

HOT TOPICS

Heat, humidity fry turf in Midwest and East; promote disease and crabgrass; force turfseed prices up.

NATIONAL REPORT—"It's a year of burnout," says Stan Zontek of the USGA Green Section. "It's September 13th and there's some dead grass, and trees are already dropping leaves."

"But most of the grass looks worse than it is. Turfgrass is amazingly resistant."

A worldwide shortage of grass seed, coupled with blistering heat, then a late-summer drought in the grass-rich Midwest and Eastern U.S., are forcing prices of proprietary brands up drastically.

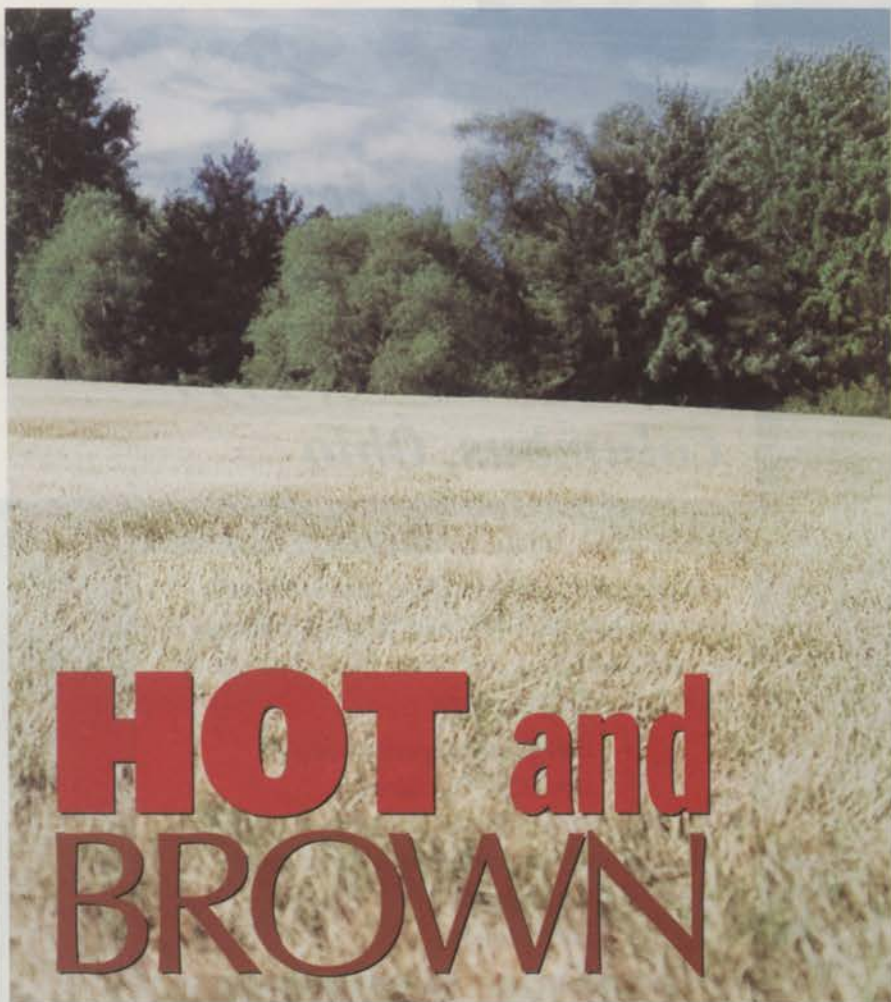
"Demand is tremendous," Mike Robinson of Seed Research of Oregon told LM on September 11th. "Sales are up at least 20 percent, and I think that's industry-wide—and we've still got half of September and all of October to go."

A band of land from Chicago to Philadelphia was among the hardest hit. In Chicago, for instance, at least 50 golf greens had been killed, says Robinson.

"Turf is just dead everywhere," he says, "and it's not just home lawns; it's golf courses, too—even those with irrigation."

Bruce Church says the second-hottest summer in Chicago history forced D.R. Church Landscaping to send out water trucks in double shifts, night and day. Yet increased incidence of crabgrass, summer patch, leaf spot and grubs were unavoidable, meaning...

"We're doing tons of renovations," he says. "We're trying to blend in patches of new turf, but I get the feeling that the renovations we're doing now will be just a small portion of what we'll be asked to do



next spring."

Even though the weather boosted the demand for turf renovations, nobody's hoping for a repeat of 1995's crabgrass and turfgrass disease problems.

"We've had a ton of crabgrass," reports Steve Van Noord of Weed & Feed Lawn Care, Byron Center, Mich. "Everybody has their theories as to why, and I'm not sure either, but it seems that every fourth or

fifth year we have a bad year for crabgrass."

Several Ohio lawn care pros speculate that the near-tropical conditions—weeks of continuous high heat and humidity—proved to be too much for pre-emergents at their labeled rates. Most customers generally understood that the unusual conditions were at fault, they say.

Clark Throssel, associate professor at

ELSEWHERE

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Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind., says frost will kill the crabgrass. Even so, some managers will probably be looking for new products when buying pre-emergents this winter.

He provides these tips:

✓ When selecting a pre-emergence herbicide, stick with what works.

✓ If change is necessary, talk with peers and colleagues and find out what's working in your area.

✓ Once you chose a new product, try it on only a small portion of your accounts.

✓ Keep in mind the kind of equipment you use and if it is compatible with the pre-emergent.

✓ Be aware that some products stain sidewalks and equipment.

