

The Best Season

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

Whew! It is finally here - autumn. Where I come from, Labor Day ushers in fall, the calendar notwithstanding.

It was a tough last half of the golf season weather wise here in southern and western Wisconsin - no rain. Zip. Zero. Zilch. No moisture relief for weeks and weeks, leaving us six to seven inches below normal in precipitation for the year. And last year ended very dry. But with fall comes hope for a change.

Between now and November 1st, the leaves will have turned from green to red and yellow and brown, and fallen to the ground. The bright colors of nature are fading fast these days and our world will change significantly in the coming weeks.

Who cannot be excited about the Badgers and Packers and the local high school football team? Is there anyone who doesn't enjoy taking a walk in the chilly night air, especially under a harvest moon?

Shorter, cooler days spell relief for golf courses that have been pushed hard all summer. They can use the relief, too. It is funny to me how I can barely wait for fall fairway aeration to begin. It puts an exclamation point on the turn in seasons and shows we are already working on playing conditions for next year.

I have even come to enjoy the familiar smell that nature brings with autumn - that unmistakable spicy, pungent aroma of roadside plants at their maturity.

And finally, like you too I hope, Cheryl and I will be able to take some vacation time. For us, it is the usual, always exciting, prospect of leaf peeping in New England at their best time of the year.

Enjoy the remaining days. The snow will fall before we turn around.

Belated congratulations to two of our close friends on the event of their appointment to tenure from their institutions of higher learning. Dr. John Stier of Wisconsin and Dr. Frank Rossi of Cornell attained that distinction this summer. And Frank turned 40 to top it off.

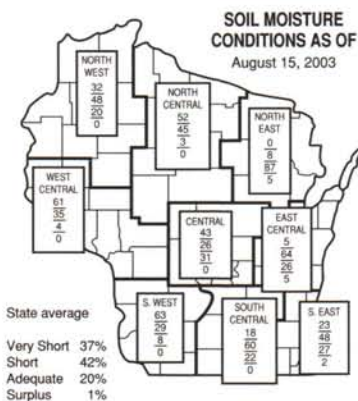
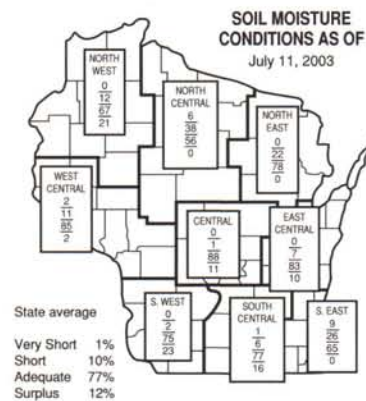
Testimony offered here from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service speaks to the dry weather for the past two months. State Climatologist John Young reported in mid-August that Grant, Crawford and LaCrosse counties had drought conditions and qualified for drought status. And our county qualified a week after the aforementioned. We are, in a way, fortunate because of irrigations systems. Farmers, on the other hand, are watching corn, soybeans and alfalfa crops take a yield hit. Leaves on corn and soybeans are curling up in the response to no water.

Frustrating has been the unevenness of moisture conditions, not only for different areas of the state but also in different regions of a single county. That has been the story all summer.

But as time has expanded my view, I know that these events will even out, if not in a season then over several seasons. I guess it is merely our turn.

But that doesn't make it any less painful watching every single opportunity of rain disappear before it reaches us.

Speaking of hot and dry weather, a two-year study by the Union Of



Concerned Scientists and The Ecological Society of America released earlier this year spoke to changes that seem headed our way.

By 2030, unless changes are made, global warming will make Wisconsin feel more like Illinois. And if that's not enough to scare you, by the end of the century our winter snow and relatively mild summers will give way to a climate like Arkansas.

In addition to the changes in the landscape we will suffer more natural disasters, like floods and droughts, and the problems that accompany them. The study showed by the end of the century temperatures will rise 6 to 11 degrees in the winter and 8 to 18 in the summer. That change is comparable to the climate change at the last ice age (or in

the past 1,000 years).

Part of the answer is diminishing the potential for these changes lies in reducing heat-trapping gases. That means energy efficiency will be seriously discussed again. And soon.

The faithful believers among us will be heartened by a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that concluded faith-committed weekly-plus church attendees live longer compared to nongoiners.

About seven years for the religious. This study accounted for such factors as gender (gals live longer in general and go to church more frequently) and health problems preventing attendance. However, you can't just suddenly "get religion" but must embrace longstanding devotion.

Other research has shown

increased longevity for Catholic priests and nuns, Mormon priests and Trappist monks (according to Health Psychology). Part of this may be that religious folks smoke and drink less, have better support networks, and possess a more optimistic and hopeful view of life. Plus, out of a feeling of ultimate acceptance and the relaxed meditation of prayer or Sabbath observance may come stress prevention and enhanced well-being. Recent findings show healthier immune functioning and fewer hospital admissions among religiously active people.

Amen.

If you have been seeing less of Rod Johnson this summer, it is because he has been spending a lot of time in northwest Wisconsin, from Osseo to Rice Lake, helping in the search for that feared

Norwegian north woods terrorist Ole bin Loggin.

"He's a tough one," Rod said recently, "and it will take another Norwegian to find him. We all think alike."

Yeah, hey der...

Nice job by everyone associated with the Summer Field Day at the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility. It was well organized, there is a ton of research work under study, and the equipment show is always fun for people like us. If you missed it, you also missed seeing Bob Newman and the dedication of a Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship in his name. In every way, it was an outstanding day.

The world seems to slow down for a time now with summer behind us. Be smart and make the most of it. ♡

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