



Louisiana Turfgrass Association

Serving the turfgrass industry for over 50 years

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Inside this issue:

Big Time Cold	1
2010 LTA Conference	1
LSU Sports Corner	2
Green Industry Economics	3
Large Brown Patch of Warm-season Turfgrass	4
Early Season Turf Pests	5
Turfgrass 101	6
Student Spotlight	7

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Big time cold but good turfgrass recovery

Well, it looks like there is a good chance that we made it out of the cold without any major turfgrass losses from the “Big Freeze of 2010”. The coldest temps were observed in the Calhoun area (12 F). Baton Rouge got down to 17 degrees. In order to get an idea about how well our greens survived the “big freeze” in north and south Louisiana, I collected samples (cup cuttings) from greens from various golf courses from around the state soon after the freezing temps subsided. Included in the samples were several ultra-dwarf varieties. I am happy to report that all samples regardless of location eventually came out of dormancy in our greenhouse (85 F) here in Baton Rouge.

I also collected St. Augustinegrass, centipedegrass, hybrid bermudagrasses, and zoysiagrass from various locations of the state. Although very slow, all came out of dormancy. Even newly sodded St. Augustinegrass from extreme north Louisiana (Farmerville) recovered after 10 days or so in the greenhouse.

When you think back, we had a nice transition of cool weather during the fall and early winter that helped us gently acclimate to colder weather. That is a good thing because turf that has been acclimated over time goes through numerous metabolic changes that allow greater tolerance to the kind of arctic blasts that we experienced. I believe turfgrass in Louisiana was in about as good of shape to handle the extreme cold weather as we could have been. We will know for sure as temperatures warm up this spring if we have any serious damage.

Special thanks to all the golf course superintendants and sod farmers that participated in the cold weather recovery evaluation.

— Ron Strahan —

Successful 2010 Louisiana Turfgrass Conference

The Louisiana Turfgrass Association had its annual conference on January 7, 2010. Attendance was up over previous years. The nice crowd was a real accomplishment considering we were in the middle of prepping for the severe cold weather that was headed into the state.

The theme of this year’s meeting was “water use efficiency”. The featured speaker was Dr. David Chalmers, turfgrass specialist at Texas A&M University. Dr. Chalmers discussed the results of a 2-year project that evaluated the drought tolerance of 25 warm-season turfgrass varieties including eight types of bermudagrass, seven of St. Augustine grass, nine of zoysiagrass and one variety of buffalograss grown on 4-inch or 18-inch depth soil. The study simulated drought for 60 days using a 5000 ft² drought simulator. Grasses were evaluated visually using ratings from one to nine based on how they responded to and recovered from the drought. In a separate presentation, Dr. Chalmers provided instruction on strategies for career success in the turfgrass industry.

LSU Sports Corner

Since my assistant, Mike Watson, and I recently celebrated our one-year of service anniversary, I thought it might be interesting to look back at our first year of managing the turf for the Tigers.

When we started last year we quickly learned that we had no time to worry, as we were soon thrust into the baseball and softball seasons. Trying to learn the lay of the land, manage two newly constructed fields and evaluate our staff proved to be extremely challenging but, by the time both sports came to an end, we had experienced the successful opening of two brand new facilities, a successful spring ryegrass transition, several IPM applications for weeds and insects and it was all highlighted by a baseball National Championship.

