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## Off-Types in Ultradwarf Putting Greens

### Spot infestations of different bermudagrass in putting greens are a resurfacing issue

by [Todd Lowe](#) and [John Foy](#), agronomists, Florida Region

The ultradwarf bermudagrasses (Champion, Mini-Verde and TifEagle) have been available since the late 1990s and have outperformed their predecessors Tifgreen and Tifdwarf in research trials (Morris, 2003) and on putting greens. Superior surface smoothness and faster putting speeds can be maintained with these grasses because of their finer leaf blade texture, greater shoot density, and tolerance to lower mowing heights. Many golf courses throughout the southern United States have converted to an ultradwarf bermudagrass, and this has raised the bar as far as putting green quality.

Golf courses in the transition zone have also realized benefits of ultradwarf bermudagrasses. Bentgrass has long been favored because of its superior putting characteristics compared to Tifgreen and Tifdwarf. However, bentgrass struggles during the summer months, a time when peak playing conditions are desired in the transition zone. Many bentgrass putting greens have suffered severe turf loss with extreme heat and humidity, as greens are stressed to produce fast speeds at the expense of turf health. Bermudagrass has been viewed by golfers in the transition zone as a second-class citizen, but ultradwarf cultivars have changed this opinion with their excellent playing conditions.

Development of spot infestations of off-type bermudagrasses has also been a longtime problem with Tifgreen and Tifdwarf bermudagrass putting greens, resulting in a change in composition over time from a monostand to a collection of different bermudagrasses (Foy, 1997; Busey, 1997). Typically, off-types became noticeable within five years after planting Tifdwarf bermudagrass, growing in size and number over a short period of time. Many Florida golf courses regrassed putting surfaces every 10 to 15 years due to a progressive increase and poor performance of bermudagrass off-types (Foy, 2003).

It was hoped that ultradwarf bermudagrass putting greens were immune to off-types, as there were very few apparent issues within the first seven or more years. In fact, there are ultradwarf bermudagrass putting greens that are more than 12 years old that have no apparent off-types at this time. However, off-types have become a significant issue on golf courses in recent years. This article attempts to shed greater light on bermudagrass off-



Off-types that have distinct differences in growth rate and texture present major problems for superintendents to provide acceptable play and aesthetic character.

types on ultradwarf bermudagrass putting greens and offer some insight as to how they are currently being managed.

[Read the rest of this article](#)

## Our Experts Explain

### Measuring Soil Moisture

*by the Green Section*

**Question:** Our golf course superintendent wants to spend about \$1,000 on a fancy soil probe to measure soil moisture. Is this expense worth it? Can't he just water the grass when it is about to wilt? (Skeptical in Penn.)

**Answer:** It's a worthwhile investment for many different reasons. For one thing, a soil moisture probe that measures the amount of available water in the soil is one of the best ways to make something that is very subjective into something that actually has a number assigned to it. This simple measurement can save water, the expense in pumping it, the aggravation in having under-watered grass, or, worse yet, over-watered grass and associated summer diseases that come with it. We understand your skepticism, but at the USGA we use soil moisture probes in preparing golf courses for USGA championships. It takes the guess-work out of irrigation, and keeps the grass healthy, firm and playable. Spend the money, it will prove to be a good investment.

For more information, read a story on how soil moisture probes are changing the game of putting green irrigation:

[A Giant Leap Forward.](#)



Moisture meters are used extensively at USGA championships.

## Regional Updates



### Northeast Region

By [Adam Moeller](#), agronomist

### Warm, Snow-Free Weather Comes With Consequences



The lack of snow cover and above average temperatures have been welcomed by many golfers and a striking difference from the winter of 2011. Golf course superintendents, however, are keeping a close eye on the weather and how it could impact turf health for the remainder of the winter.

'Snowmageddon' and 'snowpocalypse' were frequently used terms the past two years. This winter, these terms have been replaced with 'nice shot', 'good putt', and 'fore' at many golf courses in the Northeast Region. Unusually warm, dry weather during December and the first half of January has provided an opportunity for some golfers to get in a game. In fact, a few courses saw 80 plus golfers during the second weekend of January when temperatures reached the 50's. Although recent snow storms blanketed courses in southern Ontario and parts of New England, most of the

region is without significant snow cover, which is not completely positive. I hate to be pessimistic, but it is important to consider some downsides to the unusual weather.

