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Turf Grass TRENDS

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Snow molds and cold weather diseases

by Christopher Sann

For turfgrass managers, the coming of the cooler weather of fall and early winter signals a time when they can unwind. The fall is a period when they can decompress from the constant state of angst that typifies the turfgrass managers' states of mind during the warm weather months, and forget diseases, weeds and insects until next year. Often managers will spend this time coasting on auto-pilot, sometimes to their regret.

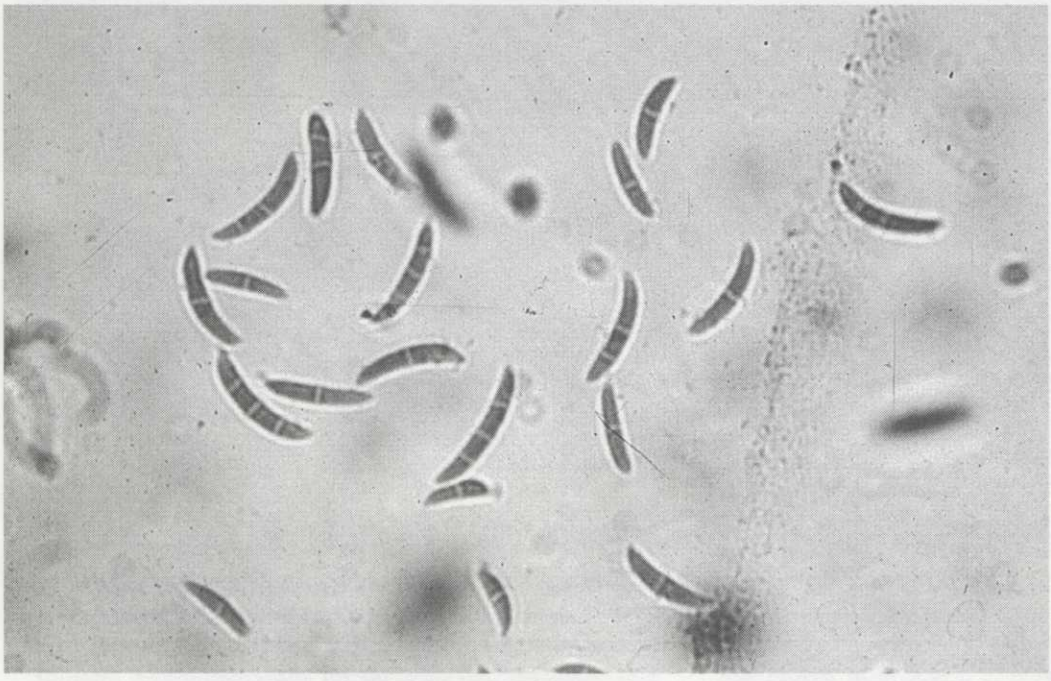

Photo provided by Dr. Eric B. Nelson, Cornell University

Conidia of *Microdochium nivale*. These characteristic 2-celled spores are diagnostic for pink snow mold.

Disease potential at cooler temperatures

The coming of cooler weather does dramatically reduce weed germination and causes the cessation of most insect activity, but it does not eliminate disease pressure. During cool to cold weather periods of the year, with temperatures of from -5 C. to 16 C. (23 - 60 F.), there are no less than 12 well-known diseases or disease groups and 17 lesser-known diseases that can damage turfgrasses.

The well-known cool weather (8 - 16 C.) diseases and disease groups are: *Anthracnose*, Dreschlera diseases, Necrotic ring spot, Powdery mildew, Pythium root rot, Red thread/pink patch, Rust diseases, Rhizoctonia diseases, Smut diseases, and Take-all patch. The well-known cold season diseases are Typhula blight and Microdochium patch. The table (see Table 1 on page 2) lists all of the well-known diseases that affect turfgrass at temperatures below 17 C. (62

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