

# THE YEAR OF EXTREMES—1973

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No one connected with the turf industry in the Metropolitan New York area — or in fact the whole Northeast — will ever forget the 1973 season. We did not have a little of everything, we had a lot of everything. Mother Nature threw the book at us this year in the form of adverse weather (excessive cloudy days, excessive rainfall, and excessive heat), every disease imaginable, insects galore, and then to top all, the summer ended off with a blistering heat wave.

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After a very mild winter, spring broke early and March had some very nice workable days, so all turfmen thought what a wonderful season was ahead for us. That was short-lived — for the rains came and continued. Cloudy rainy weather can make the grass look green, if you ignore the diseases, but when the sun breaks out that little grass plant just fades away. This is what happened near the end of June and the first part of July — grasses started to die like mosquitoes at a Dursban cocktail party.

Those areas that did survive this period met a new onslaught in early August by another downpouring rain (oh, what ever happened to those half inch and one inch rainfalls) followed by warm, muggy weather. Diseases were working on diseases — they had no grass left to devour.

Ah, we thought in mid-August when we had a breathing spell of cool nights, we are “over the hump” and “Poa annua” weather is back with us. So we started to aerify and rip the turf areas apart for reseeding, when Mother Nature let go with another block buster in the form of two weeks of hot weather — nine days of which the temperatures were over ninety degrees. So there went some more grass — yes, even new seedlings to the ravages of heat and disease. Those who had difficulty in identifying Pythium diseases previously had no trouble during this period.

In fact, the grasses have been infested with every disease in the book this year — the plant pathologists are grinning from ear to ear. In spring and early summer, Red Thread or Pink Patch (*Corticium fuciforme*) and the Leafspots (*Helminthosporium*) walked thru the fescues and bluegrass turf areas. Many beautiful bluegrass lawns were brown from leafspot diseases.

Fusarium Blight or Frog Eye Disease (*Fusarium roseum*) was more prevalent this year than many of us have ever witnessed. This disease caused considerable loss of turf on lawns, fairways and roughs this season. And naturally Dollar Spot (*Sclerotinia homoeocarpa*) and Large Brown Patch (*Rhizoctonia solani*) did not take a back seat. They were ever present. Mention has already been made of the severity of Pythium Blight or Cottony Blight (*Pythium*). Fairy Ring (*Basidiomycetes*) was present in all its glory, plus no doubt numerous other diseases that we did not even want to think about.

Oh yes, don't forget our friends the turfgrass weevils. They took their share of turf in May and June, and then, not being satisfied with that, produced a second active brood in August.

The Japanese Beetle is making its presence known this year after being sort of forgotten about for years. Even some resistant strains are being reported, so from now on do not include them out. The chinch bugs took a back seat this year — probably got drowned out — but the sod webworm and cutworms made up for them. If you witness numerous birds working ravenously on your lawn, you had better investigate before the above mentioned critters wipe it out.

So it really has been a year of extremes — with rainfall, temperatures, humidity, diseases, insects, wilt, and what-have-you. Even though it is best not to think about it and try as we may to forget, I think that 1973 will be a topic of conversation among turf men for some time to come. I only hope my golfing members do forget and forgive.

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