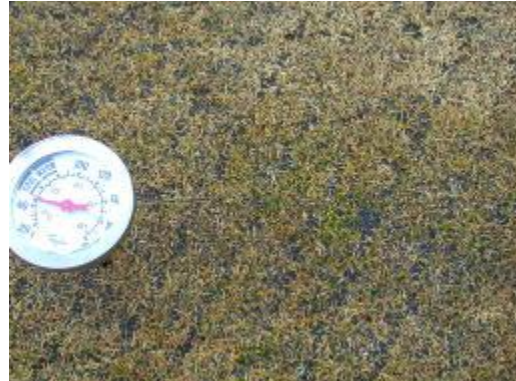


**By Jim Skorulski, senior agronomist, Northeast Region
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The weather affects everything we do in the golf industry, and the record cold, wet, and gray weather in March and April (until recently) has made for a slow and difficult start. Growing-degree-day accumulations are a solid 14 days behind last season's accumulations through April 25th. Cold and wet weather periods in a New England spring are not an anomaly, but this season's weather has been especially hard to stomach for both turf managers and golfers.

Those dealing with recovery from winter injury are feeling the weather's impacts most. The first reports of seed germination (covered greens) were heard earlier this week on coastal New England golf courses, but this is much later than last year. The warm nighttime temperatures of the past few days will help establishment, but expectations for early recovery of seeded greens are not realistic at this point. Here are a few tips when dealing with this situation:

- Keep the covers handy just in case a hard frost or freeze is anticipated in the next few weeks.
- Spike-seed areas where germination has been poor.
- Use soluble nitrogen sources to spoon-feed the establishing turf and begin lightly topdressing the damaged areas once the seedling plants have emerged.



Various covers and colorants are used to warm soil temperatures in hope of stimulating early seed germination in winter-damaged areas. The lack of sun and warm temperatures prevented early seed germination at many New England golf courses despite those best efforts.

A call for "rescue sod" may be heard at locations where early seed establishment has been disappointing. Using sod to patch severe cupping or high traffic areas, or where severely damaged greens are kept open to play, is a viable option. The value of a good-quality putting green nursery will be fully appreciated at this point. If a sod nursery is not available, then harvest sod from a practice green or other severely injured green. A commercial sod can then be used to regrass the greens where the sod was harvested. Patching damaged areas directly with commercial bentgrass sod is generally less desirable due to the surface inconsistency that will be created by using a pure bentgrass sod on an older green. Commercial sod blends of annual bluegrass and creeping bentgrass are better suited for the patching work. The commercial sod should be soilless (washed) or grown on a root zone similar to your greens. Stay away from overly thatchy sod, which will be more difficult to establish.

Although tempting, do not be too hasty in abandoning the seeding approach in favor of sod, unless you have a good-quality nursery or other source of sod available on the golf course. The recovery from seed may seem painfully slow, but this method usually produces a more durable and consistent surface by midsummer. Commercial sod will provide faster results initially, but its establishment can be tricky and the effects on the playing surface may be noticeable long past the summer season.