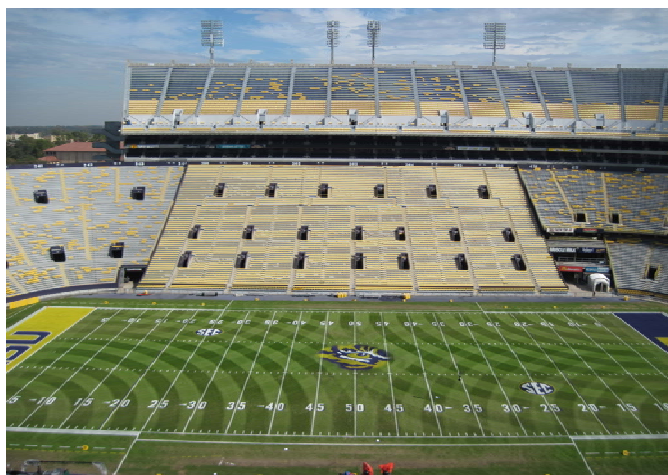


Transitioning the playing surface at Tiger Stadium after the Spring Game in late April proved to be a bit nerve racking. The stadium surface was sprigged in June 2008 and saw five games in a row to finish off the season. What that meant for us was once the ryegrass was gone; we were left with pretty much bare sand. Our initial survey of the field saw a small stem of green Bermudagrass every 18" to 24" but our stolons and rhizomes were healthy. Our plan was to fertilize weekly and irrigate daily. Once there was enough grass to mow, we started to mow every-other day at 1/2" and when the profile was stable enough, we aerated or verti-cut every other week. The process was slow going at first but, the summer heat helped immensely. The field went from an estimated 5% coverage at the end of April to an estimated 75% at the end of May.

As many of you know, this fall there was a lot of rain, in fact it seemed to rain every week that we had a home game. September's rainfall was 10" above average, October was 13" above and November finally began to see some leveling off. With that type of weather, we seemed to have to paint the field twice before every game. Once on Wednesday to make sure we had some markings down in case it rained right up to game-time, and again if the weather broke on Thursday, Friday, Friday night, or even Saturday morning a few times. All in all the Tiger Stadium Field had a very successful football season, in fact, Coach Miles said that this season was the best that Tiger Stadium and the Practice Fields performed since he arrived in 2005.

Here we are again in February preparing for another Baseball and Softball season. We have learned a lot this past year about how our fields perform and we are looking forward to an even more successful 2010. Thanks to all of you who helped us through our first year and made it so successful!

New Alex Box Stadium



Tiger Stadium just before the Arkansas game.

Eric Fasbender, CSFM
Sports Turf Manager
Louisiana State University Athletics

Green Industry Economics

What about the New Normal?

The debate about how consumers will behave after our much anticipated economic recovery targets a top critical economic issue. After all, it matters less that businesses have investment and operating capital than whether consumers feel confident enough to buy. The idea of a 'new normal' paradigm is logical. Consumers have been hit by slow or no income growth, reduced values of retirement accounts, and in many areas of the country with changes in home values that range from a little to a lot.

Regarding homes, recent reports indicate that numbers of foreclosures in hardest hit areas of the U. S. are fewer, but foreclosures seem to be more prevalent in areas that had not seen problems. Examples include Las Vegas, the leader in number of foreclosure filings last year. About 12% of its households received at least one notice, but the rate was down as 2009 ended. But, the Gulf Coast, including the Gulfport area of Mississippi, recorded a big year-over-year spike in foreclosures, and Houma, La. also was much higher.

These big percentage increases are from small bases, and still represent small numbers of foreclosures. Residential construction is another indicator. Sales of new homes rose to the highest level in more than a year. Strong U.S. southern markets canceled declines in other parts of the US. At the end of November, sales were up 6.2 % to a seasonally adjusted rate of 430,000 from September, and higher than expected. Observers take this as a sign that "builders will need to start swinging their hammers again soon."

But back to the new normal. If consumer behavior has changed and spending will not rebound with recovery, there are significant implications for producers, retailers, and the entire supply chain. The industry might be looking at current production and sales levels, or even lower levels, as the new norm.

But Grant McCracken, a cultural anthropologist, argues that this 'new normal' is wrong. Below, I have edited/shortened an article that presents his ideas about consumption and spending.

