

Impatiently Waiting For Warm Weather

By **BOB VAVREK**,
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Impatiently waiting for the warm weather... The upper-Midwest could sure use the spell of unusually warm weather that jump-started the turf growth and development in New England a few weeks ago. Many courses in central to northern Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin are still awaiting the first sustained surge of turf growth this year. Scars from severe snow mold injury have been extremely slow to heal. Pockmarks from dollar spot injury that occurred last September and October are still evident on greens as well.

Slow recovery has encouraged some superintendents to apply extra fertilizer to the playing surfaces at a time when soil temperatures are not high enough to initiate the release of nutrients. This strategy can backfire when the weather finally warms up and a flush of heavy growth occurs.

Too much topgrowth during the spring causes several problems. The obvious concern is keeping up with mowing at a time when the maintenance crew is not yet fully staffed. Furthermore, excessive leaf tissue is often produced at the expense of root growth. Root growth needs to be encouraged before the hot weather arrives. Wet weather during April and early May has already limited root growth. Shallow root growth was noted on greens during several Turf Advisory Service visits.

It was encouraging to find core cultivation operations on greens, tees, and fairways well underway during visits. Coring the playing surfaces is one of the most effective ways to stimulate deep, healthy root growth. Golfers need to be reminded that the holes will heal over slowly during cool, cloudy weather.

To make matters worse, the combination of lingering snow mold injury and slow growth provides an opportunity for weed encroachment. It's already another banner season for dandelions and knotweed in fairways and roughs. It

might not be a bad idea to plan pre-emergence herbicide applications for areas that have a history of crabgrass problems. At least budget for applications of post-emergence herbicides such as quinclorac (Drive) turf or fenoxaprop (Acclaim) just in case crabgrass appears with a vengeance on thin bunker banks, fairways, and roughs.

Let's hope that next month's update is more upbeat.
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