 feet below."

The course was flooded again in October following a storm that delivered five inches of rain. "There was no damage, but we're constantly seeing more and more erosion," said Dayton. "I don't think the course can take much more. We suspect that with the increase in development, particularly in the western parts of Houston, it takes less and less rain before the creek starts overflowing."

"The Cypress Creek watershed, once prairie land that could absorb the water, is now rooftops, roads and parking lots," Dayton explained. "I think the flooding here will just keep getting worse."

The longest lasting effects from Allison was the damage caused to the pump house. "We fixed everything visually to the pump station, but we ended up with internal problems with the control system," Dayton said. "It was a good two months before our irrigation system was back to normal. With a Houston summer, we ended up seeing the effects of the flood on areas that weren't even flooded." ■

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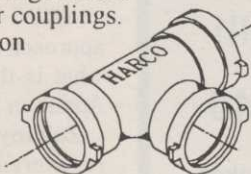
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