A homemaker (Susan) observes a mountain of stuff in her garage. Why is it there? Was it irrational exuberance and cheap money? No. This crowded garage sprang from *cultural motives* - things purchased to help her build a life. She listened to Martha Stewart, so she now celebrates holidays and events with more formality, with more stuff. She is cultivating new ideas of childhood for her kids. Her kids *need* many more things, including soccer boots, Karate outfits, iPods, cell phones, and a ton of games. Susan's biggest recent expenditure is the "great room" she and her husband installed a couple of years ago that cost \$45,000, but it caused Susan not a flicker of remorse. She has a new idea of entertainment - her guests sit at around the island in the great room, glass of wine in hand, looking on while Susan cooks brilliantly beneath halogen lighting. From 2005 to 2007, expenditures on interior renovation in American homes rose about 40 percent to \$13 billion. Much of this was driven by Martha and the great room. There is a deeper, culture motive to this - Susan is fashioning her social life. There is status seeking, but also something richer and more cultural, as Susan works out new ideas of "host," "guest" and "entertainment." Right now Susan is hunkered down. She and her husband have scaled back expenditures. But this much is clear: The cultural motives of Susan's consumption have not changed. When circumstances allow, she will return to spending enthusiastically to fashion her children, her family, and herself.

Add your own items to the cultural needs list, like outdoor kitchens. This is only an opinion, but McCracken's approach makes sense to me as I observe my family, neighborhood, and behavior in other settings. In Baton Rouge, we certainly can expect short term impacts from declining state revenues. But recovery probably will bring back that spending. So with a cautious dose of optimism, while we wait be sure your customers remember your name and that they receive the value that your brand name implies.

Roger Hinson, Professor
Marketing/Agribusiness/Farm Management/Specialty Crops
Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness

Successful 2010 Louisiana Turfgrass Conference, cont'd from pg. 1

Continuing with our water use theme, Charlie Houston of Hunter Industries presented information concerning irrigation basics and its efficient use. Jerome Nettles discussed his research that is currently evaluating the use of preemergence herbicides and their negative effects on turfgrass root architecture. These negative effects could cause a temporary reduction in root efficiency.

Dearl Sanders informed the audience on aquatic weed management in irrigation ponds and Ron Strahan discussed the latest on MSMA regulations and alternative herbicide options. Jeff Beasley talked about the current projects of graduate students in the turfgrass program at LSU.

Panel discussions covered irrigation trouble shooting, frequent agronomic problems encountered on golf courses, sports fields and lawn and landscape installation. The overall theme of the panel discussions was "money saving tips".

Thanks for participating in the conference. We look forward to seeing you next year. —Ron Strahan

Large Brown Patch of Warm-season Turfgrasses

Large patch (formerly brown patch), caused by *Rhizoctonia solani*, is the most common disease of warm-season turfgrasses in Louisiana. As the name suggests, when conditions are favorable the disease develops rapidly into large circular or irregularly-shaped patches of brown turf if not treated. Although the turf is usually not killed, *R. solani* does attack and rot the bases of the leaf sheaths, killing the leaf blades. This results in areas of sparse turf that are readily invaded by weeds, which creates another problem requiring additional management.

The development of brown patch is favored by frequent or prolonged periods of rainfall when temperatures are moderate. Although we typically think of brown patch as a fall disease, it can develop in the spring, especially with prolonged periods of cool, wet weather following green-up. So if you had brown patch this past fall, be prepared to treat those areas with a fungicide in the spring before it becomes active!

Typically, fall and spring applications of fungicides can reduce disease severity and limit its development until conditions become unfavorable. The duration of favorable weather in the fall and the frequency of rain dictate how many fungicide applications will be needed. We generally recommend at least two fungicide applications in the fall, the first should be applied in mid- to late September and the second in mid-to late October. However, if the grass is still growing and conditions remain favorable for disease development into November and December, additional fungicide applications may be necessary. In areas where brown patch is known to have occurred previously, an application of a fungicide in mid-March, just before or at green-up, is advisable. Again, if we experience an extended period of relatively cool, wet weather in the spring, additional fungicide applications may be necessary.

Almost all fungicides registered for use on turfgrasses are labeled for the control of large (or brown) patch. Most of these will do an adequate job of controlling this disease if used properly. When fungicides are being applied to prevent disease from being introduced into areas where it is not already established, the use of granular formulations of fungicides is quite appropriate. On the other hand, when fungicides are being applied to areas where brown patch is active, the use of sprayable formulations of fungicides is preferred as these will give better coverage. Systemic fungicides that are absorbed into the plant should be applied when the turf is still growing actively (so it will be taken up) and prior to periods of rainfall. Lastly, remember that chlorothalonil may no longer be used on residential lawns!