[Read the rest of this update](#)



## Southeast Region

By [Chris Hartwiger](#), senior agronomist

### 'Tis The Season For Educational Opportunities

Conference season is well underway and turf professionals are taking advantage of multiple opportunities to broaden their knowledge, network with others, and earn valuable certification and GCSAA points. In this update, I will review the first conference of the year and update you on upcoming USGA educational opportunities.

My first stop in 2012 was the 46<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Turfgrass Association Conference in Nashville, January 9-11. Attendance was good with speakers from throughout the country and even overseas. Dr. Micah Woods, president of the Asian Turfgrass Center, travelled from Thailand and wowed the audience with unique pictures on how golf courses are maintained in other parts of the world. There is definitely more than one way to get the job done.

Dr. Rick Brandenburg of North Carolina State University made several presentations, and his talk on "Transition Zone Top Pests" had multiple tips for superintendents in the region. A few are noted in the rest of this update.

[Read the rest of this update](#)



## Northwest Region

By [Durf Soller](#), agronomist

### It Must Be Next Year!



L) May 2011 - Late spring snow kept turf wet, and soil temperatures on the cool side well into the summer, causing a slow start to turf growth. (R) January 2012 - Lack of snow cover on many turf areas keeps golf course superintendents busy watching for damaging, drying conditions, or desiccation. Hand watering greens, even in January may be necessary to save exposed turf. (Photo courtesy Mike Valiant, director of agronomy, Talisker Club, UT.)

January 2012 has presented conditions sharply contrasting a year ago in most of the Rocky Mountain region. Courses that didn't receive snow last year are getting some limited coverage, while many mountain courses that set snow amount records last winter are now facing large areas of exposed turf. The precipitation, white and otherwise, just wouldn't let up last spring, and now it's nowhere to be seen.

What do you do when you get unusual winters? Evaluate the current condition, react accordingly and communicate how things are different from normal. Many courses that typically have sufficient snow cover for turf insulation thru the winter are finding themselves dealing with different concerns and solutions this winter. Instead of monitoring for the possible development of winter snow mold diseases under snow cover, many superintendents are instead



keeping a close eye on exposed areas that are now prone to winter desiccation. Drying winds and prolonged winter sun can cause significant turf thinning and loss, especially on elevated mounds and exposed tee boxes.

[Read the rest of this update](#)



## Southwest Region

By [Pat Gross](#), director

### A Community Approach To Managing The Mess Created By Coots And Canada Geese

It has been a bad winter in the Southwest for loose impediments. In particular, the "loose impediments" left behind on golf courses by coots and Canada geese. In recent weeks, many golf courses have reported high populations of coots and geese, along with a significant increase in the amount of excrement deposited on turf areas - a very messy situation for golfers trying to play the game and maintenance personnel attempting to mow and manage the turf.

Although superintendents in the region have been moderately successful discouraging coot and goose activity with various non-lethal harassment techniques, Jim Ferrin at Sun City Roseville (California) enlisted the help of the entire community to address the problem. Over the years, Jim and his staff tried various methods to discourage coots and geese, yet the results were limited and temporary because the staff did not have enough time throughout the day and into the evening to keep the birds moving off the property. Fortunately, the local residents had the time and were happy to coordinate their dog walking activities as part of a community goose and coot patrol. The first step was amending a local leash ordinance to allow the dogs to run freely and chase the birds. Next, Jim set up a meeting for interested volunteers to give them background and training on the goals of their coordinated goose and coot control efforts, which included allowing dogs to chase the geese, the use of remote controlled model boats in the lakes, and the occasional use of water cannons. A few of the volunteers also were trained to safely use a hand-held green laser to disturb the geese and coots in the morning and evening, which has been a very effective program at golf courses in the Pacific Northwest and is commonly used by airports to discourage bird activity. Two follow-up meetings are conducted each season to share information and adjust the program as necessary.



