What a difference a 250 mile stretch of I-70 can make! April showers have graced St. Louis in bulk, with many areas receiving 1.5-2 inches above normal rainfall so far in April from storms traveling up I-44. On the flip side, the Kansas City area is nearly 2 inches below normal precipitation. Jackson county, Missouri has recorded less than 0.5 inch of rain for the month, and the average is near 4”! The discrepancy in rain between the two cities mirrors their baseball teams, with the Royals languishing and the Cardinals thriving. If this continues, May flowers and Royals fans may struggle this year. The good news (for the flowers at least) is that there is a good chance over the next 5 days for more precipitation.

**Weather**

**Erratic Rainfall**
- A) Thus far in April, St. Louis has been receiving the April showers while KC has been sorely missing out. Source: Midwest Regional Climate Center
- B) Over the next 3-5 days, 0.75”- 1” of rainfall is expected to be scattered across the region as a front stalls out over Missouri. Source: NOAA

**Return to Spring temperatures**
- A) April temperatures are refreshingly normal (and even below normal!), making for a nice dose of spring for cool season turgrasses. Source: Pat Guinan, state climatologist
- B) As expected, soil temperatures have moderated along with the reduced air temperatures. Source: Pat Guinan, state climatologist
A Tale of Two Cities

The good news for cool-season turf growers is the mild, much more spring-like, temperatures of April. For fescue, bluegrass, and bentgrass, the occasional frosts and cooler temperatures are a benefit, as hopefully this extended spring will result in a longer growing period and more time for beneficial root growth before the summer season hits. Conversely, zoysiagrass and bermudagrass has taken a step back from its quick March awakening. Minor frost damage was noted on both grasses throughout the region over the past two weeks. Nothing major as scattered leaf tips were dinged and green leaf, stolon, and rhizome tissues will resume growth when temperatures climb again.

Quick Hits:

Light Frost Damage: As I noted above, there have been some reports of light frost damage on zoysia and bermudagrass throughout the region. Areas where the damage is most apparent is in KC on non-irrigated sites. In most (if not all) cases, scattered green shoots and stolons are dotted throughout, so recovery should be complete. Warm season turfgrasses are just taking the month of April off, just like the disappointing Royals so far...
Emerging Grubs: Significant bird activity was reported by my research assistant Daniel Earlywine this past week on our zoysia plots. We dug up a very small section of turf to reveal a startling number of grubs. These grubs are coming to the surface after their long winter slumber and appeared to be in the more mature 3rd instar stage and are pupating into beetles. Recent black light trapping has shown a considerable number of May/June beetles, which coincides with this grub occurrence. Because of this, it doesn’t appear that any direct turf damage is currently happening from grub feeding. However, birds, raccoons, and skunks could get a whiff and start digging around so it’s advisable to scout vigilantly. In areas with a history of grub damage, it is still too early to apply most preventive insecticides. The target application window is normally late May or June, or about 4 weeks from when the adults begin to emerge (which is obviously now).

Large Patch: Recent weather patterns have skewed the large patch severity squarely to the east side of the state. Reports are still flying in of large patch activity on St. Louis zoysia lawns and fairways, but with the lack of moisture Kansas City outbreaks have been curtailed. Remember the best thing you can do now for zoysia is to be a minimalist (no fertilizer, no aeration, low irrigation). Large patch spread can be limited with a curative fungicide application now, but patches should be mapped and a preventive application should be made in early September to suppress large patch troubles in 2013.
With bermudagrass greening up, (or at least trying to), in the Midwest, areas damaged by spring dead spot are becoming evident. Spring dead spot is the major disease of bermuda, and is caused by three different pathogen species in the genus *Ophiosphearella*. My Masters student, Derek Cottrill is conducting a research project focusing on chemical and cultural control methods for spring dead spot control in bermudagrass, primarily on sports fields on golf fairways. Since Rubigan has recently been pulled from the market, this research should be of significant interest to those trying to manage this problem.

Part of Derek's project is to assess the species distribution of the spring dead spot pathogen in Missouri and surrounding states. This aspect is very important as research suggests that control practices may differ among the species. In order to put the best control strategy together for this region, it is therefore crucial that we know which beast we are dealing with.

If you currently are noticing spring dead spot symptoms on your field or course, please email Derek at djcqnq6@mail.missouri.edu or me so we can schedule a visit and take a bit of disease away from you.

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