

*"Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'"*  
— ROBIN WILLIAMS

**S**pring is the time when golf is renewed with anticipation and excitement. For golf course superintendents it is also a time of preparation for the coming season and inevitable summer stress. Here are a few things to keep in mind during the "party."

**1 Take care of residual problems from last year.** If old disease symptoms are present upon spring green-up, clean them up. Old symptoms are a source of inoculum that can potentially result in early and severe disease development later in the season.

**2 Spring growth initiation varies.** Remember, cool season turfgrass shoot growth initiation varies among species. For example, tall fescue initiates a more rapid spring shoot growth rate than Kentucky bluegrass. The difference is most obvious in a Kentucky bluegrass rough that has patches of tall fescue. The earlier shoot growth rate contributes to the obvious appearance of tall fescue clumps. Regarding creeping bentgrass, rapid shoot growth is much slower to occur compared to annual bluegrass. The creeping bentgrass may appear to be doing nothing compared to annual bluegrass. A common mistake is to try to increase creeping bentgrass shoot growth by applying higher than normal rates of nitrogen. Creeping bentgrass will start growing when it darn well feels like it — don't push it! Excessive nitrogen in spring will only lead to problems later in the year (for example, succulent growth, potential reduction in root growth, etc.)

**3 Be aware of sporadic root die back.** It's an interesting phenomenon that was first reported by Dr. James B. Beard while at Texas A&M in the late 1970s. On warm season turfgrasses, specifically bermudagrass and St. Augustinegrass, root die back can occur at the time of first leaf emergence. Roots that were white and healthy quickly turn brown and die. Root regeneration occurs rather quickly but mechanical practices at the time of first leaf emergence are detrimental. Root die back does not appear

## Spring Cleaning

BY KARL DANNEBERGER



A COMMON MISTAKE IS TO TRY TO INCREASE CREEPING BENTGRASS SHOOT GROWTH BY APPLYING HIGHER THAN NORMAL RATES OF NITROGEN.

to occur every year and may be sporadic, but why chance aggressive management practices at that time?

**4 Annual bluegrass seedhead control with growth regulators is a popular practice in areas where annual bluegrass turf predominates.** Various methods of predicting when best to apply a growth regulator is based on phenological events (for example, seedhead in the boot of the sheath, seedhead appearance in the rough) and climatic data (growing degree day models) but in any case, getting the product down before seedhead emergence is important. It might be suggested to mix some iron with the plant growth regulator to reduce any phytotoxic response. Also, if melting-out is a concern, putting down a fungicide prior to the plant growth regulator application would be recommended.

**5 Stress affects the speed of spring transition.** Although there are several herbicide strategies to removing perennial ryegrass or *Poa trivialis* from bermudagrass that are quite effective, the amount of stress that you put on that overseeded turf through mowing, fertilization or watering can influence the speed of transition.

**6 Coring to relieve compaction gets pushed earlier and earlier in the season to the beginning of spring mainly to not impact rounds of golf.** The benefits from coring have been reported to last between 5 to 8 weeks. Maximum effect from coring should be timed prior to the summer stress period. Following the 5- to 8-week window some sort of quadra or pencil tine coring should be initiated on roughly a 3-week basis.

**7 Disclaimer:** The above recommendations may need to be adjusted based on local conditions.

Let the party begin!

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