



What's Cooking?

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Unfortunately, for many golf course superintendents this summer, what's cooking is the golf course. Unusually cool weather this spring set the table for the intense disease activity and severe heat stress that occurred soon after the early arrival of high temperatures and high humidity in June. The stressful weather conditions arrived early and have not let up all summer. For superintendents in northern Michigan and Wisconsin, this is their first experience with summer patch and pythium.

In fact, just about every major disease that affects cool season turfgrass has been seen this season—and seen again and again. Not just a patch or two here and there, but extensive disease activity and combinations of diseases. Not just dollar spot on green banks, but dollar spot and red thread. Not just brown patch on the greens, but brown patch, pythium, anthracnose and summer patch.

Extended periods of unfavorable weather provided ideal conditions for some very nasty plant pathogens. Superintendents in the north are learning what superintendents in the south deal with each season: that under certain conditions of extremely favorable weather for disease activity and when a susceptible turfgrass host is under stress, an application of the proper fungicide does not provide the expected level of protection. A properly cali-

brated spray carefully applied to, for example, the greens does not afford any relief of the disease symptoms, or, at best, it provided only a day or two of disease control.

At this point, the superintendents who have generally relied on fungicides to provide high quality playing conditions are somewhat dumbfounded, while other superintendents who rely much more on cultural control of turf problems simply roll up their sleeves and continue or intensify the spiking, aerifying, hand mowing, hand watering, and other maintenance practices that they have been doing all summer anyway. The "spiking" superintendent generally hears only the usual grumbling from golfers when midsummer disruption of the putting surface is necessary, because these operations do not surprise anyone. On the other hand, golfers are ready to lynch the "spraying" superintendent as soon as the greens aerifier leaves the shop during July.

So far this summer, the "spikers" are ahead of the "sprayers", sometimes both have lost significant amounts of turf, but the magnitude of the red number next to the fertilizer/pesticide line item of the operating budget at the end of the year is much, much smaller for you know who. What has been learned so far? That techniques such as midsummer aerifying with quadratines, hand

watering, raising the height of cut, and spiking can and do work, but more so when they are initiated before extensive losses of turf occur.

It should come as no surprise that mechanical injury from maintenance equipment to turf already under stress from a variety of other problems has been a common concern this summer as well. An interesting note is the "triplex ring" type injury that has been frequently seen at courses using the latest models of hand mowers. The new breed of hand mowers tends to be significantly heavier than the older models and they seem to track so straight and true that they cause injury to the perimeters of greens, just like a triplex.

Courses that utilize hand mowers for greens, though, have generally been under less stress than courses using the triplex units. Obviously, (it should be obvious) when the heavy walker is shaving the greens down below 1/8 of an inch, it makes little difference what mower is being used. Triplex or hand mowers—SLOW DOWN—especially along the perimeters of greens, and don't forget about the benefit of switching from grooved rollers to solid, smooth rollers to minimize stress and injury to the turf—it really works.

Good luck with the rest of the season—think positive—snow is around the corner! ♣

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