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A Fast Start Followed by a Slow but Steady Spring: What Does it Mean for Insects This Year

By Dr. R. Chris Williamson, Department of Entomology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

It seems like there are no two years alike! Last year at this time we were about 2-3 weeks behind on growing degree-day units. And, this year, we are about 2-3 weeks ahead. So, what does it all mean, and how will it affect the insect populations this year? The answer to this question is not as simple as one may think. There are several factors that contribute to insect development and population density. Insects are cold-blooded animals that are dependent on temperature for biological activity, most insects are inactive at temperatures below 50 F.

In theory, one would expect insects to begin developing sooner and more quickly if temperatures are above 50 F° earlier than normal. So far, we have accumulated approximately 350 GDD units, and we had only about 100 GDD units at this time last year. This is over a 3.5 X increase! Despite this occurrence, nature somehow seems to find a way to get things back to “normal.”

Last year Japanese beetle adults did not begin to emerge and fly until the first week in July, they typically emerge in late-June. Although the adult beetles emerged later than “normal” last year, GDD units rapidly increased and accumulated in July and August, thus the grubs developed and occurred when we would typically expect.

While we are measurably ahead on the buildup of GDD units so far this year, the accumulation has been relatively



Japanese beetles look menacing when they are “pile up” mating or feeding. Grub control should be applied when the adults are first seen for best control.

slow but steady (consistent) since we experienced the rapid accumulation in March. If we continue to experience the current trend of temperatures and we do not experience any abnormally high heat-unit accumulation, the emergence of Japanese beetle adults will likely be a week or two earlier this year. Consequently, we may see Japanese beetle adults beginning to emerge around the second week in June.

So, what does this mean for your management approach or strategy for managing insect pests such as the Japanese beetle? The appropriate IPM strategy would be to monitor the emergence of Japanese beetle adults by either using pheromone traps or simply observing the preferred hosts for the presence of Japanese beetle adults. As soon as Japanese beetles adults are caught in traps

or observed on plants, respective preventative white grub insecticide treatments should be applied. Be sure to apply an adequate amount of post-treatment water (about 0.10-0.20 inches) immediately following the insecticide application.

Should you decide to forgo a preventative application and go with a curative or rescue treatment, understand that smaller grubs (younger) are much easier to control than larger (older). Because most curative or rescue grub insecticides have a relatively short-residual activity (< 15 days), make sure to closely inspect the turf for the presence of young larvae to ensure maximum control. The bottom line regarding the impact of a fast start followed by a slow but steady spring is that it can be challenging to predict how it will ultimately affect insect pest populations and subsequent damage. Therefore, make sure to regularly monitor and sample for respective insect pests to accurately determine the appropriate management or strategy timing to ensure the greatest likelihood of success.



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A Wet Issue

By Jake Schneider, Assistant Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

I'm not sure how it came up, but while enjoying our day at the April monthly meeting in Lake Geneva, I made a comment to my friend, colleague, and playing partner that scrutiny of water usage on Wisconsin's golf courses will be here sooner than most think. Maybe that is a widely-held belief, but I haven't been privy to those discussions. Mostly, we think of the southeastern and southwestern portions of the US when we think of irrigation limitations on golf courses. And, truth be told, why so many golf courses are built in water-scarce areas seems rather non-sensical to me.

With approximately 15,000 inland lakes and two of the Great Lakes on our borders, Wisconsin isn't exactly one of these water-scarce areas. Of course, portions of the state were absolutely inundated with rain a few weeks after my comments at Geneva National. Recently, the Great Lakes Compact brought with it new permits and recordkeeping requirements for superintendents in northern and eastern Wisconsin. In June 2016, a statewide water-use report will be released and is

likely to have a significant effect on future irrigation-related policies. It's no secret that golf courses seem to be easy targets for environmentally-based restrictions despite the fact that they are a drop in the bucket when it comes to these issues.

For several years, the media has latched onto diminished groundwater levels and lakes that have dried up in the central sands portion of the state. Angry cabin owners and dry lakes make for an interesting story and rightfully so. Even though Mother Nature may have more to do with these changes than do high-capacity and agricultural wells, we know as well as anyone that you can't control the weather, but you certainly can control wells. And, unfortunately for us (for a number of reasons), far more people eat potatoes than play golf.

Who knows exactly what the future will bring, and I certainly hope that we won't be battling this issue in the coming years. In the meantime, I believe that the greatest defense that we can provide is to become the best water managers that we can be... and to record it. Chances are that you're

already doing all that you can to water wisely, and irrigation audits, soil moisture meters, improved sprinkler components, and ET-based irrigation are becoming commonplace and leading us in the right direction. None of it is cheap or easy, but doing as much as we can is necessary. Although potato eaters outnumber golfers, said french fry aficionados aren't very likely to notice when potatoes plug in the fairway when it hasn't rained in two weeks (This sentence does, in fact, make sense in my scrambled brain). In other words, oversaturated fairways are noticed more often than soggy farm fields.

