

Gazing in the Grass

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Welcome back to our 19th season of the ShortCUTT (Cornell University Turfgrass Times) newsletter! We are grateful for the many years of support from the New York State Turfgrass Association. However, new funding sources allowed for the newsletter to be available to **all turfgrass managers** and interested parties in NY. If you are a member of a Professional Association then you will receive them through your regular email. If you know someone who'd like a copy get in touch with us at our Cornell Turfgrass Website @ turf.cals.cornell.edu. Or our Twitter and Facebook pages @[Cornell_Turfgrass](https://twitter.com/Cornell_Turfgrass).



Untreated "Check" Plots often reveal level of pest pressure.

Weather records from the 2017-18 Winter will read normal for temperature and precipitation. It's what's happened since the end of Winter that is creating the challenge! Significant snow fall events came one after another like a subway train heading up the East Coast of the US disrupting Spring turf work and delaying course and field use. We are 1-3 weeks behind the 30 yr avg. Growing Degree Day (GDD) accumulation despite the recent warm up and while many areas to the south have had moisture deficits, they will all be alleviated with this week's rainfall. Soils are cool but warming when dry into the low 50's to the south. Most can still see visible voids from last Autumn's cultivation programs or late foot traffic. Snow mold pressure was generally light due to lack of persistent snow cover that also lead to an uptick in desiccated turf on exposed knobs. The fluctuating freezing and thawing conditions since the end of February has exposed some weak areas as well, especially annual bluegrass. Late Autumn turf establishments from seed have struggled with cool temperatures and, even with synthetic covers, the lack of sunlight prevented significant warming. Many who added pigments or pigmented products to the late-season applications are seeing the benefits of early Spring green-up. In golf turf management, the Autumn application of Plant Growth Regulator (PGR) primarily Ethephon (Proxy), for annual bluegrass seeded suppression was widely practiced this year and many are making their follow up application based on GDD models available at our FORECAST website. Spring pre-emergence herbicide applications for crabgrass and goosegrass control still has time to be applied as soils

1-3 weeks behind the 30 yr GDD accumulation despite the recent warm up moisture deficits, will be alleviated with this week's expected rainfall.



are well below any threshold as far south as Washington DC. In general, application of products to dormant turf and soil in the 40's is ill advised. Patience is a virtue at this time and better than patience is DATA! Monitor soil temps., soil moisture, and GDD. Look around at phenological indicators of biological responses and keep records!

Most native soils experienced excellent frost heaving this Winter from the long open ground periods and could benefit from light surface firming (empty roller) to smooth the surface and prevent mower scalping. Same is true for sports fields on both native and sand-based soils. A good early season roll will firm footing without becoming too hard ([see article below on field hardness from WSJ!](#)). Depending on soil conditions, a good rolling can aid with better mowing quality as the mower has firm surface to travel. Of course rolling is considered more acceptable than in the past since soil management through cultivation has become more routine.

ShortCUTT Conversations



This week's ShortCUTT Conversation with Soil Insect Ecologist working in Turfgrass at Cornell University, Professor Kyle Wickings centered on three topics. Grubs, Annual bluegrass Weevil and Earthworms.

So far cool temperatures have kept grubs from moving up in the soil, but a few places south have reported European Chafer and Japanese Beetle in the top inch. Reports of vertebrate grub feeding damage is much more widespread. Some second instar grubs were identified however the majority of grubs at this stage

are 2-3 instar and too large for insecticide treatment to be effective. Best recommendation is to note areas and consider scouting and treating in late summer.

Annual bluegrass weevils have been delayed as well, but have begun to respond to the slight warm up. Most reports are from the southern end of the region where adult populations are still low. However when consistent warm temperatures arrive, expect a surge of movement and activity. Regular scouting using soap solution, phenological indicators such as Forsythia, and on-line population tracking offer excellent insight ABW development and treatment timing.

Finally there is growing concern over a variety of earthworm species from putting surfaces and fairways on golf courses to lawns and forest floors in the landscape. The disruption of soil structure and depositing of casting on playing surfaces have made these a growing pest problem. Right now the Saponin-based fertilizers such as Early Bird have been able to provide suppression when heavily watered in or applied during rainfall.



Sports Fields in the Wall Street Journal

Player safety continues to dominate the conversation in sports these days, much of this related to concussions, but also the widespread concern over synthetic in-filled turf systems. The connection between these issues and natural turfgrass systems is the hardness of the surface. A recent article in the Wall Street Journal quoted some Land Grant University Professors on the importance of measuring and knowing field hardness and traction parameters. You can be sure many of your field users and parents are growing aware of these measures. Do you know yours? See the article @ <https://tinyurl.com/y8gb4ncp>