Large (brown) patch of St. Augustinegrass

*Dr. Don Ferrin, Extension Specialist
Department of Plant Pathology & Crop Physiology,
LSU AgCenter*

Early-season Turf Pests

We are fast approaching springtime and the beginning of a new insect season. Remember, to manage pest problems, we must identify the problem and make sure what we are looking at are pests and not beneficials. Always ask. If there is any doubt, it could be a valuable economic choice.

Fire ants continue to make their presence known on both ends of the spectrum. They can be effective predators or big pests, depending on where you stand. A few warm days, and mounds will begin to spring up with queens emerging to look for a place to set up housekeeping. Before making any applications, be sure to test for fire ant activity by setting out small portions of an oily food (potato chips, hot dog, sardines) and evaluate their activity about 30 minutes after setting out the food. Be sure to cover the stations with something to prevent birds, cats, dogs or other animal from eating it. When the food source attracts a large number of ants, it's time to treat.



Materials available for management are numerous and varied, and some are quicker than others. Growth regulators – Extinguish, Extinguish Plus, Esteem, and Award – are good materials but are slow acting, taking two to six weeks before results can be seen. This is how long some of these materials take to be distributed by the ants through the colony and sterilize the queen so all the eggs laid are sterile. They also sterilize the new queens ready to swarm, so we get extended management of the population. We also get control on colonies outside the area because ants forage 2 to 300 feet from the colony. This provides an extension of the treatment and increases the interval between treatments to six months. The best treatment times are April and early October. Advion and Over and Out with Indoxicarb and Over and Out with Fipronil are quick-acting materials. Indoxicarb is a very safe material so treated areas can be used and played on the same day. This is especially useful in areas where kids play. The pyrethroids like Deltamethrine, cyfluthrin, lambda cyhalothrin and others are effective controls. Baits like Amdro and other formulations are equally effective. Citrex and some pyrethroid materials are considered organic for those who want to reduce insecticide use. Use the product and formulation that fit your situation best. Keep all materials out of water systems by treating only within 30 feet of water sources and use mound treatments with Acephate in those other areas. Be sure to rotate the products used to avoid tolerance and resistance development.

Mole crickets are a primary pest of turf, and early detection and treatment can save time and money. Early treatment of hot spots can limit the area to be treated and the cost of management. When spraying materials for mole-cricket control, using a lemon additive or soap helps to improve contact and management of this pest. As the soil temperature warms, overwintering populations will emerge and feed to complete development. Tunneling will be a good indicator, as will seeing the adults that overwintered collecting at lights at night, to determine when early treating should be started. This spot treating of early-emerging crickets can greatly reduce overall treatments and save time and money. Control is best using Advion mole cricket bait, Chipco Choice, Merit or Talstar, with applications late in the afternoon just before or after dark. Remember, Chipco Choice will not control white grubs. Adding lemon soap when spraying will enhance effectiveness of the application.

Crane flies have already begun to emerge, and people want to kill these giant mosquitoes. Larvae are emerging from the soil and collecting on walks, driveways and carports. The larvae feed on roots and grass blades and thatch that is decaying or associated with turf diseases in the winter months.

The adults after emerging mate and begin to lay eggs shortly thereafter. The larvae feed on grass roots during the day, and on damp, warm nights they come to the surface to feed on the grass blades, giving the effect of black cutworm injury. They feed and develop until the following spring when they emerge. There is not much need to treat unless populations are very high. Good sanitation through thatch removal is effective to keep population down.

