

# If There is Pink Snowmold in June, This MUST Be Wisconsin!

By Monroe S. Miller, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

Good grief – we've had a wet and cool spring in Wisconsin. The forecast all too often was "partly cloudy with a chance of rain." Generally, there hasn't been flooding amounts of precipitation – we are only a little above normal for the year – but it seemed to rain almost all the time. Jeff Gregos took a photo of a slide sample of pink snowmold from our 9th fairway and the field of vision was full of spores.

"I'm not worried," was my response. "As soon as the sun comes out the disease will disappear." As it turns out, that wasn't until June!

The hot summer that arrived in the second week of the sixth month spawned some fairly strong storms around the state, and the result was significant damage on golf courses. The sound of chain saws was pretty common for the southwest corner of the state up through the Fox River Valley to Green Bay. A few golf courses won't be the same because of the loss of mature trees.

Mostly, I am struck by the parallels of what I do now and what went on during my youth on our family farm. Lately, the contrasts have been on my mind.

On a Wisconsin dairy farm, there is a frenzy in the spring getting fields plowed and crops planted. Weather pays a huge role in that. Fall is equally busy with harvest, particularly of row crops like corn and beans. Granted, there is hay to make in the summer but only a few farmers are raising oats or barley anymore. So for them, the pressure eases in July and

August.

Not so for golf course superintendents. The pace and the pressure intensifies and we are at our busiest in July and August. It won't be unusual for many of us to work every single day of those two months, whether we like it or not.

But remind yourself of this: we are well past the summer solstice and I can sense it. The sun is edging, ever so slowly, south. Dusk comes a few minutes earlier each day and sunrise comes a few minutes later. You can tell it in the way the shadows fall. There are fewer birdsongs in the morning and more insect sounds in the afternoon and evening. The tomatoes ripen, the corn tassels, and Queen Anne's lace begins to bloom. There is more talk of the Badgers and the Packers. Young employees start talk of the fall semester.

Soon – all too soon when you are my age – it will end. Another golf season with all of its glories and warts will slide into the slower months of autumn. One of the most difficult things for me to learn during my career was to enjoy (or at least appreciate) these days of intense pressure and stress. Things appear worse at the moment than they will in hindsight. Summer is still summer, and it can be a wonderful time in Wisconsin.

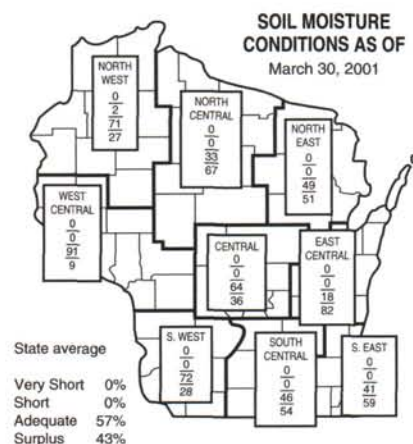
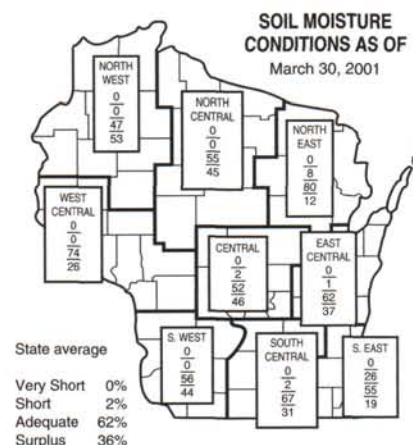
As for the two months past, a summary is here from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service.

I enjoy visits from Terry Ward more than nearly anyone else. He embodies so many traits I envy and

has had so many experiences I respect that I am enriched every time he stops. When he swung through in May, I was thrilled with the news he brought of the 2001 Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium. Three things were exciting:

(1) The Symposium will convene at Wisconsin's only five star hotel – The American Club in Kohler. There is no place like it and the room rate will startle you in a favorable way!

(2) Format changes initiated last year will be used this year. Bravo!





(3) The subject chosen – emerging problems and pests – has drawn an outstanding roster of speakers. I won't spoil the surprises, other than to ask, "how would you like to see and hear Stan Zontek again?"

The dates are November 13 and 14 in Kohler. If we don't set an attendance record this year, we NEVER will.

Congrats to the committee of Ward, Johnson, Otto, Nees, Waddington, Worzella, Biro and Vavrek.

Sympathy to the staff at Midwest Irrigation and the family of Gordon Cunningham. He passed away June 3 in Dubuque at the age of 75.

Gordy and his partner Peter Beaves designed and installed many irrigation systems in Wisconsin. Superintendents like

me who did business with them found each man to have the ultimate in ethics, honesty and congeniality. They had the same kind of people working for them. Their work reflected their professionalism. And with our job, we didn't even have a small disagreement.

