Treading in Cold Water

Weather

Normal May? In Average Temps Only...

A. Despite the wild mood swings, May turned out to have normal average temperatures.
B. Rainfall totals are considerably above normal through spring 2013. 10” surplus for 2013 thus far!
- Source: Pat Guinan, state climatologist

Spring is officially over (well at least meteorologically speaking), and what a wild spring it was! The roller coaster temperatures of May left us a little less than a degree cooler than normal, making it the 3rd consecutive month below. This made it the 7th coolest spring on record, and the coolest since 1984. Precipitation came in the form of snow early in the month, and abundant rains since. Every month in 2013 has recorded above average rainfall, and except for the Springfield area, most areas in Missouri recorded anywhere from 2-5” above normal during the month of May. In Columbia, this is the 3rd wettest year on record, the 4th wettest spring on record, and the 8th wettest May on record. 10” up this year so far... remember when we were 13.5” in the hole just 9 months ago?

The bottom line is that soils are cold and waterlogged, making our neighbors peevish and unhappy. Like these farmers, spring renovation and establishment of turf areas has also gone poorly, as washouts and other issues have delayed or damaged germinating seedlings. Mowing of cool seasons has been baling hay, (honest now who’s been removing only 1/3rd?), and zoysia and bermudagrass still aren’t pushing growth like we’d normally see in early June. That being said, we should be fairly thankful we manage a perennial crop this year, and extremely thankful if it has subsurface and surface drainage that is working effectively.

The forecast holds a slight chance of storms over the weekend, and then we look to dry out and finally get some 80’s next week. If the forecast holds, this would make the first half of June at least a little bit drier, except for the locally heavier amounts.
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that hit some areas during yesterday’s storms. Hopefully, this also means a decrease in the tornado threat, particularly speaking on the EF3, 150 mph wind twister that hit St. Charles county last Friday. According to the NWS, the tornado was on the ground for 35 minutes, traveled 32.5 miles through southern St. Charles and northern St. Louis county, and was a mile wide. Luckily, no one was killed, but considerable tree and property damage occurred.

Quick Hits:

- **The Survey Says...** This time geared at sports turf managers. I presented at the Gateway STMA Vendor Day yesterday, and had a great time. Thanks to the group for the invite. Now tell me which bermudagrass variety you would install right now if you could...

- **Brown Patch Warning** – With the current situation of saturated soils and a summer-like heat wave coming, there is a high likelihood that brown patch could start firing by the middle of next week in much of Missouri. The small lesions I observed in mid May got a cool blast of natural fungicide (40 degree nighttime temps), but I don’t think June will have many of those reprieves. And remember... no nitrogen fertilizer on tall fescue now.

- **Dollar Spot Flaring** – Dollar spot on both fairway and greens height creeping bentgrass took off this past week in both inoculated and non-inoculated areas at the turf farm. This goes along with another report of dollar spot flaring up at a course in Kansas City on 5/31.
I’ve been going on and on about large patch, but this year may indeed be termed “historical” in terms of its ferocity. We are still seeing considerable firing and expansion of patches, (see above), and are now observing it on our ‘Riviera’ bermudagrass block. Symptoms may tend to subside if the temperatures rise and we experience a bit of a dry-turn precipitation wise. For many zoysia lawns, however, the damage has been done. One particular homeowner aerified and applied a Weed-n-Feed product in mid April, setting the stage for considerable large patch damage. Remember, if you have zoysia you need to be sweating while you are managing it. No aerifying or fertilizing (more research on this aspect is underway) in the spring until the zoysia really comes out of dormancy in June, July, and August. According to homeowners and superintendents alike, zoysia just didn’t wake up this spring, and the large patch pathogen took full advantage.
- Next up on the enemies of zoysia, Daniel and Brad reported the first observation of a hunting billbug larvae while fixing an irrigation leak in Columbia yesterday. According to our limited knowledge of the life cycle of this insect, this means that both adults (which overwinter) and grubs may be active now. If a preventive insecticide is not down in an area that has documented damage to this pest, a combination product (i.e. Aloft, Allectus or Arena) is suggested to get both the adult and larval stage. Two life cycles of grub to adult can be expected in most years, so detecting them now and knocking them back will do good later.

- As noted in the last update, golf superintendents should be vigilant in scouting for root rots caused by *Pythium* spp. on their problem child, or notoriously poor draining greens. This wet spring has generated perfect, saturated soil conditions for development of this disease. In areas that have a history of the disease, a preventive application of Subdue, Banol, or Segway may be warranted. Remember to water it in with 1.8 – 1.4” of irrigation.
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New Plots at MU Turf Farm

Despite the intense flooding last Friday of our creek, three brand new plots will be established at the MU Turf Farm over the coming weeks. I can tell you that two of them will be turf pathology related, one will be the only of its kind, and one will only be conducted in one other location in the U.S. The trials will have far reaching implications for home lawns, golf courses, and sports fields alike. Curious? Good. We’ll lower the carrot this coming field day on July 30th.

Field Day, July 30th – Save the Date.

And speaking of the MU Field Day, I wanted to highlight another of our three prime afternoon tours we will be offering. Joe Herzog, golf superintendent, will graciously open the doors at Columbia CC and speak to attendees about the trials, challenges, and triumphs of renovating a course after an Interstate exchange plows through it. I took a brief tour a few weeks ago, and it’s an incredible transformation. Exhibitor/vendor registration is now open, the complete agenda will be finalized shortly, and attendee registration will be open soon. Hope to see you there.

Have a great weekend.

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