



New Services, Same Price

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For longtime Wisconsin superintendents it might be difficult to imagine, but the Turfgrass Diagnostic Lab (TDL) has been around for over a decade. From Gregos to Abler to Koch, and Maxwell to Jung to Kerns, the lab has changed with the changing needs of today's turfgrass managers. Despite the changes, the lab remains based on one fundamental goal; to provide the turfgrass managers in Wisconsin with fast and accurate results to all their turfgrass problems. With that said, today's TDL is striving to improve the quality and speed of sample reports while also offering new services to its clients throughout the region as a whole.

Since my arrival at the TDL nearly four years ago, I have focused on increasing the value of a TDL contract membership through complimentary sample reports and biweekly email updates. Beginning in 2009, longtime TDL users may notice some new diagnostic services that will both increase our ability to detect pathogenic causes of turfgrass decline and pinpoint possible abiotic ones. First off, the antiquated microscopes that had served the lab well for many years have been replaced by state of the art microscopes with vastly improved clarity and focus at high magnifications. Together with a new microscope camera, we will be able to not only observe fungal spores and root-infecting fungi with greater clarity, but also to portray these images to you in your reports with greater focus and resolution.

In addition to new microscopes, pH and electrical conductivity (EC) will now be measured on each sample submitted with the pur-

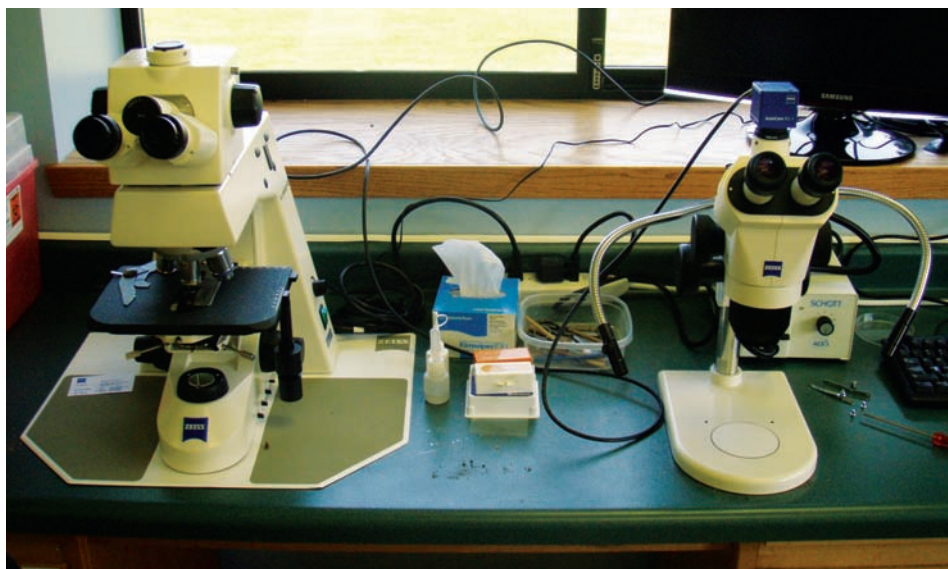


Figure 1: A brand new compound microscope (left), dissecting microscope, and microscope camera will aid both our diagnostic abilities and the quality of the reports.

chase of two new handheld meters. The pH of a plant's root zone plays a crucial role not only in some turfgrass diseases such as take-all patch, but also in the availability of essential plant nutrients. A fast and accurate measure on a submitted sample can pinpoint or rule out possible pH problems, leading to a more accurate diagnosis and more relevant recommendations. Though high salt levels that lead to high electrical conductivity readings are more common in arid regions of the southwestern US than the Great Lakes, increased water restrictions will undoubtedly lead to more golf courses and other turfgrass stands being irrigated with effluent water. Effluent water can quickly increase salt levels in the soil, leading to severe pathogenic and abiotic turfgrass problems. For those who might be concerned with soil EC levels for any reason, the Turfgrass Diagnostic Lab can now help manage those concerns.

These new services complement the diagnostic services already offered by the TDL; fast and accurate diagnosis of all turfgrass problems, timely reports including pictures and detailed recommendations, and for contract members biweekly email updates and disease alerts. The best part about all of this is that for the fourth consecutive year there will be no change in sample submission fees. The generous support of the TDL by its many contract members helps keep sample submission fees affordable for all golf courses. A listing of 2009 contract members will appear soon at our website (www.plantpath.wisc.edu/tdl) as well as the "TDL Year in Review" article in the January/February issue of *The Grass Roots*. More information on becoming a contract member yourself or sample submission instructions and forms can also be found at our website. 🌱