Gordon designed golf courses as well as irrigation systems. His parents immigrated to here from Scotland, so Gordon came by his love of golf and golf courses naturally. What name could be more Scottish than Gordon Cunningham?

He will be missed by more people than he would ever have realized.

Tuesday, July 10th will be one of the most memorable days in the history of golf in Wisconsin. That night the Wisconsin State Golf Association will celebrate its centennial.

The evening will be emceed by former Tour player Steve Melnyk. The Wisconsin players who have been elected to the WSGA Hall of Fame will be recognized. Many of the current PGA Tour players who had outstanding WSGA amateur careers will be honored. Also featured will be the founding clubs, USGA dignitaries and players of the past.

I can hardly wait!

If golf course superintendents are anything, they are plantsmen. Grasses are most important, but annuals and perennials and woody ornamentals are all key to the golf course setting.

Given that, most of you would have waited in line like I did at the UW – Madison Botany Department greenhouses to get an up close look at the rare Titan Arum during its flowering. Only a handful of these plants (11) in the US have ever produced the single flower.

The flower is of titanic proportions. It grows from a huge tuber – 175 pounds. The flowering stalk can reach ten feet and when it opens the flower has a 3' to 4'

## Wicked weather

Golf superintendents were asked:

**What single environmental or weather-related condition do you fear might negatively impact your course next year?**

**Drought/water supply shortage**

45%

**Turfgrass disease**

14%

**Ice/snow damage**

9%

**Flood**

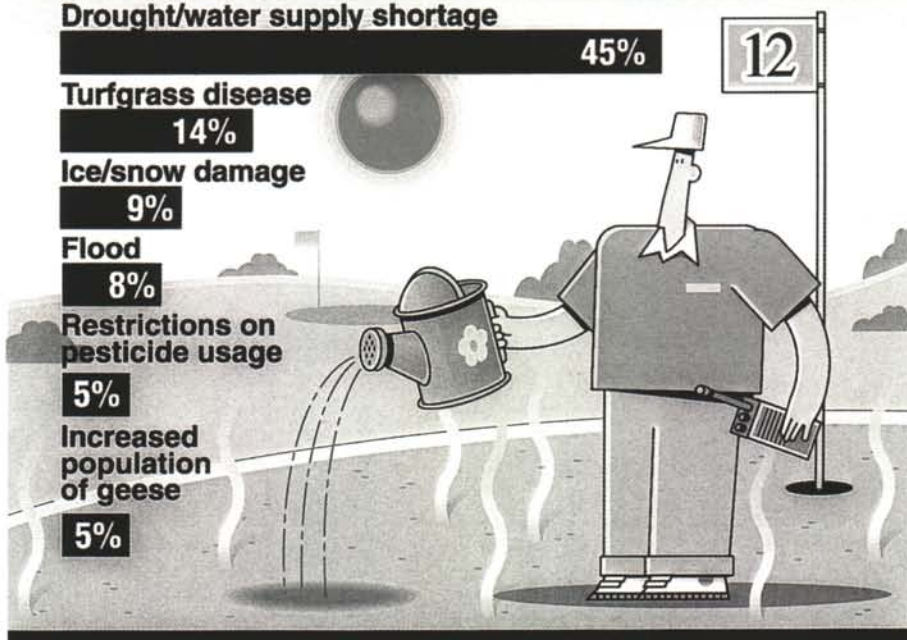
8%

**Restrictions on pesticide usage**

5%

**Increased population of geese**

5%



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diameter. No wonder it is called the world's largest flower.

The down side when the flower opens is the smell; it is a horrible stench that smells like rotting fish. The odor attracts pollinators like flesh flies and carrion beetles. The flower stays open for a few days and collapses when pollination is complete. It is a native of the equatorial rain forests in central Sumatra in Indonesia and is called the "corpse flower."

The corpse flower bloomed in the US first at the New York Botanical Garden in 1937 and most recently (before the Wisconsin blooming) at the Huntington Botanical Garden on August 1, 1999 in California.

Tens of thousands tromped up Bascom Hill to see the corpse flower. A photo I took is here for

you to see in case you missed it.

Wishes to John Gallus for a rapid recovery from emergency surgery he underwent on June 15th in Madison. Good health is everything and we hope John will be 100% before you know it.

A lesson I learned a long time ago from my parents is the value of hard work. A golf course in the summer is very hard work. Fortunately, most often that hard work is rewarded and recognized, and those two things make it worthwhile.

Dig in. Grind at it. Give it your all. And keep in mind that there will be snow sooner than we can imagine. 🌱



The Titan Arum three days before the flower opened. The height here is about 9 feet; the flower opened to a diameter of 3-4 feet!