Contrary to popular (cough, cough) opinion, my predictions have been wrong before. Remember that article where I predicted that artificial turf would become more common on golf courses? No? Good. Well, if the man shuts down our water, both gloomy predictions may come true at the same time. Let's make sure that that doesn't happen. Our golf courses and environment will be better because of it.



Water conservation should be followed by all turf managers before it is a regulation. In this picture a adjustable rotation head allows the green to be watered but not the sand bunker or nearby pond.



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April Meeting at Geneva National

By Jake Schneider, Assistant Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club


Geneva National Golf Club once again hosted the first WGCSA monthly meeting on April 23. And, unlike last year, Mother Nature was kind enough to provide a beautiful, snow-free day for the very well-attended event.

Pete Whitacre from the Toro Company kicked off the meeting with an informative talk about the looming Tier 4 air-quality emission standards that will be affecting new, off-road, 25-plus horsepower diesel engines beginning in 2013. The new standards were mandated by the U.S. EPA and are meant to reduce nitrous oxide and particulate matter emissions. Pete explained that there are several methods that the manufacturers are likely to use to meet the new regulations, including converting to gasoline engines when feasible. However, for competitive purposes, none

of the major turf equipment manufacturers have publicly laid-out their plans for Tier 4, but the bottom line is that the newly-affected equipment will cost 10-20% more than the equipment that is currently available. As such, he strongly recommended that superintendents take a close look at their near-future replacements with their courses' decision makers because buying sooner rather than later could save a substantial amount of money. While pre-2013 equipment can still be sold, the price difference means that it's likely to sell very quickly.

After that dose of less-than-great (but good to know) news, the attendees were treated to a hearty tailgate-style lunch prior to taking to the golf course. As usual, Kevin Knudtson and his entire staff at Geneva National had the Palmer Course

in fantastic condition. As my bounding wedge shots could attest to, the greens were firm, and the course was fast. As expected by the author, the group consisting of Aron Hogden, Jim Kerns, Trygve Ekern, and Scott Gilbertson found their way around the course fairly well and posted a score of -15 in the scramble format. Fittingly, Dr. Kerns knocked one in from 100 yards for an eagle on their last hole, and they finished five strokes ahead of the rest of the field. Congratulations were also in order for the hole-prize winners that included John Rautmann, Dustin Riley, Andy Kronwall, Tim Wegner, and Brad Legnaioli.

Thanks to all who organized the event and especially to Kevin and the rest of our hosts for an outstanding day at Geneva National. 



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THANKS TO HOST SUPERINTENDENT
KEVIN KNUDTSON!



Honor of a Lifetime

By Ed Kirchenwitz, Owner and Golf Course Superintendent, Sunset Hills Golf Course

I was extremely lucky to be accepted as a guardian on a recent Stars & Stripes Honor Flight with 112 World War II veterans from Wisconsin. I now have a better understanding as to why they are referred to as the greatest generation. They are all heroes, yet very humble in every respect.

The Stars & Stripes Honor Flight is a non-profit organization that sends WWII veterans free of charge to Washington DC for a one-day trip to see the memorial built in their honor. The goal is to get as many veterans as possible to the memorial, but time is running out. Did you know that every 86 seconds another WWII veteran passes away? So time is of the essence. The faster money can be raised, the sooner they can get these veterans to Washington DC before it is too late.

Last year on June 16th, I did a Longest Day of Golf fund-raiser at Sunset Hills Golf Course. I took pledges for every par, birdie and hole-in-one; or people could just donate a set amount. I started golfing at 5:00am and continued playing until 9:00pm. Sunset Hills is a par 3 course with a yardage of 1466. I played a total of 369 holes that day. I had 229 pars, 38 birdies,



92 bogies and 10 double bogies. Unfortunately, no hole-in-ones was recorded, but a few came pretty darn close! I putted every ball into the cup, no "gimmies" allowed. My customers, friends and relatives were very generous; donating a total of \$5,533.00, way beyond my expectations. This amount paid for 11 veterans to go on the Honor Flight.

Now, since I have been privileged enough to be a part of one of these flights, I have decided to hold another Longest Day of Golf event on Saturday, June 23rd. We are inviting any WWII veterans from Sheboy-

gan County who are Honor Flight alumni to attend. We will be having a brat fry for them and we hope they will stay awhile, share stories of their trips with each other and be on hand to cheer me on as I golf as many holes as possible.

