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Creeping Through the Summer Grass

The Lawn Reader

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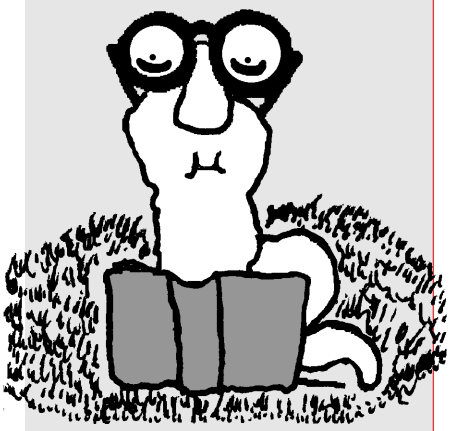

Creeping Bentgrass Management: Summer Stresses, Weeds and other Maladies
Peter Dernoeden, Ph.D
Ann Arbor Press, Chelsea, MI
ISBN 1-57504-143-X

Father's Day weekend in Oklahoma was hot. The fans were enjoying watching the greatest golfers in the world do some incredible things with a golf ball. Each golfer hopes to have his hot putting stroke at the right time. Yet, the hottest thing will be the bentgrass greens growing in the smoldering heat.

Only a decade ago the thought of a championship tournament on high-performance bentgrass putting greens in the transition zone was an enormous risk. Sophisticated cooling systems would have to be in place to minimize the heat stress and improve air movement. Penncross, the industry standard, simply was not up to the task. How are the new grasses able to provide these conditions under heat? Can every grass do this?

Peter Dernoeden, Professor of Natural Resources at the University of Maryland, College Park, authored the 2000 book "Creeping Bentgrass Management: Summer Stresses, Weeds and Selected Maladies," from Ann Arbor Press. Pete has devoted the last 20 years of his career to the golf superintendents in the Mid-Atlantic region who struggle with managing putting greens during the summer months.

Training in turfgrass diseases and agronomy provided Pete with an important perspective on the complex problems that cause putting green failure. Pete states in the opening section of his book, "it became abundantly clear that many summertime problems with golf turf were often stress rather than disease related."

This is one of the most practical reference texts for golf turf managers to date. Born our of Pete's GCSAA seminar, this is an extremely practical and easy to read review of an important stress area. The biggest problem with the book is the title. While many issues in the book are specific for bentgrass, most of the maladies discussed are pertinent for annual bluegrass as well. Therefore, while bentgrass is the focus, anyone who manages turf in summer stress conditions including sports turf managers would benefit form Pete's wealth of experience.

My favorite section addresses summer bentgrass decline that has plagued the golf turf industry for the last decade, as more bentgrass is grown in marginal environments. The backbone of these management programs has been regular fungicide use to control turf diseases. Dernoeden alludes to this concept describing the superintendents as "perplexed and invariably disappointed when a chemical treatment for the decline cannot be recommended". Yet, conservatively Dernoeden estimates that 30% of the bentgrass samples submitted to the diagnostic lab are negative for any primary disease.

Half of the text is devoted to annual bluegrass control with herbicides and plant growth regulators. This section can serve as a good basis for information; however, cultivar and management regimes will require local information from other golf turf specialists. In the end though this book is filled with Pete's experiences and scientific support for his recommendations. If the summer we are beginning to have keeps up you need this book!

Frank S. Rossi