High populations of coots and Canada geese are making a mess of golf courses in the Southwest. Sun City Roseville (California) has been successful in reducing bird activity by enlisting the help of the local community and using a variety of non-lethal harassment techniques.

[Read the rest of this update](#)



## Mid-Atlantic Region

By [Stanley J. Zontek](#), director

### Give Thanks

How are things going? I would wager that most who read this first 2012 Mid-Atlantic regional update would answer, "pretty well" for the following reasons:

- **Great Weather.** The past two winters have been cold and icy with much of the region covered with snow. If there wasn't snow, it was too cold to play golf and barely warm enough to complete winter projects. This year is totally different. Statistically, the Philadelphia metropolitan area has had the 10th warmest November in history, which is now carrying over into December and January. Our area gets more than its share of bad winters so when a decent one comes along it is a welcome change.
- **Great Weekends.** This fall and winter, our warmest days have been on the weekends. It is amazing how much golf is being played, and this benefits everyone. With temperatures being as moderate as they are, even concerns about winter traffic and winter injury are less of an issue. Some turf managers are still mowing grass, although at higher mowing heights. So, enjoy the weather, but remember that winter damage could become an issue in the future, and that winter traffic is *never* good for grass and soil when the grass is dormant and the ground is semi-frozen.

- **Winter Protection.** Of course the winter is far from over so it is important to keep in mind the possibility of low temperature diseases. Some low temperature diseases, including snow molds, do not actually need snow to become active. In fact, more diseases are active during this type of weather pattern than if there was ice and snow on the ground. It is always good to consider re-treating during a January/February period of open turf, and, as winter moves into spring, we will enter the next period of disease development. Fortunately, there are many good fungicide options. *Note:* as of January 1, 2012, Turfcide (PCNB) has received (49-states) re-registration from the EPA. This is good news for turf managers who must treat large acreages like fairways and who like to use traditional contact fungicides.
- **Education.** The seminar season is in full swing. With the good weather there is no excuse not to attend winter turf conferences in order to keep up with the industry's current events. There continue to be unanswered questions about bacterial diseases, how best to manage the Hyperodes Weevil and some exciting new approaches to *Poa annua* suppression and control. Also, it is good to walk through the trade shows and evaluate the various products and services on display.

[Read the rest of this update](#)

## 2012 USGA Green Section National and Regional Conferences

### NATIONAL CONFERENCE

March 2, 2012	Las Vegas Hotel & Casino	Las Vegas, Nev.
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### MID-ATLANTIC REGION

March 20, 2012	Oakmont Country Club	Oakmont, Pa.
March 27, 2012	DuPont Country Club	Wilmington, Del.

### MID-CONTINENT REGION

April 2, 2012	Belmar Golf Course	Norman, Okla.
December 12, 2012	Overland Park Convention Center	Overland Park, Kan.

### NORTHEAST REGION

February 7, 2012	Rhode Island Convention Center	Providence, R.I.
March 15, 2012	Alpine Country Club	Demarest, N.J.
March 20, 2012	Blue Hill Country Club	Canton, M.A.
March 27, 2012	Oak Hill Country Club	Rochester, N.Y.

### SOUTHEAST REGION

March 27, 2012	Grandover Resort	Greensboro, N.C.
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### NORTHWEST REGION

February 8, 2012	Peaks and Prairies GCSA	Sheridan, Wyo.
March 26, 2012	Waverley Country Club	Portland, Ore.

### SOUTHWEST REGION

March 26, 2012	Gainey Ranch Golf Club	Scottsdale, Ariz.
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### FLORIDA REGION

May 18, 2012	Naples Beach Hotel	Naples, Fla.
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First started in 1953, this service permits individual facilities to reap the benefits of on-site visits by highly skilled USGA agronomists located in Green Section offices throughout the country. Each agronomist visits more than 100 courses annually. Their experience helps golf course staff and officials produce the best possible golf turf for the dollars that can be spent. The TAS's purpose is not to tell anyone how to run a golf course or what products to buy. Rather, it seeks to bring a wealth of information and an impartial yet concerned perspective regarding turfgrass growth requirements, how these requirements might best be managed for golf, and ideas that other golf courses have found to be beneficial.

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*By the USGA Green Section Staff*

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