Several caterpillars will infest turf – cutworms, sod webworms and armyworms. The cutworms and sod webworms are night feeders, and armyworms feed day or night until they pupate. In many instances, webbing over the top of the turf in the morning or a large number of birds in the late afternoon is a good indicator of a caterpillar

Early-season Turf Pests, cont'd pg. 5

infestation. The adults of the sod webworm usually hide in the shrubs during the day and lay their eggs singly as they fly over the turf in the late afternoon. The cutworms lay their egg either singly or in clusters, and each female can produce more than 500 eggs. The armyworms lay their eggs in clusters on walls, plot flags and even the flags in the end zone or goal line on football fields. The plot flags can be set out to determine when eggs are laid or hatch so treatments can be made. Each female can lay 2,000 eggs. The worst part is that there are five to six generations a year. Each generation takes 4 to 6 weeks to develop from egg to egg. The pyrethroids are excellent for management – Talstea, Maverick, Battle and others. Other materials include Mach 2, Conserve, Onyx, Dylox, Proxol and Meridian, and the Bts are effective controls. The use of lemon soaps or essence will help with contact for better control.

The lemon soap or essence with water can be used as a flushing agent to find what is in the turf.

Three things should be remembered: identify the problem, adjust the pH of the water, and time your applications for optimum management.

**Dale Pollet, Entomologist
LSU AgCenter**

Turfgrass 101:

Weed ID

Dollarweed (*Hydrocotyle spp.*) is a perennial summer weed in the parsley family that infests lawns throughout the state. It is an indicator weed for high moisture areas and weakened turfgrass.

Dollarweed is often confused with dichondra (*Dichondra spp.*) or pony-foot. I have included images of both species to help you distinguish between the two plants. Dichondra prefers dry ground and thin turf. Dollarweed prefers damp areas and is worse during years with above average rainfall. However, dollarweed has shown good drought tolerance once established in the lawn.

Thick healthy turfgrass is very important in the prevention of creeping type weeds like dollarweed and dichondra. Heavy infestations of these weeds are often the result of poor cultural practices such as mowing too low or failure to manage diseases like brown patch. Good cultural practices like proper mowing and maintaining good soil fertility are important in reducing the predominance of weeds like dollarweed. Herbicides such as atrazine (St. Augustinegrass, centipedegrass, and zoysiagrass) can be effective as well as “Trimec type” herbicides and 2,4-D. Dichondra is very easily controlled with Trimec type herbicides.



Dichondra



Dollarweed

How can freezing temperatures kill turfgrass?

According to Jack Fry, author of [Applied Turfgrass Physiology](#), there are actually two types of freezing stress. All freezing injury is caused by ice formation. When ice crystals form inside cells it is called **intracellular freezing**. In a worst case scenario, the ice crystals rupture cell membranes killing the turf.

The second type is called **extra-cellular freezing**. Extra-cellular freezing occurs as ice forms in the spaces between cells. As the water in spaces between cells freeze, water potential is lowered outside the cell. As a result, water “leaves” the inside of the cell (high potential) and moves to the outside of the cell (lower potential) causing cell dehydration. This of course can lead to severe injury or death of the turf. Extra-cellular freezing is brought on by prolonged periods of freezing temperatures, and dry windy conditions. **This type of freezing is most common on golf greens on sandy soils and low mowing heights.**

Student Spotlight



Devin Boudreaux
 President of Turfgrass Club
 GCSAA Member
 Currently interning at
 Baton Rouge Country Club

I would consider Devin Boudreaux as one of the top students to come through the LSU turfgrass program.

Devin has worked in golf since he was 16 and in maintenance since 19. He spent three years at Sherwood Forest Country Club including two years as an assistant. Devin is currently employed (for the last two years) as an intern at Baton Rouge Country Club. Devin has a considerable amount of experience in golf course turf management from course set up, pesticide application (commercial pesticide applicator license for 3 years), fertilizing, irrigation and drainage, and mowing. He has been a good student in the turfgrass program here at LSU. Devin is very active in the turfgrass club here at LSU serving as vice-president last year and currently serves as president. He is a two year member of GCSAA. Personally, I am very impressed by Devin. I have seen his abilities first hand as I took him with me on golf course visits. He is extremely intelligent, has a tremendous work ethic, and a vast knowledge of turfgrass and golf course operations.

Devin has big changes in store as he and his wife are expecting their first child. Just in time, Devin will be graduating in May of 2010.

Any questions? Contact rstrahan@agcenter.lsu.edu; jbeasley@agcenter.lsu.edu. or Devin directly at dboud16@tigers.lsu.edu.

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