Turfgrass diseases clobbered many turfgrass areas, too.

Joe Rimelspach, extension turfgrass pathologist with the Ohio State University, says that brown patch (rhizoctonia) and phythium were especially active in Ohio. Turf got a double whammy when soil temperatures kept rising through mid-summer. When cooler temperatures finally did arrive, so did drought in many parts of the Midwest and Mideast. All these factors combined to stress turfgrass.

"Roots were deteriorating and there was no new root growth or initiation for weeks on end," says Rimelspach of the unusually hot summer weather. "Turfgrass just got weaker and weaker and weaker."

The problem was most dramatic on golf courses where high traffic and low mowing heights gave turfgrass little respite. "A lot of the grass that died on golf courses was almost out of control of the superintendents," says Rimelspach.

Meanwhile, seed prices are rising, partly because the international market is so tight. In other high-demand years, U.S. turfseed marketers were able to import seed from New Zealand or Europe. This year, that won't happen because of high overseas demand. An early indication was the price of tall fescue, which went up almost 15 cents a pound from mid-August through mid-September.

"We can't get the seed cleaned fast enough," Seed Research's Robinson contends. "And if the grass gets moister—as it is starting to do—and the fall stays mild, we will also see tight supplies next spring.

"We have never totally run out of seed, but that's not to say it can't happen."

—Jerry Roche, Ron Hall, James Holter

GIE GREEN INDUSTRY EXPO

The National Expo For Lawn & Landscape Professionals

Keynote message: learning how to cope

MARIETTA, Ga.—Charlie Plumb, a former prisoner of war, is the keynote speaker Nov. 13th at the Green Industry Expo.

Plumb, a former naval aviator who was shot down during his 75th combat mission over North Vietnam, spent six years in a Communist POW camp. The author of "I'm No Hero" and "The Last Domino" will emphasize the value of inner strength and how people in their business and personal lives create their own prisons through fear of failure, blaming others and self-pity. His message is said to be upbeat and entertaining.

Plumb's presentation on how to overcome adversity to achieve a more effective, productive life will begin at 2:30 p.m. in the Fort Worth (Texas)/Tarrant County Convention Center theater. It is one of many exciting events to be held during this nearly week-long celebration of the lawn and landscape industries.

Educational conferences by the three Expo co-sponsors (Professional Lawn Care Association of America, Associated Landscape Contractors of America, Professional Grounds Management Society) begin Sunday, Nov. 12.

The trade show kicks off with its Grand Opening and reception Monday at 4 p.m. It continues Tuesday and Wednesday. The GIE concludes with its popular outdoor equipment demonstration at nearby Trinity Park Thursday morning.

Although trade show registration will be available on-site for \$15 per day, to attend any of the educational sessions, you must register with one of the sponsoring organizations. A registration with one co-sponsor will automatically entitle you to attend educational sessions sponsored by any of the three organizations.

For more trade show details and exhibitor information, contact Eleanor Ellison at (770) 973-2019. To register for one of the three conferences, contact PGMS at (410) 584-9754; PLCAA at (770) 977-5222; or ALCA at (703) 620-6363.

(CLIP AND SAVE)

GIE SCHEDULE-AT-A-GLANCE

Sunday, Nov. 12

ALCA certification exams, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
PGMS computer sessions, 9 a.m.-noon, 1-4 p.m.
ALCA tour of leading companies, 1-5 p.m.
PGMS pre-conference tour, 1-5 p.m.
PLCAA pre-conference seminar, 2-5 p.m.
PLCAA President's Reception, 6-7 p.m.
ALCA welcome reception, 6-7 p.m.
PGMS welcome reception, 6-8:30 p.m.
PLCAA Western Roundup, 7-8:30 p.m.
ALCA rodeo party at Billy Bob's, 7-10 p.m.

Monday, Nov. 13

ALCA Breakfast with Champions, 6:45-8:30 a.m.
PGMS Business Over Breakfast, 6:45-8:30 a.m.
PLCAA, ALCA Western picnic lunch, noon-1 p.m.
PGMS annual business meeting, 1-2:15 p.m.
GIE keynote address, 2:30-4 p.m.
GIE Grand Opening & Trade Show reception, 4-6 p.m.
PLCAA new & prospective member Fiesta Reception, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
ALCA Ask the Experts, 6:30-10 p.m.
PGMS Brag Night, 8-10:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 14

ALCA Breakfast with Champions, 6:45-8 a.m.
PLCAA breakfast roundtables, 7-8:15 a.m.
PGMS Business Over Breakfast, 6:45-8 a.m.
PGMS Past Presidents Breakfast, 6:45-8 a.m.
PGMS Certified Grounds Manager (CGM) breakfast, 6:45-8 a.m.
PGMS CGM meeting, 8-9:45 a.m.
PLCAA Annual Meeting, 8:30-10 a.m.
GIE Trade Show, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
PGMS Branch/National Meeting, 3:30-5 p.m.
PLCAA live auction, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
ALCA awards reception and banquet, 6-10:30 p.m.
PGMS awards banquet and reception, 7-10 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 15

PLCAA breakfast roundtables, 7-8:15 a.m.
ALCA Breakfast with Champions, 6:45-8:00 a.m.
PGMS Business Over Breakfast, 6:45-8 a.m.
GIE Trade Show, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 16

GIE Outdoor Equipment Demonstration, 9 a.m.-noon
GIE Board of Directors meeting, 1-5 p.m.