By sharing this story with you, I am hoping that everyone reading this will go back to their perspective courses and take up a collection from their employees in honor of a friend, relative or course patron that served in WWII. Also, if you know of anyone who is a WWII vet, please encourage them to fill out an application to go on an Honor Flight, if they have not already done so. You can find all the information you need at www.starsandstripeshonorflight.org. Checks for donations can be made payable to Stars & Stripes Honor Flight and sent to:

Sunset Hills Golf Course
Attn.: Ed Kirchenwitz
W3634 Sunset Rd
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Along with donating money to make the trips possible I encourage everyone to attend a homecoming celebration at the airport when the flights arrive back in Wisconsin. Mitchell Airport in Milwaukee has had over 6,000 family and general citizens welcoming these men and women back with signs and cheering.

The program is nationwide and Wisconsin's Flights are not just in Milwaukee La-Crosse has Freedom Honor Flight, Madison has the Badger Honor Flight, the Fox Valley has the Old Glory Honor Flight, Wausau has the Never Forgotten Honor Flight and the NorthWest part of the state has the Honor Flight Northland out of Duluth.

Anything you can do for this wonderful organization would be greatly appreciated. And I know, from experience, that any veteran blessed by this donation will appreciate, and remember forever, that one day in Washington DC for the rest of his or her life.



Ed with Leo Bauer, who was a member of the U.S. Army, Ninth Air Force Division at the World War II Memorial.



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A Penny Saved is A Penny Earned

By Robert Vavrek, Senior Agronomist USGA Green Section

Editors Note: This column originally appeared in the USGA Green Sections Record May 22, 2012 and is used here with permission.

As a golf course superintendent, your first challenge was convincing those who pay the bills that the old *Poa annua* and creeping bentgrass greens were becoming more unreliable each year due to a combination of stressful weather conditions and unreasonable expectations for fast, flawless playing surfaces throughout the season. You did your homework, presented your case and, with a little help from your friends (i.e. Green Section agronomist), you are now the proud owner (well, caretaker) of brand spanking new creeping bentgrass greens.

Then you see it! And it elicits the same feeling you get when you discover the first ding, dent or scratch on a new car. The "it" is that first small colony of *Poa annua* that dares to contaminate your pure stand of new and improved bentgrass and you know more will follow unless you take action. It makes you recall comments from the know-it-all golfer who questioned the sanity of those who approved the regressing project because, after all, everyone knows *Poa* will ultimately dominate the putting surfaces again within a few years.

What can be done to keep *Poa annua* out of new greens when it is abundantly present in the fairways and roughs? Will unrepaired ball marks, aeration holes and other

openings in the turf canopy present constant opportunity for *Poa* to contaminate the greens? More importantly, might the know-it-all soothsayer, for once, actually be right?

Well, some degree of *Poa annua* contamination into new greens is inevitable at old courses, especially courses in the North Central Region where conditions for an-

Wouldnt it be great if there were a product that had the ability not to control, but actually prevent Poa Annua from becoming established...

nual bluegrass establishment and survival are ideal for a significant portion of the golf season. However, the amount of encroachment can be limited by employing a combination of cultural and chemical programs. For example, keeping the greens as dry as possible and making an extra effort to manage organic matter accumulation with light, frequent applications of sand topdressing will go a long way towards providing a growing environment that favors creeping bentgrass versus *Poa annua*.

Most superintendents would have simply reached down and physically removed that first, annoying dime-sized colony of *Poa*

annua from the green; and hand removal is an effective early strategy for keeping new greens clean. It doesn't take much time to have someone walk the perimeters of the greens every week or so and cull out a few *Poa* colonies, if you begin the process before contamination gets out of hand. Start as soon as the greens are open to play, if not before. Wait too long and an abundance of large *Poa* colonies will transform a simple task into a labor-intensive, time-consuming ordeal for the crew, not to mention turning the greens into Swiss cheese every week. .

Judicious use of plant growth regulators, such as Cutless and Trimit can definitely slow down the rate of *Poa annua* encroachment into new greens, but they tend to be more effective at courses in locations that experience more summer heat stress

versus courses in the relatively cool climate of the North Central Region. What about *PoaCure*, *Velocity* or *Xonerate* for *Poa* control in new greens? As of today, you need an experimental use permit for *PoaCure*, *Velocity* is not labeled for greens and there is no information on the *Xonerate* label regarding rates or timing for use on putting greens. End of discussion, for now.

Wouldn't it be great if there were a product that had the ability not to control, but actually prevent *Poa annua* from becoming established in bentgrass greens? Wouldn't it be great if that product was actually labeled for putting greens? Well, there is, but very few turf managers in this Region ever consider the use of bensulide preemergent herbicide as part of a comprehensive program to manage *Poa* encroachment in new greens.

Maybe bensulide is too "old school." Then again, even Old Spice aftershave is making a comeback. Maybe the urban legend of bensulide being an insidious "root pruner" still frightens off potential users, even though research indicates no significant effect on rooting when it is applied to greens at low to moderate rates.



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