

Gazing in the Grass

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Welcome to the 2nd issue of our 19th season of the ShortCUTT (Cornell University Turfgrass Times) newsletter! Once again, new funding sources in 2018 allow for the newsletter to be available to **all turfgrass managers** interested in “just-in-time” science-based cool-season turfgrass



recommendations from a collection of turfgrass educators and researchers in the Northeast US. 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.

The long Winter's Journey into Spring continues with below normal temperatures last week everywhere, but further south closer to normal. “Warmer” temperatures lead to rapid recovery of many areas that have received traffic or core cultivation last Autumn or this Spring, **not** from Winter Injury ([discussed in this week's ShortCUTT Conversation](#)). The “Picture of the Week” is an excellent example of how rapid that recovery can take place without the addition of supplemental N, rather the strategic use of darkening agents such as pigmented products, iron, or covers (and some bright sun) that lead to an increase in soil temperature and promote green-up. Soils are still in the high 40's at the 2” depth under sod.

Rainfall > 1 inch across the region increasing soil moisture and decreasing soil temps....return to “normal” air temps this week will feel like a warm-up!

Annual bluegrass seedhead development has begun in areas where the annual biotype populations are the highest, typically this is unirrigated areas on golf courses, sports fields and lawns. No reports of seedheads have been made from putting surfaces. However, annual bluegrass is actively growing more than most other turfgrass species at this time and the prolonged Winter could lead to increasing populations. Cumulative Growth Potential this season is roughly 30% of that observed in 2017 and sunlight hours significantly lower as well. No amount of fertilizer will help turf overcome these deficits. The return to “normal” temps and



clear skies will spur some growth. If you have been adding supplemental N, get ready for an early growth surge!

Late Autumn turf establishment from seed has been poor to date. Cool soils whilst excellent for root growth can be too cool for most species to germinate. Certainly covers have helped recently but if you have worn goal mouths or other high traffic areas, trying to get seed established at this time will be difficult. If you need it quick fix, investigate sodding options-including the use of various thickness. Thick cut sod is always a temporary convenient fix.

ShortCUTT Conversation: Winter Injury in the Northeast



This week's ShortCUTT Conversation with Senior Agronomist for the United States Golf Association and Cornell Alum Jim Skorulski '89 focused on the Winter Injury he has observed across the Northeast north of CT into Canada and west to CNY. The damage seemed to have occurred during various cold periods where the ground was open and turf exposed to winds and very cold temperatures-in some cases well below 0°F. In some regions this was early January, others the end of January. Some are suspicious of the February warm-up and then return to cold to date. Regardless of when it occurred Jim reports the injury is diffuse (as opposed to wholesale) and almost entirely related to desiccation or direct low temperature injury as opposed to the typical crown hydration experienced in low areas with very poor drainage. Many of these plants, if still alive, are struggling to produce roots from the lower crown meristem typically the site of the most severe injury. Snow molds were a minor problem for most as even the unprotected higher cut turf has only superficial damage. Interestingly, the low areas that held moisture in many cases are actually doing better! Areas where snow persisted did better on average than exposed areas. Adding insult to the injury is the painfully slow recovery that have driven more to using covers and colorants such as pigments, iron and dark topdressing to encourage recovery. Jim commented that he has seen covers working well, especially those that transitioned from impermeable to permeable during the prolonged cold temps. Jim ended the conversation with encouraging golf course superintendents to pressurize their irrigation systems, especially in marginal areas where warm and cold conditions continue to fluctuate so that annual bluegrass plants with green leaves and limited ability to produce roots can get access to some moisture.

Sports Turf Minute: Talking to Your Coaches

The prolonged Winter conditions have wreaked havoc on Spring sports at every level. A record number of MLB games have been postponed and some schools in Central NY had not had an outdoor practice! Of course this creates an opportunity to communicate the steps taken to ensure fields are ready for Spring that take advantage of every minute of favorable weather. Be sure they are closed in the Autumn properly with fertilizer and topdressing, use covers, apply high iron rates or pigmented products to encourage warming to accelerate growth under the less than favorable conditions. Do your coaches and administrators know? Do not assume these folks don't care to hear as many of these folks will be held accountable for issues that arise due to field safety. See the tips for communicating @ <http://safesportsfields.cals.cornell.edu/coaches>.

